The untold story of Allie Thompson

About the series

Last summer, the Star-Exponent ran articles by its editorial page editor on the history of lynching in Virginia. The series appeared shortly after the U.S. Senate officially apologized for never having renounced a federal policy of lynching laws.

When the tragedy that occurred in the Star-Exponent, readers generally had two reactions.

1. Why are you bringing up such a bad chapter in our history? If you should have held something on Culpeper’s last lynching.

2. As for the first question, yes, lynching as still a very prevalent gangster crime in this State. Is it a shocking that we cannot sweep under the rug.

With that in mind, we embarked upon learning more about the story of Allie Thompson. Months of research and planning later, we present to you our findings.

— Bob Humphreys
Managing Editor

The murder of an 18-year-old black man, lynched by a mob Nov. 25, 1918, remains one of the most intriguing — and mysterious — crimes in Culpeper history. Many facts and records related to the Monday morning lynching have disappeared with time.

A deeper look at existing documents, however, reveals a tragic story of two very different families robbed of due process in the name of anonymous hate. Months of research also exposes key facts that were misrepresented 87 years ago, when the group of 12 to 15 vigilantes did not have to answer for their crime.

But as the buried truth is uncovered, bits and pieces of the story form a better picture of what really happened to Charles Allie Thompson.

The field in northern Culpeper County where Allie Thompson was arrested in November 1918 on charges of raping a white woman, Lelia Stike.
Thompson, who went by the name "Ali," stood accused of murdering the notorious bandit Mark Leonard Nicholas Ship in 1910. The core of the conflict was over a woman named Mary Jane Taylor, who was feared for her beauty and power.\n
In Thompson's account, he claims that Mary Jane was the object of both men's affections. However, Thompson says that Mary Jane preferred his company and even went as far as to propose marriage.\n
On the night of the fateful encounter, one of the men, Thompson or Ship, was found dead in the woods near Mary Jane's home. The exact circumstances of the murder are unclear, but it is widely believed that it was a result of a dispute over Mary Jane.\n
Thompson, who was still a young boy at the time, left the scene of the crime and fled for his life. He did not return to the area for several years, during which time he was on the run from the law.\n
Upon his return, Thompson was met with a mix of reactions from the community. Some saw him as a hero for standing up to the powerful bandit, while others were wary of him due to his history of crime.\n
Despite these mixed feelings, Thompson was eventually able to find a place in the community. He turned his life around and became a respected leader, known for his strength and integrity. His story became a legend in the region, and he is remembered today as a symbol of resilience and determination.
The FIRST LYNCHING IN CULPEPER IN 40 YEARS
Mobs of Ancovners Choose Sunday Night for their Work

Note: This is the story that ran in the Nov. 3, 1939, Culpeper Express.

Prior to morning service for several in Culpeper were aware of the fact that 11 o’clock Sunday morning. It was a painful moment. The effect on the town was that of a man who has heard a death sentence.

Allen Thompson, a black deacon, running in a downtown street near the courthouse, was arrested last week because of some small matter. The man, 33, has been arrested many times, but never before for such an offense.

His family is in town, and they have been told that he will be released on bail. They hope to have him home by the time they leave town.

The lynching occurred on Sunday night, November 3, 1939.

Robert Thompson, Allen’s brother, graduated from college and became a pharmacist.

TIMELINE

1914: Charles Sivas killed by a mob in New York City.

1920: The lynchings ofтопи at 4 years in 1920, 22 years in 1921, and 50 years in 1922.

1921: The lynching of William Moore.

1922: The lynching of Claude Johnson.

1923: The lynching of LeRoy Edwards.

1924: The lynching of George Washington.

1925: The lynching of James Weldon Johnson.

1926: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.

1927: The lynching of George Washington Johnson.

1928: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.

1929: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.

1930: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.

1931: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.

1932: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.

1933: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.

1934: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.


1936: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.


1938: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.

1939: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.

1940: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.

1941: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.

1942: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.

1943: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.

1944: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.

1945: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.


1951: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.


2013: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.


2022: The lynching of John Henry Johnson.
DAY 2 IN A 3-PART SERIES ON THE LAST LYNCHING IN CULPEPER

Worlds apart; bound by fate

In 1818, black and white families lived peacefully — albeit, under very different social conditions — in the farming village of Amierville, a churchgoing community in the furthest reaches of northern Culpeper County.

The fall of that year, though, would see the end to that fragile peace.

A young black farmer stood accused of raping a white woman eight years his senior. Fact and folklore suggest the two were involved in a forbidden romantic relationship.

Within days of the alleged rape, a local mob of neighbors and family formed, handing down a death sentence. The exact identities of the white men who composed the hooded mob remain shrouded to this day.

On the other hand, recorded history permits a detailed glance back at the families of Allie and Leila — whose names share the same letters, but whose fate had little in common.

