

**THE HILLSVILLE TRAGEDY:  
APPALACHIAN STEREOTYPES AS EXAMINED THROUGH  
THE CARROLL COUNTY COURTROOM SHOOTOUT OF 1912**

by

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(ABSTRACT)

This thesis is a community study that centers on the Carroll County Courtroom Shootout of 1912. The shootout provides an opportunity to examine the dynamics of a small Appalachian community by looking at the years leading up to 1912. This study focuses on issues of causality, including a series of intense political feuds, land disputes, and general hostilities between certain members of the court administration and members of a particular family within the county. This thesis adds to revisionist histories on Appalachia and serves as a corrective to views of the region as monolithic, isolated, and impoverished. By placing the Hillsville Shootout in a historical framework for the first time, one can explain and deconstruct some of the myths surrounding the Carroll County tragedy and more generally Appalachia itself.

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## **Introduction**

There are but two remedies for such a situation as this, and they are education and extermination. With many of the individuals, the latter is the only remedy. Men and races alike, when they defy civilization must die. The mountaineers of Virginia and Kentucky and North Carolina, like the Red Indians and the South African Boers, must learn this lesson.

*The Baltimore Evening Sun* in response to the Hillsville Tragedy  
March 15, 1912

On March 14, 1912, an unlikely region made national headlines. The country's attention was instantly riveted on the small southwestern community of Hillsville, Virginia after a deadly courtroom gunbattle that left five people dead, including the judge, the sheriff, and the commonwealth's attorney. The following day, the *Raleigh Times* reported,

The tragedy at Hillsville, Virginia yesterday has no parallel, we believe in this country, and it is doubtful if any country could furnish a more deliberately fiendish illustration of lawlessness. An entire court of law sitting in its official capacity was wiped out...<sup>1</sup>

This particular study on the tragic events in Carroll County in 1912 serves several purposes. For one, an analysis of the county in which the tragedy occurred will add to recent revisionist histories on Appalachia by dispelling Appalachian exceptionalism and serving as a corrective to views of the region as monolithic, isolated, and impoverished.

Secondly, a thorough analysis will challenge prior explanations given for the

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<sup>1</sup> "Newspapers Comment on Murder of Court Officials at Hillsville," (*Richmond Times Dispatch*, 17 March 1912).

increase of violence within the region, such as ethnic origins, alcohol, or isolation. By the 1890s, a significant rise in the population and a decrease in prime farmland, coupled with limited economic opportunities and a national depression, created a series of economic strains which led to an inevitable increase in violent behavior within the region.

Thirdly, this thesis is important in dealing with the Hillsville Shootout in a historical framework for the first time. No historian has attempted to examine the shootout in relation to its larger meaning and context. The shootout provides an excellent opportunity to explore the dynamics of a small Appalachian community. In placing the Hillsville shootout in a historical framework, one can explain and deconstruct some of the stereotypes and myths surrounding the Carroll County tragedy and more generally Appalachia itself.

Lastly, an analysis of the shootout will demonstrate the media's blatant misrepresentation of Appalachia and their more immediate focus on selling sensationalized stories to the public. The press fueled inaccurate images of Appalachia by continuing to write from their own preconceived ideas and by exploiting instances of violence within the region. For instance, from the time that local color writers first began commenting on the region, Appalachian people have been the source of constant criticism and false characterizations. Such accounts are only now beginning to be discounted, and the myths surrounding the social and political behavior of its residents are gradually being deconstructed and re-analyzed. Ideally, this implies that events which were once exploited, sensationalized, and misinterpreted should be examined with a new perspective and in a historical framework. There are numerous events which would benefit from such re-examination; certainly among them is the Hillsville tragedy.

### Stereotypes and the Media

For well over a month, the Hillsville tragedy made front page headlines across the country. Unfortunately, newspapers used the incident to portray not only Hillsville, but all Appalachian communities as uncivilized, backwards, and excessively violent. As John Ashworth, an economist from southwestern Virginia in 1913 noted, when the Hillsville tragedy occurred, "three million people were condemned for the act."<sup>2</sup> Only with the sinking of the Titanic in late April did the media attention slightly subside.

Newspapers continued to trace the tragedy in the year that followed however, documenting what had happened to each of the participants involved. The story provided the kind of drama reporters thrived on at the turn of the century. The press focused increasingly on marketing and selling their newspapers while also expanding their circulation, oftentimes at the cost of accuracy. Critics of reporters complained about "profit seeking, invasion of privacy," and "sensationalism."<sup>3</sup> Newspapers encouraged their reporters to write "spicy," "interesting," stories "enlivened with imagination."<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, those reporters who hesitated on writing what they saw as "a sensational falsehood" and who preferred to "discriminate between facts and rumors" usually found their "prospects...dim."<sup>5</sup>

Most reporters writing about Appalachia drew their accounts from distorted facts, often derived from older works of fiction. Approximately thirty years before the

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<sup>2</sup> W.K. McNeil, ed. "The Virginia Mountaineers," (reprinted from *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 12, July 1913) in *Appalachian Folk Images and Popular Culture* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1989), p. 200.

<sup>3</sup> Hazel Dicken-Garcia, *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth Century America* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-199.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

Hillsville Tragedy, there had been a movement among literary circles to write about Appalachia and the lives of its people. This new literary mode, referred to as the local color movement, became widely popular from the 1870s through the 1890s. In 1873, Will Wallace Harney published an article in *Lippincott's Magazine* entitled, "A Strange Land and Peculiar People" which described Appalachian residents in the years before the Civil War. The characterization of them as somehow "strange" and "peculiar" endured. Following the publication of his story, other writers began exploiting "Harney's sense of 'otherness.'"<sup>6</sup> With each publication, Appalachia was eventually established "in the public consciousness as a discrete region."<sup>7</sup> Within a short time, people accepted

...the assumption that it really was a strange land inhabited by a peculiar people, and responded in what to them seemed the appropriate way. In practice this involved a variety of modes of action, but what characterized them all was the assumption that the mountainous portions of eight or nine southern states composed a distinct region of the nation, with physical, social, and cultural characteristics that made it fundamentally different from the rest of America.<sup>8</sup>

Local color writers such as Mary Noailles Murfree, James Lane Allen, John Fox Jr., and many others emphasized what they believed to be typical Appalachian characteristics: violence and feuding, moonshining, strange dialects, and primitive lifestyles. Such descriptions disregarded the actual conditions and similarities of Appalachia to other rural areas in the United States. Most of these writers had never even visited the mountains they described. John Ashworth, who published an article refuting Appalachian stereotypes in 1913, noted that most authors who wrote about the mountains based "their assertions on old antiquated jokes and stories told by our fathers years ago, and

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

upon works of fiction which refer to conditions long since past."<sup>9</sup> He cited the example of John Fox's popular novel, *Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* which discussed the period before the Civil War, which most readers applied to Appalachia's present conditions.

There has been a consistent refusal to recognize the prodigious strides made in industrial, and consequently in other lines of development during the last twenty-five or thirty years, and the blind assertion is made that "They live just as they did a hundred years ago."<sup>10</sup>

Ashworth was particularly disturbed by exaggerated commentary made by newspaper reporters and magazine writers who thrived on accounts of crime in the mountains. Reporter for the *New York World*, T.C. Crawford, serves as a classic example of a journalist more interested in selling a story than in obtaining the facts. His telling of the Hatfield and McCoy feud, for example, was particularly sensationalized. Crawford described the mountains as "being as remote as Central Africa" with few civilized institutions.<sup>11</sup> He, like many other journalists, unfairly focused on "the feudists as examples of a degraded and uncivilized culture," instead of "the details of the feud itself."<sup>12</sup> Historian Altina Waller notes that by the 1890s, "journalistic preoccupations with race and political conflict" and with "election-day animosities" shifted to a focus on "mountaineer character and culture" as reasons given for the occurrence of violence in the mountains.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> McNeil, ed. "The Virginia Mountaineers," p. 199.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>11</sup> Altina Waller, *Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860-1900* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>13</sup> Altina Waller, "Feuding in Appalachia: Evolution of a Cultural Stereotype" in

Thomas Dawley was another writer who created sweeping generalizations and perpetuated false images of Appalachia. In 1910 he published an article entitled "Our Southern Mountaineers: Removal the Remedy for the Evils that Isolation and Poverty Have Brought." In the article, he briefly described the region:

Picture to yourself a solitary log cabin, without window or porch, on a little patch of land capable of producing only a few bushels of corn; and picture in one of these cabins the haggard old mother and the broken-down father sitting by the fireplace, chewing tobacco all day long, with eight or ten children, long-haired and dirty, scattered about- and you have a typical picture of the "farm" and of the family of the uninhabitable places.<sup>14</sup>

Some early historians also accepted such stereotypes. British historian Arnold Toynbee equated southern mountaineers with "barbarians" and proclaimed that they had "relapsed into illiteracy and witchcraft."<sup>15</sup>

Broad assumptions and stereotypes also characterized the reports concerning the Carroll County tragedy and more specifically the Allen family who were immediately blamed for the deaths of the court officials. In fact, contemporary observers preferred attributing the shootout to moral and ethnic origins rather than the more obvious political hostilities that existed between the court administration and members of the Allen family. For instance, at the time of the tragedy, explanations for why it took place inundated the newspapers. Some pinpointed geographic isolation, weak governmental institutions, a sense of fatalism, bootlegging, or traditionalism as reasons for the outbreak of violence.

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*Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight Billings, and Altina Waller, eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), p. 367.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas R. Dawley, Jr. "Our Southern Mountaineers: Removal the Remedy For the Evils that Isolation and Poverty Have Brought," *The World's Work*, 1910.