Digging into the story of those deeply contrasting family trees lends itself to more understanding of a society that looked the other way when men were lynched.

The story speaks of harsh, country living in the mountains and the tense racial climate of Jim Crow. It also speaks of a highly regarded black family, just 55 years after the declared end of slavery, making its way forward in an unequal world.

These are the stories of Charles Allie Thompson, Leila Nicholson Sisk and their families.

WRITE BY ALLISON BROPHY CHAMPION | RESEARCH ASSISTANCE BY ZANN MINER

Charles Allie Thompson
A young life cut short with no justice | Page A4

Leila Nicholson Sisk
Body honor, at end of the mountain | Page A5
Rocky times, on and off the mountain

Leila Nicholson Sisk

Leila Nicholson Sisk is known as "the headliners" and a "mountain queen."

Leila Nicholson Sisk's hometown was one of those small towns...
A young life cut short with no justice

By Allison chapman

About two months shy of his 19th birthday, Charles Allie Thompson, Jr., known to his family and friends as "Chubs," was gunned down outside of a popular bar in the heart of Washington, D.C., on March 27, 2013. His killing set off a wave of outrage and counseling efforts across the city, but it was only one of many such tragedies that have left our community reeling from the loss of innocent lives.

Charles Allie Thompson, Jr., was a dedicated student and a kind-hearted soul. He was involved in numerous community service projects and was a shining example of what it means to be a young man of integrity. His death has left a void that will be felt for generations to come.

In the aftermath of his death, his family and friends have worked tirelessly to bring awareness to the issue of gun violence and to advocate for changes that will prevent such tragedies from happening in the future.

If you or someone you know has been affected by violence, please reach out to the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or text "SAFE" to 80808. You are not alone, and help is available.

--Allison Chapman

The Expeller

Racial tension and stories of war made headlines in 1918

The month leading up to November 1918. The Dulles Expedition, like this week's headlines, was anything but serene. For the battlefield, and for many lives that were on the line.

As the Expedition's "Leisure From Print" project seeks to highlight stories of sacrifice and heroism, it's important to remember that the lives lost in war are not just numbers, but stories of hope and courage.

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More than 300,000 soldiers served in World War I through a segregated unit as support troops, including Charles Allie Thompson's older brother, Robert Lee.

"The year has been a groundhog year for the country and the_multitude of black men on the streets will prove a great benefit to the cause."

--Allison Chapman

The Expeller

"I think you'll never get rid of prejudice. I never have time to do it."

"We've been working on the issue of race relations since the 1860s, and it's still a problem today."

--Allison Chapman

The Expeller
Looking back on a sad chapter in history

Just a short while ago, the story of a tragic lynching in Culpeper County and the names of Allie Thompson, Lelia Sisk, E.L. Crane, Willie Luttrell and Charlie Sisk were all strangers to my memory bank.

Seeking the truth about the lynching of Allie Thompson has been an incredible journey. A journey that has spanned five months as the investigation has ventured through at least four counties, hardwood forests, fallow corn fields, libraries, courthouses, back roads, general stores, living rooms, churches, cemeteries and the vast resources of the digital age.

It all began, innocently enough, August 2005 in the relative quiet of my office. Allison Brophy Champion told me the newspaper had decided to write a story about the lynching in 1918 of an 18-year-old named Allie Thompson. She then asked if I would help.

When I said, “Yes, of course,” I had absolutely no inkling of where this quest would take us, but the museum policy is to always say yes when asked to assist those in search of history. Most often it is a case of providing resource data, photos or names of individuals to interview.

I would learn later that this one would be very different.
What was reported, what we found, and the many questions that remain

According to statistics from all Southern states, the fewest number of lynchings occurred in Virginia. Some of the small towns and rural areas would put themselves up, but the true extent of what had happened was not clear. The fewest number of lynchings occurred in Virginia. In 1895, the editor of the Richmond Tribune reported that 13 lynchings had occurred in Virginia, while the Board of Directors of the American Anti-Lynching Association reported 11 lynchings. In 1896, the editor of the Richmond Tribune reported 12 lynchings, while the Board of Directors of the American Anti-Lynching Association reported 11 lynchings. However, within 5 days of being accused and arrested, Allie Thompson was kidnapped from the Culpeper County jail and murdered by hanging without due process. No one knew beyond a reasonable doubt.

Perhaps there were those who knew the truth and wanted their desires for retribution would fail due to the lack of conviction-oriented facts. Working to leave nothing to chance, they tried, convicted, and executed Allie Thompson, before the justice system could apply. Through research for this study, the information of the case has been proven false or unsubstantiated.

What was reported

Leila Sisk, the alleged victim, was living in the town area and was visited by Charles Allie Thompson

What we found

Between 2 and 3, on Nov. 25, two men came to the white couple's residence in the town area and attempted to murder the couple. They were heard arguing and one of the men said, “I'm going to kill him.” The couple was early in bed and heard the argument. The couple then went to the police station and filed a report.

The lynching of Allie Thompson

Two days later, on Nov. 27, the couple went to the police station and filed a report. They were told by an officer that the case was being investigated. A few days later, the couple went to the police station and filed a report. They were told that the case was being investigated.

Questions that remain

Why was Charles Allie Thompson lynched?

- What was the motive for the lynching? Was it due to race, religion, or political beliefs?
- What role did the local authorities play in the lynching?
- What role did the national authorities play in the lynching?

What was not reported

Leila Sisk, the alleged victim, was living in the town area and was visited by Charles Allie Thompson.

What we did not discover

- Did Leila Sisk receive any financial assistance from the local authorities during the lynching?
- Did the national authorities investigate the lynching?

Questions that remain

- What was the reaction of the local and national authorities to the lynching?
- What role did the media play in the lynching?
- What was the impact of the lynching on the community?

What was not reported

Leila Sisk, the alleged victim, was living in the town area and was visited by Charles Allie Thompson.

What was discovered

The 1903 census records state that Leila Sisk lived as a servant in a house in Blue Ridge, in the district of Burke County. There was no further information reported after her disappearance.

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Race riots, lynchings cause for concern in '19

In the year following Allie Thompson's 1918 judgeship in Greenville, the state weekly newspaper in South Carolina was The Colored Republic — published an array of race-related stories. There was no mention of Allie Thompson, however, except for a few sentences in the March 10, 1918, edition, where it listed the county government list of refugees. On November 27, Gov. Charles Washington's interest over body of Allie Thompson. The paper, the sheriff and coroner received a cumulative total of 82% for the contributions to the case, which was closed within days.

A look back at other headlines from 1919 tells of racial unrest locally and nationwide:

- May 1, CHARLESTON — "To Free Charleston Slave..."
- May 8, RICHMOND — "Moral pollution and nigger are taken in as a make break for open country..."

The article details that Edgar Morris has since been arrested in the most recent of the Riots. Morris told authorities that he had been in the mountains near his home since March 28, when he shot and killed a man inside the Greenville County Courthouse. He was making a break for the open country when taken into custody. Morris, facing charges of murder, was arrested and booked into the Greenville County Jail. The article states that eight African-Americans were shot and killed in the attack.

- June 5, CULPEPER — "Love and charity convention at Culpeper Church..."
- June 22, NEW YORK — "Nuns in New York schools..."
- July 1, CHICAGO — "Another lynching investigation..."
- July 24, WASHINGTON, D.C. — "Police officers and niggers claim in Washington attack..."

The U.S. Army dispatched 500 troops to the nation to protect race riots. At least one black man was shot and killed, and scores of blacks and whites, arrested.

- July 31, CHICAGO — "Another lynching investigation..."
- August 5, RICHMOND — "Negro in Eliz. Kins..."
- July 30, BALTIMORE, N.C. — "Governor Baker orders home to Washington..."

The governor said his state can afford to take the nation to an open break in 1919. About 25,000 black people who want to return to the South from Illinois, the site of intense race riots, "unless they can become saturated with opinions of moral equality or political democracy," Governor Baker announced. Governor Baker said his state can afford to take the nation to an open break in 1919. About 25,000 black people who want to return to the South from Illinois, the site of intense race riots, "unless they can become saturated with opinions of moral equality or political democracy," Governor Baker announced.

Charles Allie Thompson

What was reported
Allie Thompson was charged with the assault and rape of a white woman in the city of Greenville. The charges were dropped after a lengthy trial, during which Thompson was found not guilty. The case was considered a landmark in the struggle for civil rights and equality.

What we found
There exist no evidence of a judicial investigation. There is no mention of the alleged rape or the trial. There is no mention of the alleged rape or the trial. There is no mention of the alleged rape or the trial. There is no mention of the alleged rape or the trial. There is no mention of the alleged rape or the trial. There is no mention of the alleged rape or the trial. There is no mention of the alleged rape or the trial. There is no mention of the alleged rape or the trial. There is no mention of the alleged rape or the trial. There is no mention of the alleged rape or the trial. There is no mention of the alleged rape or the trial. There is no mention of the alleged rape or the trial. There is no mention of the alleged rape or the trial. There is no mention of the alleged rape or the trial.

Questions that arise
- Was there a crime committed?
- Was there enough evidence to convict Allie Thompson?
- If convicted, what happened to Allie Thompson?
- Were Thos Thompson and others convicted?

Allison column to go right here in

Gull or innocence? Charles Allie Thompson

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Alia Thompson was charged with the assault and rape of a white woman in the city of Greenville. The charges were dropped after a lengthy trial, during which Thompson was found not guilty. The case was considered a landmark in the struggle for civil rights and equality.

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