<sup>15</sup> A. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947) p. 149.

Others emphasized ethnic origins, poverty, or honor as the singular cause. For example, Alexander Forward, a reporter for *The Times Dispatch* in Virginia, targeted fatalism as the primary reason for the Allens' alleged behavior on March 14. He noted that their "distorted religious view" was responsible for their actions.<sup>16</sup> Forward explained that the Allens

disregarded the exhortations to right living, to peace and harmony, to soberness and godliness, to observance of the golden rule, and have singled out the one doctrine of predestination. This they chose to regard only in the sense of an invitation to be as bad as they wanted to be, since Providence would not permit them to do anything except that which they were foreordained to do.<sup>17</sup>

Newspaper reporters also blamed the incident on the what they believed was the Allens' need for producing "illicit liquor."<sup>18</sup> *The New York Press*, called them a "band of Blue Ridge moonshiners," claims which were never substantiated. Newspapers usually extended their comments about the Allens to include the entire mountain culture. *The Baltimore Sun* portrayed the Allens as examples of a "degenerate" breed that infested "the mountain regions of the Southern States." This same paper labeled mountaineers in Southern Virginia and North Carolina as "rough," "uncouth," and "ignorant." *The New York World* concluded that "isolation" and the "lack of profitable employment" had "produced mental degeneracy and a sort of savagery" among mountaineers.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Alexander Forward, "Fatalism Secret of Carroll County's Reign of Terror" *The Times Dispatch*, 24 March 1912.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Excerpts found in *The Times (Richmond, Va.) Dispatch*, 16 March 1912 and 17 March 1912.

Whatever the reason for the heightened sensationalism of the Carroll County tragedy, the true explanation for what occurred was lost in tales of Appalachian "otherness" which emphasized independence, fatalism, social and geographic isolation, and traditionalism. Though the event itself was intriguing enough and need not have been sensationalized at all, reporters continued to weave their own elaborate stories in hopes of attracting more readers. In the process, so many contradictory and exaggerated reports of the tragedy emerged that many have a difficult time, even today, tracing what really happened in March of 1912.

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The chain of events leading to the courtroom shootout was set in motion by a rather typical incident which began in September of 1911. Six young men in their early twenties, had a confrontation outside of a church during Sunday morning services. The dispute began when, during the service, a young man by the name of Wesley Edwards was beckoned outside of the church by a group of four men. In the churchyard, Wesley Edwards encountered William Thomas, someone he had exchanged words with the night before. The men were involved in a heated argument and a fight ensued. Sidney Edwards, Wesley's brother, heard the commotion from inside the church and quickly became involved in an effort to help his brother. Shortly after the dispute, charges were brought against Sidney and Wesley Edwards for fighting and disturbing religious worship. Strangely, however, no indictments were made against the other four involved.

Before bond could be arranged for them, Wesley and Sidney traveled to the North Carolina border, approximately ten miles from their home, to begin work at a nearby Granite Company. Soon after, Carroll County deputies crossed over the border without extradition papers from the Governor, handcuffed the two young men, and tied

them to a buggy for the trip back to Hillsville. The manner in which the boys were treated and the route through which the officers chose to return to Hillsville were key events in raising the attention and temper of Carroll County resident Floyd Allen.

Floyd Allen, the uncle of Wesley and Sidney Edwards, was a well known and relatively wealthy man within the county. He had grown extremely close to the boys since their father had passed away. Because he helped raise them, he practically thought of them as his own sons. Allen was also a deputy having been appointed earlier that year.

Along the route to the courthouse, the officers met up with Floyd Allen who was furious at how the deputies treated his nephews. A disagreement between him and the officers followed. According to him, the officers drew their guns on him several times. When one of the officers, Pinky Samuels, drew his gun a third time, Allen grabbed it and smashed it against a rock. He then asked the officers to untie the boys so that they could go to court like gentlemen. After the officers refused, Allen took the boys to the Hillsville court himself. Wesley Edwards served sixty days in jail, while his brother Sidney served thirty days, both for the disturbance of public worship. The other four young men were never charged. In December 1911, Floyd Allen himself was charged with interfering with officers of the law in the performance of their duty. His trial date was finally set for March 13, 1912.

### **Court Convenes**

On March 13, Floyd Allen's trial began. People filed in from all over town to watch the proceedings. Curiously, Pinky Samuels, one of the chief witnesses, never appeared. The jury had almost reached a decision when Thornton L. Massie, the presiding judge, decided to adjourn the court and have the jury stay in Thornton's

Motel for the night. Court would convene at eight a.m. the next day.

On the morning of March 14th the weather proved poor. When Floyd Allen and his brother Sidna Allen arrived at the courtroom, both carried pistols, rather typical for most residents at the time. In fact, officers never checked for concealed weapons as people entered the court. Consequently, Floyd and Sidna Allen were not the only individuals carrying weapons into the court that day. Indeed, a large number of those within the courtroom on that Thursday morning were armed.

At 9:30 a.m. inside the courtroom, the jury came back with a verdict of guilty. The jury sentenced Floyd Allen to serve a year in prison. The judge set a hearing for the next day, and there was a "brief pause while lawyer Bolen engaged in quiet conversation with Allen and his son, Claude."<sup>20</sup> When the Judge ordered Floyd Allen to be taken into custody, the sheriff stepped forward to apprehend him. Suddenly, a single shot rang out in the courtroom.

No one knows with any degree of certainty who fired the first shot, but the consequences were devastating. The fatally wounded included Sheriff Lewis Webb, Judge Thornton L. Massie, Commonwealth's Attorney William M. Foster, jury member Augustus C. Fowler, and a young woman by the name of Nancy Elizabeth Ayers.

Blame soon centered on the Allen family. Newspapers across the country branded them as a gang of lawless desperadoes and demanded swift and severe punishments for their alleged crime. Through a combination of extensive rewards, several surrenders, and the efforts of the Baldwin Felts Detective Agency, members of the Allen family, including Victor Allen, Friel Allen, and Sidney Edwards were soon captured. Six months later in Des Moines Iowa, Wesley Edwards and Sidna Allen were also

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<sup>20</sup> Rufus Gardner, *Courthouse Tragedy*, (Nu-Line Printing, 1991), p. 10.

arrested and brought to jail in Roanoke, Virginia.

Victor Allen, Floyd Allen's son, was acquitted of all charges six months after the shootout. Wesley Edwards received twenty-seven years in prison. Friel Allen, Floyd Allen's nephew, was sentenced to eighteen years. Sidna Allen received a sentence of thirty-five years in prison. Floyd and his other son Claude Allen however, received much harsher sentences. The Wythe County jury gave Floyd Allen the death penalty and shortly thereafter sentenced his son to the same. The sentences were carried out a year later in Richmond, Virginia.

Though harsh sentences were meted out, controversy still exists over whether or not justice was truly served. A great deal of hostility existed between the Allen family and certain members of the court administration, particularly over political conflicts and land disputes. Some vehemently claimed the innocence of the Allen family and the corruption of a political system that was against them. Pearl Webb, a relative of Lewis F. Webb killed in the tragedy, believed that "a great injustice" had been done to the Allens, and that the whole event started from a "political feud."<sup>21</sup> Others alleged that the court officials were intentionally murdered by members of the Allen "clan" and that the "assassinations had been deliberately planned by Floyd Allen, prisoner at the bar, and his gang of outlaws."<sup>22</sup>

A critical analysis can dispel the old myths and inaccurate portrayals that have plagued this particular story for nearly a century. Many have forgotten that the years leading up to March 14, 1912, contain the true beginnings of the tragedy. Though

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<sup>21</sup> E.J. Cooley, *The Inside Story of the World Famous Courtroom Tragedy* (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1915), 80.

<sup>22</sup> "Acts of Outlaws Terrorize Town to Point of Paralysis," *Times* (Richmond, Virginia) *Dispatch*, 15 March 1912, p. 1.

this incident has been extensively written about in the past years, especially on each anniversary of the tragedy, the real reasons for the shootout have never been thoroughly examined.<sup>23</sup>

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Though the historiography of Appalachia has moved considerably beyond the pejorative accounts which first emerged during the late nineteenth century, problems still remain. For example, the widely held perception that the American South was and is more violent than any other area of the nation, is the focus of innumerable journal articles and books that seek to explain Southern culture.<sup>24</sup> Historians, social scientists, anthropologists, criminologists, journalists, and psychologists among others, have focused their studies on the nature of southern violence and its origins. One might question how such conclusions are reached and

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<sup>23</sup> For more recent books and articles on the tragedy see Roger Doss, *The Killing of a Court* (Roanoke, Virginia: Marathon Graphic Services, 1994); Rufus Gardner, *Courthouse Tragedy* (Nu-Line Printing, 5th edition, 1991); Clifford Harrison, "Murder in the Courtroom," in *Virginia Cavalcade*, Summer 1967, pp. 43-47; Seth Williamson, "Hillsville Massacre," in *The Roanoker*, Nov. 1982, pp. 28-29, 44-51.; "The Story of the Allen Brothers" at <http://www.pingzine.com/...ugust/sporadic/allen.htm>.; For a musical version of the shootout see "Sid Allen and the Devil's Den," an American Rock Opera by Tom Harvey, T.H.E. Productions, Boulder Creek, California.

<sup>24</sup> See Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); David T. Courtwright, *Violent Land* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996); David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Elliott J. Gorn, "Gouge, and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch: The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry." *American Historical Review* 90,18-43; Richard E. Nisbett and Dov Cohen, *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996); John Ed Pearce, *Days of Darkness: The Feuds of Eastern Kentucky* (University Press of Kentucky, 1994); Altina Waller, *Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Changes in Appalachia, 1860-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982);

whether or not they are fair interpretations. For example, David Courtwright in his study, *Violent Land*, describes the South as "a seedbed of national violence."<sup>25</sup> This statement is open to interpretation. Though the South is cited by some authors as more violent than other geographic regions, such conclusions are usually based on opinion polls about gun ownership or basic impressions taken from certain statistics, such as the number of death penalty executions.

One has to be cautious of such conclusions. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, many assault and homicide charges were not recorded in court dockets. Early records can be misleading. Furthermore, the term "violence" seems to hold varying connotations for different authors. This alone can produce the perception of higher levels of violence for one region as opposed to another depending upon one's definition of what constitutes violent behavior.

For purposes of this study, violence is described in terms of homicides or the use of physical force which inflicts injury on, or causes "damage to, persons or property."<sup>26</sup> Yet for some, proving that the south is more "violent" may not rest on statistics of homicide or assault rates at all. Psychologists Richard E. Nisbett and Dov Cohen include in their definition of violence the "spanking of children," certain "pastimes" and "games" such as football, and the existence of military schools and units.<sup>27</sup> Sociologists, L. Baron and M.A. Straus include such "measures" of violence as "national guard expenditures, corporal punishment laws, execution rates, and per

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<sup>25</sup> David T. Courtwright, *Violent Land: Single Men and Social Disorder from the Frontier to the Inner City* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 60.

<sup>26</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. 12 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 221.

<sup>27</sup> Richard E. Nisbett and Dov Cohen, *Culture of Honor: The Psychology of Violence in the South* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), p. 25, 58.

capita production of college football players."<sup>28</sup> Not only do such studies vary in their specific interpretations of violent behavior, but most also deny the distinct differences between rural and urban areas.<sup>29</sup> Seemingly, more could be derived from an analysis of rural versus urban society rather than North versus South.

In addition, some studies establish unusual correlations for analysis. An example is Nisbett and Cohen's startling comparison of the South's Cumberland Mountains from 1865 to 1915 to the inner city of today. They note that the homicide rate was "130 per 100,000- more than ten times today's national homicide rate."<sup>30</sup> Can a comparison between a place a century and a half ago to a present area in two completely different regions be taken seriously?

Other fundamental flaws poke holes in Nisbett and Cohen's theory. For example, women, African Americans, or other minorities are curiously omitted, leaving only a focus on white males. One might question whether a truly accurate study can be obtained by examining only one part of the population. Furthermore, some studies combine statistics which include the South and the West against an analysis of the North, leaving the possibility for skewed results and an area of much larger comparison to the Northern United States.<sup>31</sup>

For a number of years, geographic and cultural isolation have been used to characterize Appalachia. For example, Jack Weller in *Yesterday's People* concluded that isolation was a significant quality of Appalachian life and that Appalachians were to

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>29</sup> Nibett and Cohen omit any study of urban residents and therefore concentrate on rural white southerners as opposed to rural white northerners, both of which are less violent than urban residents.

<sup>30</sup> Nisbett and Cohen, *Culture of Honor*, p.1.

<sup>31</sup> Nisbett and Cohen are guilty of this as well.

blame because of their reluctance to change and their adherence to traditionalism. This theory, often referred to as the culture-of-poverty approach, overlooks the diversity of Appalachian residents and any sense of social stratification. Theories about isolation, such as Weller's, remain seriously flawed and grounded in inaccurate portrayals of the mountains. Most areas of Appalachia have never been as isolated as depicted.

More recent historians have refuted older ideas of Appalachia as a place of social and economic isolation. Many emphasize a growing interconnectedness, a market oriented society, and a strong sense of community.<sup>32</sup> In doing so, a number of studies demonstrate the fallacy of prior theories on Appalachian "otherness."<sup>33</sup> For example, the colonialism model theorizes that the exploitation of the region by outside corporations siphoned off wealth from the area and left residents in poverty. Advocates of this theory, such as Harry Caudill's *Night Comes to the Cumberland*, concentrate on the absentee ownership of the region's resources, and stress that residents seldom saw the profits of the timber, minerals, coal, and other resources they helped obtain. For supporters of this idea, the link to violence seems apparent. Gordon McKinney in *Southern Mountain Republicans* makes the connection especially clear. He acknowledges that "vast mineral and timber resources of the region were being exploited, and many predictable disruptions of mountain communities followed."<sup>34</sup> McKinney makes the

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<sup>32</sup> See Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988); Ronald Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986); David Hsiung, *Two Worlds in the Tennessee Mountains* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996); Gordon McKinney, *Southern Mountain Republicans* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978).

<sup>33</sup> Henry Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Minds: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1978) p. 17.

assertion that industrialization itself led to increased violence. He notes that,

Some mountaineers were frightened by the new demands placed on them, fiercely resisting change and demanding that the outside world leave them alone. The culmination of this feeling was one of the most significant outbreaks of social violence in American history.<sup>35</sup>

There are several problems with this approach however. The colonialism theory suggested that Appalachia was in a constant battle against outside developers and the heavy industrialization of the area. This follows closely with the "dependency" model which describes the area as having undergone extensive industrialization and exploitation.

In recent years, historians have produced far more sophisticated and complete arguments. One of the more popular theories in explaining the historical patterns of violence in southern culture is the concept of honor. Perhaps the best known and most extensive of these is Wyatt-Brown's *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*. Brown sees honor, "not conscience, shame," or "guilt" as the "psychological and social underpinnings of southern culture."<sup>36</sup> This thorough study on the origins of honor and its meaning to the southern way of life is both insightful and provocative.

Edward Ayers also provides a thorough account of the existence of honor and notes that it bred "violence among men of every class." He further states that,

Without the concept of honor, southern violence remains inexplicable. Honor was the catalyst necessary to ignite the South's volatile mixture of slavery, scattered settlement, heavy drinking, and ubiquitous weaponry.

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<sup>34</sup> Gordon McKinney, *Southern Mountain Republicans*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), p.124.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>36</sup> Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p.22.

Honor thus served to set the South apart from the North, and once established honor became an integral part of the southern identity.<sup>37</sup>

But is honor alone adequate enough to explain southern violence? Most historians, such as Ayers, who discuss "honor," find other explanations to accompany it. For example, ethnic origins of settlers has often dominated the literature. Edward Ayers notes that "a particularly virulent strain of violence entered the South in the culture of the Scots-Irish."<sup>38</sup> Elliot Gorn has commented that the "Scots-Irish brought their reputation for ferocity to the backcountry."<sup>39</sup> Nisbett and Cohen, who base their argument for violence on a "culture of honor," find southern violence grounded in cultural traits. They note that,

The northern United States was settled by farmers-Puritans, Quakers, Dutch, and Germans. These people were cooperative, like farmers everywhere, and modern in their orientation toward society...In contrast, the South was settled primarily by people from the fringes of Britain—the so-called Scotch-Irish.<sup>40</sup>

Rodger Cunningham in *Apples on the Flood: The Southern Mountain*

*Experience*, also emphasizes cultural characteristics. His work provides an insightful comparison of the 'Celtic' nations of western Europe to Appalachia and the stereotypes associated with what he calls peripherhal people. His focus on "psychological heredity"

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<sup>37</sup> Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 33.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 22. Ayers among many others use the term Scotch-Irish, but as Tom Costa points out, "it is important to distinguish the differences among Irish Presbyterians of Scottish origin...Irish Catholics, Presbyterians from Wales, Scotland, or northern England, and Irish Anglicans of English origin..." Tom Costa, "Connecting Appalachia: A Survey of Recent Work in Early American History with Reference to Southern Appalachia," *Journal of the Appalachian Studies Association*, Volume Seven, 1995, p. 70.

<sup>39</sup> Elliott Gorn, "Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch: The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," *American Historical Review* 90, p. 39.

<sup>40</sup> Nisbett and Cohen, *Culture of Honor*, p. 7.

leads him to the hypothesis that "the core of the Appalachian people was essentially formed by events which took place in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries."<sup>41</sup> He notes that it was "the Scotch-Irish who moved in successive waves down the Great Valley between the Blue Ridge and the Alleghenies, spilling back eastward out of the gaps where the valley is pinched behind Roanoke..."<sup>42</sup>

The cultural heritage theory is not limited to Cunningham analysis, but is developed much more boldly by David Hackett Fischer's more recent study of ethnic origins in *Albion's Seed*. Fischer provides a detailed account of immigrants regional and religious origins, their family life, forms of speech, work patterns and numerous other social customs. He concludes that the traditions of migrants can be linked to the British or English regions from where they came. More significantly, he determines that the borderland areas of Northern England, Northern Ireland, and Lowland Scotland formed the foundation for a particularly violent culture made up of migrants who moved to the southern backcountry. Due to isolation, poverty, and weak social and political institutions, he claims that in the backcountry, immigrants became even more aggressive.

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<sup>41</sup> Rodger Cunningham, *Apples on the Flood: The Southern Mountain Experience* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), p. xvi. Cunningham unfortunately places too much emphasis on the Celtic origins and thus spends little time on the Celtic identity's actual relation to Appalachia.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 78. Cunningham does point out that the "'Scotch Irish' themselves experienced many admixtures of immigrants, especially English ones, both in Scotland and later in Ireland. And finally, of course, a goodly proportion of Appalachians themselves are not of 'Scotch-Irish' origin at all but are derived from the original natives; from German, Welsh, English, Highland Scottish, and Black settlers...Nevertheless...they have become part of that 'Appalachian' culture which, by and large, is a transform of 'Scotch-Irish' culture." p. xxviii

Once again however, Fischer, like so many others, gives in to generalizations and stereotypes about Appalachia. As historian Tom Costa points out, Fischer's "examination of the transferal of culture to the backcountry is too rigid."<sup>43</sup> He notes that "the work is useful in its emphasis on the British background of the settlers but provides a too static picture of the settlement process itself."<sup>44</sup> Specifically, Fischer never explains how violent behavior altered during this settlement movement. One would assume that most of these settlers, by the time of the Revolution, had already become "largely assimilated into an Anglo-American cultural framework."<sup>45</sup> Fischer in one of the overarching flaws of his study, overlooks the diversity of Appalachia and the complexity of its people. As Cratis Williams so vividly pointed out in 1972,

...the Southern mountaineer, though mainly of Scotch-Irish ancestry, of dissenting religious convictions, and of Whig descent, is not necessarily any of these things. He turns out to be a rather complex individual when we examine him closely. Hence, sweeping statements, stereotyped presentations, and generalizations as to his essential character are not to be relied upon as adequate interpretation of mountain life and character.<sup>46</sup>

In order to apply Fischer's thesis to the Hillsville Tragedy, one would have to

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<sup>43</sup> Tom Costa, "Connecting Appalachia: A Survey of Recent Work in Early American History with Reference to Southern Appalachia," *Journal of the Appalachian Studies Association*, Volume Seven, 1995, p. 73.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>46</sup> Cratis Williams, "Who Are the Southern Mountaineers," in *Appalachia: Social Context, Past and Present*, eds. Bruce Ergood and Bruce E. Kuhre (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 1983, p. 56 (reprinted from *Appalachian Journal*, Vol. 1 (Autumn, 1972) pp. 48-55.

show that the Allens still harbored specific cultural traits carried over from Northern Ireland nearly two centuries before. Their aggressiveness would have to be coupled with weak social and political institutions in Carroll County and distinct isolation and poverty; none of which are true. Even Rodger Cunningham's detailed analysis of peripheralization does not explain the reasons behind the tragedy. Cunningham mistakenly views Appalachia through the lens of economic colonialism. He sees the region as heavily exploited by outsiders and Appalachians themselves acting as passive victims in the process. Could this lead to frustration and violence among mountain residents? Not likely. In the first place, those involved in the shootout were active, both politically and economically, and became heavily involved in the development of the county and its resources. The Allens were one of the largest landowners in Carroll County. The area contained a strong court system, relied on heavily by its residents, and elections were taken very seriously. Voter turnout remained high throughout the years. The county contained adequate schooling facilities, numerous churches, and had community gatherings on a regular basis. More importantly, the region was not isolated and backwards like newspaper accounts made Hillsville out to be. Cunningham's parallel between twelfth century England and twentieth century Appalachia does not correlate with Carroll County or its residents.

Wyatt-Brown's analysis is also an inadequate explanation for the events which took place in Hillsville in 1912. Had honor been the overriding motivation in initiating a deadly confrontation between members of the court administration and the Allen family, why hadn't it occurred much earlier? Conflicts between the two dated back nearly fifteen years. Honor as a concept is far too simplistic to form the foundation for the

Hillsville tragedy.<sup>47</sup> The events leading up to 1912 were much more complex.

The colonialism model does not work in providing a reason for the tragedy either. Though outside investors were certainly involved in the development of the county's timberland and minerals, a study of Carroll County establishes that inside investors were just as prominent. In fact, many within the region initiated the first contacts with corporations outside of the state. Research on Carroll refutes the colonialism model by demonstrating how Appalachia often exploited the region's resources themselves. After all, the shootout in Hillsville did not involve outside investors or absentee owners, but revolved solely around county residents, leaving economic colonialism an ineffective explanation for the outbreak of violence. In fact, the tragedy invariably discredits prior explanations concerning violence in Appalachia, but consistently leads back to two rather simple factors; politics and the economy.

Chapter One of this thesis will demonstrate that in the 1890s violence in Carroll County reached a dramatic peak, but not for the reasons cited by most reporters and writers. For example, in 1912, the *New York World* stated that isolation and the lack of a railroad were to blame for the Hillsville Tragedy. The paper proclaimed that "wherever the steel rails go, the feud surely dies."<sup>48</sup> What the paper failed to recognize however, was that the county did indeed have a railroad, constructed prior to 1890 by Norfolk and Western. Carroll contained a number of links to outside areas. As Ronald Eller states in his seminal study, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, "trade with nearby valley communities, seasonal work out of the

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<sup>47</sup> Wyatt-Brown's view of culture tends to be too static, lacking actual attention to cultural diversity. Also disturbing is the fact that many of his characterizations concerning southern culture aptly describe behavior throughout nineteenth century America.

<sup>48</sup> *The Times Dispatch*, "Newspaper Comment on Murder of Court Officials at Hillsville," 17 March 1912, p. 9.

mountains, postal delivery...and regular penetration of remote communities by peddlers and politicians kept mountain residents informed of issues and events in the larger society."<sup>49</sup> Such was the case in Carroll County. Isolation was definitely not a factor in the Hillsville Tragedy, even though many outsiders felt otherwise.

Isolation can also be "broken down into its interrelated parts and analyzed more clearly and critically," which is accomplished in chapter one as well.<sup>50</sup> Isolation has been viewed in monolithic terms, but a number of historians have now recognized the danger of looking at it in this way. As historian David Hsiung makes clear, a region "may be more isolated in one dimension (such as political structure) and more integrated in others (such as economy or transportation)."<sup>51</sup> Although, Carroll County exhibited a high degree of social, geographic, and political interconnectedness, strong economic links were missing. By 1912, the county's resources were being depleted and with shrinking land availability, job opportunities for young people became increasingly restricted. Anxiety and frustration over economic issues led to an increase in criminal behavior.

By the 1890s, a younger generation inhabited the hills of Carroll, and with them increasing financial constraints and uncertainty about their future. Agricultural pursuits were dimming and land was no longer as readily available. As historian Altina Waller makes clear, the violence that existed in Appalachia "did not emerge from an ancient culture of feuding; it was not genetic, cultural, or irrational but, rather, a politically

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<sup>49</sup> Ronald Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986) p. 7.

<sup>50</sup> David C. Hsiung, *Two Worlds in the Tennessee Mountains: Exploring the Origins of Appalachian Stereotypes* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1997) p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

motivated struggle over economic development."<sup>52</sup> This was the case in Carroll County.

Chapter two shows how financial constraints restricted individual choices and led to a highly contested political arena. In fact, through political affiliation, residents obtained power, autonomy, and a significant standing within the community. Residents took local elections very seriously, and they sometimes employed undesirable tactics to assure a candidate's victory. For example, in Carroll County Floyd Allen, a staunch Democrat, along with other members of the community, took Dexter Goad, a Republican, to court on two separate occasions accusing him of election fraud. There was already animosity between the two because of an incident in 1902 where Floyd Allen accused Goad, a United States Commissioner at the time, of selling blockade liquor out of his offices. Conflicts such as these only escalated in the years to come, so much so that Floyd Allen firmly believed that the courtroom shootout was a deliberate attempt on his life, and that it was "made for no other cause except" for his "active work for the Democratic party."<sup>53</sup>

In the end, politics were crucial in determining policies concerning land development, property taxes, liquor laws, and the establishment of new institutions such as roads, banks, schools, railroads, and other facilities that drastically changed the face of the county. At times, those leading the changes, had a great deal to gain. As historian J. Morgan Kousser in points out, intimidation and fraud were not unusual, and "violence might suddenly put an end to years of fairly peaceful political competition."<sup>54</sup>

After the tragedy of 1912, it is certainly difficult to dispute that political

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<sup>52</sup> Altina Waller, "Feuding in Appalachia: Evolution of a Cultural Stereotype," p.367.

<sup>53</sup> Gardner, "Statement of Floyd Allen" in *Courthouse Tragedy*, 47.

<sup>54</sup> J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One Party South, 1880-1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 16.

conflicts never again reached the level of anxiety and tension that elections brought a decade or so earlier. In fact, these political tensions along with disputes over the increasingly valuable accumulation of land were the preeminent reasons behind the tragedy. Chapter three reveals how these forces working together led up to the events of March 14, 1912 which finally erupted into a violent confrontation that put the County of Carroll in national headlines for months to come.

## Chapter One

### Carroll County and the Turbulent Years at the Turn of the Century

The Allen Clan are, its is true, a peculiar people, being in a sort of backwater of American civilization where respect for law is unknown and where a code of social morals has been developed vastly different from that of the rest of the country... This outbreak has called the attention of the world anew to the strange social conditions in the mountain fastnesses of the Blue Ridge, conditions which have been unaffected by generations of progress and civilization...and which have thus far defied every human effort for their amelioration.

*Philadelphia Public Ledger, March 1912*

By the turn of the century, most Americans' thought of Appalachian residents as backwards, traditional, unchurched, unstable, and profoundly intolerant of outsiders and authority. Fed by images which proliferated journals and books in the 1880s and 1890s, most reporters accepted such stereotypes as fact and incorporated them into their own stories when instances of violence in the region arose.

Prior to the 1890s, journalists generally overlooked crime in Appalachia and attributed most criminal cases to remaining "hostilities engendered by the Civil War."<sup>55</sup> When an unusual outbreak of violence occurred in the 1890's however, reporters, criminologists, and writers latched on to theories which emphasized Appalachian "otherness" and described violence as having a direct correlation to ethnic and cultural origins of the area. During this time, "descriptions of feuding in Appalachia" transcended

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<sup>55</sup> Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind*, p. 105.

"the anecdotal" and became "tied to conceptions of the nature of mountain life."<sup>56</sup>

The evidence seemed hard to dispute. Violence did indeed increase significantly from the 1880s through the turn of the century. Explanations detailing the reasons why varied; yet, most accounts persisted in blaming cultural factors, a theory based primarily on stereotyped notions which seriously lacked evidence. As a result, true causal factors concerning the nature of violence remained lost and unexplored.

In order to reveal the reasons behind such conflicts, and how and why the media portrayed them as they did, one must first examine the communities in which they occurred. Only then can underlying tensions, patterns of behavior, and the complexity of social and economic relations demonstrate causality. Subsequently, a thorough analysis of Carroll County and its people is needed to comprehend the broader implications of the Hillsville tragedy, the violence in the years leading up to it, and how economic hardships increasingly produced a more volatile social setting in an otherwise peaceful county within the twenty years before 1912.

### **Carroll County**

Carroll County, Virginia lies in the Blue Ridge Mountains on the southwestern portion of the Appalachians.<sup>57</sup> In 1842, Hillsville's central location made it an appropriate county seat for an area of four-hundred and ninety four square miles. Geographically, the

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> There are numerous definitions for Appalachia. Author John C. Campbell defined the boundaries of the region as consisting of 256 highland counties including some counties in Maryland and South Carolina. Thomas Ford, in his survey of the area, redefined those boundaries by excluding the highland areas of Maryland and South Carolina for a total of only 189 counties. The federal state agency ARC (Appalachian Regional Commission) developed the official designation which included segments of twelve states with highland counties stretching from northern Mississippi to southern

county has always been well connected to other regions. North Carolina borders the southern end of the county with Mount Airy approximately twenty-five miles from the county seat of Hillsville. Hillsville is only one hundred miles from the Kentucky border and is also close to West Virginia, which made travel to outside markets and livestock trade viable economic opportunities in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In 1888 however, travel was made much easier when Norfolk and Western established a railroad track along the New River which ran as far as Sylvania, approximately ten miles from Hillsville. Though much more accessible to those in the northern half of the county, the resulting station, referred to as the Betty Baker Depot, allowed many Carroll County citizens to take advantage of its services. The railroad created a great deal of mobility for residents and generated greater links to places outside of the county. Such access enabled local businessmen and farmers to purchase and trade materials and produce at other markets outside of their own area. For instance, Carroll County resident, J. Crockett Guynn, who owned a store near Hillsville in 1902, made use of the nearby railroad. During the winter he "hired neighbors to pluck and dress" turkeys which were "packed into barrels," "taken by wagon to the railroad" and "shipped to large city markets."<sup>58</sup> Such endeavors made Guynn and others like him successful businessmen in the years that followed. As historian Durwood Dunn specifies in his study of Cades Cove, Tennessee, this "continuous intercourse with larger regional markets" demonstrates that the cove people and others like them were "more than less like their contemporaries in other parts of the country."<sup>59</sup>

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New York for a total of 397 counties. For more information on regional definitions of Appalachia, see K.B. Raitz and R. Ulack, *Appalachia, A Regional Geography: Land, People, and Development* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984), pp. 9-35.

<sup>58</sup> Owen Bowman, *Carroll County Virginia: The Early Days to 1920* (Virginia Beach, Virginia: Donning Company, 1993), p.76.

One such similarity exists in the county of Carroll which, like the majority of other rural areas in the United States, embodied strong social and governmental institutions, a high degree of community interaction, and substantial external networks created through geographic mobility, regional markets, and communication to outside areas. In fact, there were over 65 post offices in Carroll County by 1906.<sup>60</sup> Hillsville had a telegraph system and by 1910 the county contained over 747 miles of chartered phone lines. As John Ashworth points out, besides these, there were "hundreds of miles of private lines" which connected with the "lines of chartered companies."<sup>61</sup>

The people of Carroll resembled residents described in Durwood Dunn's account in other ways as well. Residents in Carroll took pleasure in reading their political newspaper entitled the *Carroll News* and other papers which circulated close by such as the *Mount Airy News*. In a similar fashion, Dunn notes that in Tennessee,

The cove people continued to sell their crops in Knoxville, receive visitors from other sections of the country, and remain informed of major state, national, and international events through an occasional newspaper. In turning its collective attention inward, the community did not completely cut itself off from the outside world, although it is a common fallacy of local historians to envision such geographic and social isolation in absolute, either/or terms.<sup>62</sup>

Dunn also emphasizes the strong sense of community evident in Cades Cove. In the early 1900s, many writers denied that a sense of community existed in the

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<sup>59</sup> Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: The Life and Death of a Southern Appalachian Community, 1818-1937*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), p. 40-41.

<sup>60</sup> Bowman, *Carroll County, Virginia*, p. 65.

<sup>61</sup> W.K. McNeil, ed. "The Virginia Mountaineers," (reprinted from *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 12, July 1913) in *Appalachian Folk Images in Popular Culture* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1989), p. 195.

<sup>62</sup> Dunn, *Cades Cove*, p. 145.

mountains. Thomas Dawley who proclaimed the "absence of community" among Appalachian residents, "explained that because the physical and social environment of the region isolated the mountain people from each other, community could never be created in Appalachia."<sup>63</sup> Along the same pattern in 1915, Ellen Semple wrote that,

...Kentucky mountaineers are not only cut off from the outside world, but they are separated from each other. Each is confined to his own locality, and finds his little world within a radius of a few miles from his cabin.<sup>64</sup>

Such accounts described extreme isolation and rugged individualism. Though some degree of isolation existed within the mountains, it was no different than in other rural parts of the country, and it certainly did not exist to the extent that community relations were never formed.

Community as described by historian H. Tyler Blethen and Curtis W. Wood, is defined as "an active network of interdependence and of shared objectives pursued collectively."<sup>65</sup> In places like Carroll County and Cades Cove, there existed, not an air of independence, but interdependence as neighbors relied on one another to help in barn raising, crop harvesting, corn husking, molasses making, apple picking, wool shearing, and other numerous activities throughout the season. A sense of communal responsibility pervaded the region.

These events entailed much more than just work however. During breaks, the men usually passed the time "whittling," or "telling tall tales," while many of the women

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<sup>63</sup> Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind*, p. 178.

<sup>64</sup> David C. Hsiung, "Geographic Determinism and Possibilism: Interpretations of the Appalachian Environment and Culture in the Last Century," in *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, Vol. 4, 1992, p. 16.

<sup>65</sup> H. Tyler Blethen and Curtis W. Wood, "The Appalachian Frontier and the Southern Frontier: A Comparative Perspective," in *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, Vol. 3, 1991, p. 41.

visited with their friends and caught up on "the latest happenings."<sup>66</sup> Children spent their time playing games of "tag," "chicken 'n the hawk," "frog in the middle," and "whoopie hide."<sup>67</sup> Young men and women enjoyed singing and dancing before sitting down to eat the large meals which were prepared after the completion of the work the community had gathered to perform. Such activity strengthened community bonds and provided for social interaction and breaks from traditional routines. Examples like these demonstrate that "mountain farmers were not...quintessentially individualistic; they relied too much on shared neighborhood labor and a code of reciprocity for that label to ring true."<sup>68</sup> Community relations extended far beyond work routines however, and were found firmly rooted in a number of other institutions within the county.

Local churches contained a large degree of social interaction and fellowship. The significance of churches in the county lie in the fact that as institution it "transcended the individual by creating bonds" between residents while at the same time providing the "context by which individuals made themselves known to the rest of the community."<sup>69</sup> Many outside of Appalachia at the turn of the century questioned the existence of these bonds, the sense of community, and the churches themselves in spite of the large number of them which actually existed. By the 1890s, home missionaries perceived Appalachia as a region in dire need of help from outside agencies. Social work included providing an education to Appalachian residents and teaching them the Gospel. Most missionaries ignored not only the number of churches already established in the region, but also the diversity of denominational activity. The majority of missionaries preferred to reinforce

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<sup>66</sup> Bowman, *Carroll County*, p. 45.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Robert Weise, *Economy and Society in Appalachian Kentucky, 1850-1915* (Unpublished manuscript), p.125.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

prior stereotypes of the area as unchurched so that additional funding and assistance for their efforts could be obtained.

There were no shortages of religious establishments in Carroll County. For example, New Hope Baptist Church was formed on Greasy Creek in 1789. From the New Hope congregation, a few other churches emerged including Old Harmony (1831), Old Laurel Fork (1846), and Little Vine (1872). With the expansion of these fellowships, thirteen new Baptist churches were formed by 1902 and numerous other congregations were later established.<sup>70</sup>

The subdenomination of Baptists, known as Primitive Baptists, made up a large portion of the church community. Among the highlights and traditions of Primitive Baptists were the well-known August meetings. Each August on Saturdays and Sundays, members went to a host church to hear visiting preachers. Families came from all over the county and gathered for spiritual and social reasons. The church gathering at Big Bridge was the largest and "across the river, ice cream, watermelon, sodas, candy, popcorn, and other treats could be purchased," while at the church there was preaching and singing.<sup>71</sup> Some recalled "crowds of two and three thousand, and at noon so many baskets of food that it sometimes took a hundred feet of table to hold them all."<sup>72</sup>

Methodists also formed a large religious group in the county. A Methodist church was founded in Hillsville in 1845. After the great revival of 1858, Hillsville was designated a Methodist station. In the Hillsville circuit alone there were at least

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<sup>70</sup> Bowman, *Carroll County, Virginia*, p.18.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>72</sup> Richard Davids, *The Man Who Moved A Mountain* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 117.

eleven Methodist churches by 1884.<sup>73</sup>

A church was established from Moravian influences at Mount Bethel in 1852. In July 1896, the Willow Hill Moravian Church was also built. Resident, Viola Haynes Tobler remembered that these churches were a "real asset to the young people of that day and exerted a lasting influence for good among the people in general."<sup>74</sup>

Tobler, a member of the only Lutheran Church in the county, believed her church to be very different from others at the time. The Lutheran church "had a Sunday School, Missionary Society, organ music, and baptized by sprinkling."<sup>75</sup> This small church, however, seemed to have faced resistance from others in the county. The church record book for 1883 stated that it had been "a year of trial and difficulty, occasioned by the prejudices and opposition of those found outside our little band."<sup>76</sup> In spite of this opposition, the church thrived.

Other denominations included the Disciples of Christ, the Church of the Brethren, Missionary Baptists, Pentecostals, and Presbyterians. The Disciples of Christ lived according to the Book of Acts from the New Testament, observed "the sacrament of communion weekly," performed baptisms by immersion, and were "governed as independent congregations."<sup>77</sup> The Disciples of Christ strongly believed in "denominational harmony."<sup>78</sup> The Church of the Brethren, which started in Germany, believed in "baptism by immersion three times forward..., the love feast, congregational

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<sup>73</sup> Bowman, *Carroll County, Virginia*, p. 26.

<sup>74</sup> Viola Haynes Tobler, *Carroll County Memories, 1890-1920* (Wytheville, Virginia: Jim Presgraves, 1984), p. 42.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 69.

<sup>76</sup> Bowman, *Carroll County Virginia*, p. 27.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*.

church government, and pacifism."<sup>79</sup> There were a number of Presbyterians in the county, though few in comparison to the number of Methodists and Baptists. The first Presbyterian church was organized in Carroll County in 1848.

Outside of churches, schools were another institution which generated community bonds, especially among children. Denominational activists usually ignored the progress schooling facilities made within the mountains over the years. Carroll County certainly exemplified the vast improvements made in educating children over the course of the county's development. Though most parents wanted their children to attend school on a regular basis, the early years of the county's growth demonstrates how difficult this could be. For example, Sidna Allen, involved in the infamous shootout and later imprisoned, remembered how his father always kept him home

until the crop was gathered, so I rarely ever was able to attend school during the first month of the session. But my brothers and I always worked hard harvesting the crop so that we might start to school as early as possible. After we started we could go regularly unless the snow became too deep for us to wade through it. When the time came to put out a crop we were taken out of school and set to work.<sup>80</sup>

This was typical in the early 1870s and 1880s when there was limited funding for schools and children were valuable assets on the farm. In fact, in 1900, Appalachian school sessions lasted an average of 95 days, and though 71 percent of white children were enrolled in schools, only 43 percent actually attended.<sup>81</sup> In the Sulpher Springs District of the county, the school year lasted from September 22, 1890 to February 6,

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>80</sup> J. Sidna Allen, *Memoirs* (Leaksville, North Carolina, 1929), p. 14.

<sup>81</sup> William A. Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place: Schooling, Society, and Reform in Rural Virginia, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1986) p. 204-5.

1891, a total of 5 months or 100 days of schooling, slightly longer than the average in other areas of Appalachia. There were 37 boys and 18 girls enrolled, totaling 55 pupils. The average daily attendance however, was 21 boys and 12 girls, equaling only 33 students a day. The following year, the school term in Sulpher Springs once again lasted five months, only 99 days, from October 26, 1891 to March 19, 1892. Total enrollment consisted of 50 children with 28 boys and 22 girls. The average daily attendance equaled a little over half of that with 26 pupils.<sup>82</sup>

Some parents taught their children themselves because they were too poor to pay the fifty to seventy cents tax charged per pupil for a school term of four to six months. Students who did attend school ranged in age from four to twenty-one, with younger students studying penmanship and the older pupils studying history, geography, and other subjects.<sup>83</sup>

Gradually, some Carroll County residents saw the need for better schools and established seven academies between 1848 and 1900. Academies were schools with advanced studies for local students that did not need boarding facilities. These included Hillsville, Sowers, Woodlawn, Lamsburg, Laurel Fork, Fairview, and Freemont Academies. The Hillsville Academy was the first in the county, established in 1848.<sup>84</sup>

E.J. Cooley, who taught in the public and private schools of the county for almost twelve years, stated that because the county had "no large corporations to help defray the cost" of public schools, "it was necessary for us to dig into our own meager incomes to build schoolhouses and pay the salary of teachers."<sup>85</sup> By 1900, however,

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<sup>82</sup> *Virginia Public School Register*, "Sulpher Spring District," Carroll County Court Records, 1890.

<sup>83</sup> Bowman, *Carroll County Virginia*, p. 113.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 114.

<sup>85</sup> E.J. Cooley, *The Inside Story of the World Famous Courtroom Tragedy*

despite economic hardships, Carroll County had established 2 high schools and 96 elementary schools (grades 1-7) within the county. There were 323 pupils enrolled in the high schools and 5,673 recorded in the elementary schools, a significant improvement from the years past.<sup>86</sup>

Examples of the number of schools, churches, and other institutions helps to refute ideas that Appalachia, and more specifically Carroll County, was isolated, backwards, and naive of occurrences outside of their own community. Though a certain percentage of the population lacked appropriate schooling, perceptions that an unchurched, uneducated, and isolated people inhabited the hills of Carroll proved unfounded. Carroll County was not significantly different from other rural, agrarian counties throughout the country.

### A Farming Community

Farming supplied the adequate necessities to support a family and a community in the early days within the county. The hills of Carroll were perfect for producing corn, wheat, buckwheat, hay, and potatoes. The Secretary of Agriculture stated in 1911 that "the leading crops as wealth producer" in the nation was corn.<sup>87</sup> The third in order of value was hay, the fourth wheat, and the sixth chief crop in the country was potatoes.<sup>88</sup> Out of the six chief crops produced in the United States in 1911, Carroll County produced four of them. Residents also raised a large number of cattle, sheep,

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(Charlottesville, Virginia, 1915), p.41.

<sup>86</sup> Bowman, *Carroll County Virginia*, p. 118.

<sup>87</sup> "Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), p. 13.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, p.p. 15-17.

and swine and produced a great deal of butter and wool for the market.<sup>89</sup>

Cotton and tobacco were not viable crops for the county and therefore none was produced. Subsequently, the slave population remained extremely limited before the war. Most slaves served as domestics for wealthier families or worked as laborers on farms. Records indicate that by 1850, there were 46 slave owners within the county and only 152 slave inhabitants.<sup>90</sup> Eighty-eight of those were females. Of the 152 slaves, only one slave owner, Peter Stephens, manumitted all four of his, three of which were mulatto.<sup>91</sup> Overall however, the majority of residents did not own slaves since it remained unprofitable for them, and few could afford it. Most residents lived in modest homes with restricted incomes. In fact, by 1880, Appalachia had "a greater concentration of noncommercial family farms than any other area of the nation."<sup>92</sup> In the years which followed, this proved problematic.

Though subsistence agriculture governed the economy, it constituted an increasingly precarious future for families. By the turn of the century, the availability of land decreased while the population rose markedly, making the struggle for large amounts of fertile farmland difficult. Historian Altina Waller's study of the Tug Valley community in Kentucky reveals demographic problems associated with land. She describes how the "supply of tillable land could not match a rapidly expanding population still fundamentally dependent on agriculture for survival."<sup>93</sup> The same problems emerged in Carroll. In 1850, the population reached 5,909.<sup>94</sup> By 1910, this

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<sup>89</sup> United States Agricultural Census, "Carroll County," 1870.

<sup>90</sup> United States Census, "Slave Inhabitants," Carroll County, 1850.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* The African-American population always remained low in the county. Even by 1920, African-Americans made up only one percent of the total population.

<sup>92</sup> Ronald Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, p. 16.

<sup>93</sup> Waller, *Feud*, p. 38.

figure grew to over 21,000.<sup>95</sup> With such a rapidly expanding population, young men inherited and obtained considerably fewer parcels of land. Even when land was acquired, the acreage usually lay in the most rocky terrain of the county. For instance, in 1815, the average farm north of the Blue Ridge, into what is now Carroll County, contained approximately 350 acres.<sup>96</sup> By 1910, the average farm consisted of only 100 acres or less.<sup>97</sup> This figure continued to shrink in the years to follow. Historian Ronald Eller, maintains that by 1930 "the average Appalachian farm contained only 76 acres, and in some counties the average was as low as 47 acres."<sup>98</sup>

For a county grounded in agricultural production, such statistics could be devastating. The list of registered voters from 1902-1903 demonstrates that out of 3800 registered voters, 3209 men listed their sole occupation as being a farmer.<sup>99</sup> Even by 1925, more than eighty percent of the county's population lived on farms.<sup>100</sup> The sheer dominance of agriculture made land holdings extremely significant. Not only did land provide economic security, but it conferred a certain status and social prestige on the individual. The amount of land one owned "determined comparative standing within the community."<sup>101</sup> As some historians have noted, "even though the social structure was egalitarian compared to more economically developed regions, residents

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<sup>94</sup> United States Population Census, "Carroll County," 1850.

<sup>95</sup> Humbert, *Industrial Survey: Carroll County Virginia* (Blacksburg, Virginia: Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 1929) p. 10.

<sup>96</sup> John Perry Alderman, *Carroll 1765-1815: The Settlements* (Roanoke, Virginia: Central Va. Newspapers, Inc., 1985), pp. 31-335.

<sup>97</sup> R.L. Humbert, *Industrial Survey*, p.24.

<sup>98</sup> Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, p. xix.

<sup>99</sup> Virginia and Richard Phillips, *Voter Registration of Carroll County, Va., 1902-1903* (Mount Airy, North Carolina, 1991), pp. 1-142.

<sup>100</sup> Humbert, *Industrial Survey*, p. 26.

<sup>101</sup> Dunn, *Cades Cove*, p. 71.

observed a statue hierarchy based on social distinction and landholding."<sup>102</sup> To not own land placed one on the lower ranks of the social order as well as in an unstable economic situation. For this reason, the shortage of land harbored consequences well beyond the inability to farm.

The lack of extensive banking networks created a situation in which farmers borrowed money from neighbors or creditors in order to make purchases. Carroll's first bank, the Blair Banking Company, did not open until 1904, and the Citizens Bank of Carroll opened for business in 1907, allowing people to save their money or to take out loans for needed projects. Until that point however, borrowing from others or bartering with them were necessary. This type of economy made property paramount because creditors often "accepted payment in land and in agricultural produce..."<sup>103</sup> With no banks and perhaps little or no property to bargain with, some residents found themselves in dismal financial circumstances. As anxiety over their situation increased, tension and hostilities became more apparent within the region. Fewer residents could hide their frustration and as the 1890s approached, increasingly more citizens vented their anger on those around them.

As Robert Weise's study of Floyd County, Kentucky points out, "underlying the static statistical harmony of 1880 was a current of aggressive economic behavior that became more forceful as agricultural prospects became more constricted and insecurity mounted."<sup>104</sup> Accompanied with aggressive economic behavior and a heightened sense of uncertainty about the future, many residents grew particularly anxious over their financial plight. The rise in population and the decrease in prime farmland created a

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<sup>102</sup> Waller, *Feud*, p. 22.

<sup>103</sup> Weise, *Economy and Society in Appalachian Kentucky*, p. 82.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, p. 202.

series of economic strains which led to an inevitable increase in criminal activity within the region.

Dealing with such a tenuous situation was difficult enough, but the problems did not end there. To truly understand the rise in violence in Appalachia, one must first understand the historical context in which it occurred. For instance, though many residents encountered financial difficulties related to a decrease in property, everyone faced the hardships accompanied by the American depression of 1893. The depression which swept the country in the spring of that year, profoundly affected every community. In Roanoke, Virginia approximately 80 miles outside of Hillsville, "the severe financial collapse in...1893 struck...hard, and unemployed workers blamed the business leadership of the city for their plight."<sup>105</sup> Subsequently, a riot broke out after an explosive incident in which an African-American man beat a white woman. "Frustrated by widespread joblessness and driven by racial fears," a mob of "angry whites demanded immediate execution."<sup>106</sup> The riot which ensued left eight citizens dead and many others wounded. Historian Gordon McKinney notes that the "tension evident in Roanoke was found throughout Appalachia."<sup>107</sup> The uprising in Roanoke reveals how this particular depression "sharpened conflict among many social groups" and "changed people's attitudes and ways of living."<sup>108</sup>

Economic historian, Charles Hoffman also demonstrates that "May 3 marked

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<sup>105</sup> Gordon McKinney, *Southern Mountain Republicans, 1865-1900: Politics and the Appalachian Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), p. 129.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, p.130.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, p. 131.

<sup>108</sup> Charles Hoffman, *The Depression of the Nineties: An Economic History* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1970), p. 282-283.

the commencement of a series of disturbing events called the 'Panic of 1893' - among the worst in the country's annals."<sup>109</sup> The signs of the depression became evident earlier in the year with price declines in wheat and iron, "falling prices" in the stock market, "depressed trade conditions," "business failures," and a steady decline in bank loans.<sup>110</sup> Bank failures spread throughout the south in particular. For example, of "158 bank failures for 1893, 153 were in the South and the West."<sup>111</sup>

Farm prices also dropped rapidly as agricultural output rose. The "corn output increased 160 percent, wheat output almost doubled, and the number of cattle increased by 40 percent."<sup>112</sup> The situation appeared grim. The depression symbolized much more than economic problems, however. It ultimately signaled a "fundamental transformation from an agricultural-industrial economy to one in which, although large-scale agriculture still was a salient feature, the outstanding characteristic was a manufacturing-industrial complex."<sup>113</sup> Manufacturing and mining activities increased enormously in the years following 1880. Both rapidly changed the nation's economy. For many people, agricultural pursuits were not as profitable as employment found in industry. For some, the future lay outside of the farm.

Economic recovery would take years. Hoffman indicates that the economy did not "again approach capacity output" until 1901-1902.<sup>114</sup> For some regions already faced with limited incomes, the depression provided the necessary spark which ignited a series of violent episodes in communities across the country, including Carroll.

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p. 57.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p. 58.

<sup>112</sup> Hoffman, *The Depression of the Nineties*, p. 30.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p.10.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

Between 1890 and 1912, violent behavior within the once relatively quaint community of Carroll rose significantly. Though exact quantification of the number of homicides is sometimes difficult to ascertain, one can still discern a general pattern of violence. Such a pattern certainly becomes evident in Carroll. In the twenty years from 1870 to 1890, only four murders were committed; (more may have occurred, but remained unreported). In the twenty years between 1890 and 1910 however, this figure soared to twenty-eight.<sup>115</sup> Twenty-eight homicides is a startling increase for a community in which previous crimes consisted of theft, failure to pay back debts, disturbance of the peace, or assault. Carroll's pattern of violence was not unique, however. Durwood Dunn noticed that in the early years, "murder was rare in Cades Cove."<sup>116</sup> Altina Waller argues that in the years before the late 1880s, "murder and larceny were rare indeed."<sup>117</sup> Yet in later years, increase in violence followed. Waller demonstrates that limited economic choices produced a large degree of "anxiety" which "tipped a naturally boisterous culture to malicious violence."<sup>118</sup> This malicious behavior eventually emerged in Carroll County.

In 1879, Carroll experienced its first hanging. Over three thousand people witnessed the punishment of General Webb for the murder of his father-in-law, Joshua Nester. Before his death, he testified, "I thought I was justified in what I did."<sup>119</sup> Webb's actions must have greatly disturbed the county's residents, but by the 1890s, such behavior became all too familiar.

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<sup>115</sup> *Coroner's Inquest File, 1851-1959*, Carroll County Court Records, documents 1-266.

<sup>116</sup> Dunn, *Cades Cove*, p. 208.

<sup>117</sup> Waller, *Feud*, p. 10.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, p. 100.

<sup>119</sup> Bowman, *Carroll County, Virginia*, p. 178.

The explosive violence beginning in the 1890s took on varied forms. Four of the twenty-eight murders involved domestic disputes and the brutal deaths of four women. One African-American male met a sudden demise when confronted by four other men who proceeded to shoot him, most likely because of his color. Records indicate one reported infanticide where a mother smothered her child and buried it under leaves soon after its birth. Other assaults included the particularly brutal death of Aaron Allen after a confrontation in which Alex Combs struck him in the head with an ax. Carr Allen, a veteran of the Civil War, died by a shotgun blast at the hands of Max Howlett. Less than a month later, an angry mob broke through the Hillsville jail, took Howlett from his cell, and swiftly shot him. Gunshot victims and other similar instances of violence became increasingly common until 1920, when homicide rates once again dropped drastically. Between 1920 and 1930, four murders took place in the county.<sup>120</sup>

Though contemporary observers and a number of historians have attributed the rise in violence to ethnic origins such as Scotch-Irish ancestry or to post Civil War hostilities, the explanations fail to coincide with actual statistics. For such theories to be viable, high levels of violence would have had to existed throughout the history of the county, which the evidence does not support. A focus on honor or cultural factors does not explain the relative calm in communities prior to violent outbreaks. Something much more fundamental and essential occurred to ignite such hostile behavior among an otherwise stable community.

Altina Waller's analysis of Breathitt County, Kentucky provides valuable insight

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<sup>120</sup> *Coroner's Inquest File, 1851-1959*, Carroll County Court Records, documents 1-266.

into sudden increases in criminal activity in counties like Carroll. She mentions that between 1884 and 1888 a series of violent events erupted within the area. Reporters blamed "family feuds and ancient grudges" for the hostility, yet "missing in the newspaper reports were the severe economic threats faced by Breathitt County farmers."<sup>121</sup>

Waller effectively points out that "in the 1870s, Breathitt county faced the same post-war crisis caused by a population explosion and a declining supply of farmland as other mountain counties." She demonstrates that by 1874, "just before the first violence erupted, cash-poor farmers were confronted with rising taxes..." The financial struggle continued unabated when, in addition to "these frustrating economic wrangles with the state...the severe famine/drought in the winter and spring of 1875" struck most areas. Not only did crops fail, but "farmers lacked the cash to purchase food for their families."<sup>122</sup> Though Carroll County's crisis occurred less than a decade later, the circumstances were remarkably the same. The significant decline in farmland, the rise in population, limited employment opportunities, and the depression of 1893 proved to much for many county residents.

It was no coincidence that within those years, when violence reached its peak, men faced their most difficult choices. One could either join the "competitive timber business," move out of the county, or endure a "lifetime as hired laborers or sharecroppers."<sup>123</sup> Obviously, "none of these alternatives were likely to produce a placid mental state or tranquil social relations."<sup>124</sup> Tensions grew even worse when

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<sup>121</sup> Altina Waller, "Feuding in Appalachia: Evolution of a Cultural Stereotype" in *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight Billings, and Altina Waller, eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), p. 365.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Waller, *Feud*, p. 100.

men realized the hazardous nature of some of the work they performed. For example, in 1900, Andrew Phillips, G.W. Sumner, and Allen Surratt were all killed on a lever car while loading iron ore for the railway company. In 1892, James Mitchell died at the Wilkinson and Mitchell Steam Mill when a saw log rolled over him. That same year, Early Cochran died when he fell off of a railway car. A year later, George Doss passed away after being caught in a dirt slide in a mine. In 1915, two brothers in their early twenties tragically died after an explosion by a saw mill boiler. William Dalton died a year later after being crushed between two logs. These accidents and others like them happened throughout the 1880s and into the turn of the century.<sup>125</sup>

Some chose to stay on at farms and work as hired laborers. In fact, over 13 percent of the total farm population in Carroll County were tenant farmers.<sup>126</sup> Hoffman calculates that throughout the country "from 1880 to 1910, the number of...tenant ownerships increased from 25 percent of all farms to 37 percent."<sup>127</sup>

This evidence demonstrates that for young men desiring to settle down and raise a family, economic opportunities were limited outside of farming. Professional jobs remained few in Carroll. In 1902, there were fourteen ministers who declared preaching as their sole occupation. Out of the 3800 who registered to vote, only seven listed themselves as attorneys of law, and seventeen as physicians for the county. Out of those seventeen, only two claimed to be surgeons and only one out of the entire registrar's list was a dentist. A number of others served as merchants, teachers, postal carriers, or business owner.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> *Coronor's Inquest File*, Carroll County Records, documents 1-266.

<sup>126</sup> Humbert, *Industrial Survey*, p. 25.

<sup>127</sup> Hoffman, *The Depression of the Nineties*, p. 36.

<sup>128</sup> Phillips, *Voter Registration of Carroll County*, pp. 1-142.

Unfortunately Carroll harbored few industrial companies or factories. In 1900, the Laurel Fork district, with the largest concentration of the county's population (5,061), contained only sixteen lumber and saw mills which hired a total of fifty-three employees. There were fourteen flour and grist mills, each having no more than one or two employees at a time. The average pay was fifty cents for a ten hour day.<sup>129</sup>

Other districts in the county fared much worse. In Sulpher Springs where the population was only a little less than that of Laurel Fork (4,324), there were only two lumber mills and four flour and grist mills.<sup>130</sup> Even by 1920, the total number of textile and lumber industries within the entire county hired only 847 residents.<sup>131</sup> Brick companies and mineral mines hired another 175 for a total of 1,022 employees for a population of 21, 283 residents.<sup>132</sup> Though supplementary incomes were needed, extra work could be hard to find. This alone generated greater mobility as residents traveled within and outside of the county looking for work on farms, factories, or at logging companies. Even before the actual size of farms decreased, supplemental work was needed to maintain the household economy, especially prior to 1910. For some, it meant leaving the county for weeks or months at a time. For others it meant leaving indefinitely.

### **Supplemental Income**

Diversified labor best explains how most farmers sustained themselves and their families. In order to earn money, some traveled to the coal fields of West Virginia. For example, Carroll County resident William Calvin Henley and his son worked

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<sup>129</sup> United States Census, "Products of Industry," Carroll County, 1880.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Humbert, *Industrial Survey*, p. 14.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

as "carpenters in the West Virginia coal fields while the rest of the family stayed at home."<sup>133</sup> In 1921, his family finally moved to Pennsylvania. A number of residents worked in the West Virginia coal mines in the off-season while others found jobs in factories in North Carolina. Some residents established themselves in blacksmithing, tanning, milling, stonemasonry, furniture making, or in perhaps the most profitable of all, logging.

About one-fifth of Carroll County lies on the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge mountains and on the piedmont below. Several mountain peaks on this half of the plateau include the Buffalo mountains in Floyd County, the Pinnacles of Dan in Patrick County, Mount Rogers and White Top mountains in Grayson County, and Fishers Peak in Carroll County. The forests have always been thick with timber comprised of oaks, white pine, yellow poplar, chestnut, and walnut. This was a pleasing sight for lumber barons around 1900.

In the 1880s, selective cutting of trees brought extra income to farmers. Portable sawmills lined some rivers in order to float logs to larger mills and towns. To local farmers, choice trees brought "fifty cents a foot across the stump" and two dollars for a tree four feet in diameter.<sup>134</sup> Such earnings were fairly decent pay considering an average days wages were only fifty cents.

In Carroll County, as in other areas of Appalachia, logging and farming together functioned in maintaining the household economy. Money earned from lumber was woven into the economy and "into broader quests for land ownership and financial solvency."<sup>135</sup> As more recent historians have made clear, "logging represented neither

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<sup>133</sup> Bowman, *Carroll County, Virginia*, p. 50.

<sup>134</sup> Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, p. 89.

<sup>135</sup> Weise, *Economy and Society in Appalachian Kentucky*, p. 254.

an intrusion of outside industrialists nor a violation of community ethics."<sup>136</sup> Outside speculators did not contribute to the rise in violence. In fact, many in the area exploited the resources themselves. Most welcomed the opportunity to make additional money. Furthermore, Carroll did not consist of coal mines like neighboring counties making the reliance on the lumber industry even more significant.

Also crucial were the mineral resources located within the county and mined for profits. As early as 1789, the mining of iron ore began and continued through 1842. Supergene copper was mined in 1850s. Other minerals included zinc, lead, nickel, cobalt, pyrite, and arsenic. In 1905 the General Chemical Company took over the Great Gossan lead (a band of ore that extended across the county), and "began mining by-product iron."<sup>137</sup>

For farmers, the selling of mineral rights provided another opportunity to earn extra money and pay off debts. Recognizing the need for money, some buyers persuaded farmers to sell "the minerals under their land, leaving the surface to the ownership and use...of the farmer."<sup>138</sup> In areas throughout Appalachia, "farm families sold minerals to preserve their farms...and secure what had been a precarious hold on their land."<sup>139</sup> The impact of such mineral mining was often discovered only after the damage to property had been done. Eventually many farmers refused to sell their land, due to the damage it created.

In spite of the potential hazards to the land, minerals "greatly increased the value of mountain property raising the stakes of competitions over property

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Bowman, *Carroll County, Virginia*. p. 83.

<sup>138</sup> Eller, *Miners, Millhands and Mountaineers*, p. 55.

<sup>139</sup> Weise, *Economy and Society in Appalachian Kentucky*, p. 345.

ownership."<sup>140</sup> Very often, the wealthier residents profited most from this industry. The mountain elites who exerted economic power and owned the most land usually held political leadership as well, or at the very least, exerted political pressure to continue speculating. For this reason, as well as conflicts over other significant issues, politics generated hostility and animosity among many residents, sometimes resulting in violent confrontations.

### Political Structure

Though much of the violence in Appalachia stemmed from economic circumstances, a great deal also centered on political battles between some of the elites within the county. Altina Waller considers much of the violence which took place in Breathitt County "overtly political."<sup>141</sup> She found that "murders and assaults were invariably connected with elections."<sup>142</sup> Historian Gordon McKinney also recognized the display of violence connected with politics. He found that,

...the 1890s was a period of political, as well as social, disruption in the mountains. In an effort to maintain themselves in office, Republican party-army leaders ignored larger issues and concentrated on immediate problems. When the depression of the 1890s struck the highlands, the mountain voters discovered that the old political bosses had few solutions to offer that would alleviate the suffering.<sup>143</sup>

Encountering the financial difficulties brought on by the depression, many Carroll County residents turned to politics with the hopes that significant changes could stabilize the economy. The year 1893 was not the only time that residents focused

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid, p. 346.

<sup>141</sup> Waller, "Feuding in Appalachia," p. 364.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> McKinney, *Southern Mountain Republicans*, p. 128.

on the political nature of their county, however. Participation in political events and elections served as an integral part of the county's continuing development, and most citizens actively joined in the process.

Mountain elections were an opportunity for the whole community to come together for social interaction. On election day people gathered from all over the county, resulting in a "high rate of participation, with entire families turning out at the polls."<sup>144</sup> While politics may have been an excuse for social interaction, it was an important part of mountain culture, and the residents took it very seriously. Issues became increasingly complex throughout the nineteenth century, such as taxes on liquor, land, and property. With the emergence of various new issues concerning the construction of schools, churches, and industries, political groups became more defined and competitive. Perhaps some carried their personal political desires to an extreme. The line on which people walked was a delicate one, and the voting decisions made in elections at the turn of the century transformed the county.

The election on November 6, 1883, in Carroll provides an example of the intense interest mountain communities had in political affairs. The election returns were the largest up to that time in the county. The Democrats carried a large majority, as they appeared to do throughout the greater part of the 1800's.<sup>145</sup>

This Democratic majority did not last into the turn of the century. From 1889 to 1891, "Republicans gained slight majorities."<sup>146</sup> The political scene was changing. During the 1890s people "witnessed the greatest political turmoil in the nation since reconstruction."<sup>147</sup> At this time, another generation of Republican leaders emerged

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<sup>144</sup> Eller, p. 30.

<sup>145</sup> "Election Abstracts," Carroll County Court Records, 1883.

<sup>146</sup> J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics*, p. 29.

who argued that they had solutions to economic problems. Republican politicians wanted to convince whites that the Republican party did not cater to black voters, yet they did not want to end African-American suffrage because of the additional support it could add. Mountain politicians "tried to insure that black Republican voters had only a minimal voice in the party organization while they also sought to preserve the black right to vote."<sup>148</sup> This party platform did not affect Carroll County extensively because the percentage of the African-American population was less than one percent.

The period of depression in the 1890s however, made the economic focus a successful one. The "Republicans elected most of the congressmen from the mountain districts" in 1894 and 1896.<sup>149</sup> The Republicans also "elected governors in four of the five upper South states during the same time."<sup>150</sup> This transition period "generated considerable controversy and factionalism."<sup>151</sup> James Walker, a Republican candidate for the state legislature in southwestern Virginia in 1894, emphasized that "only the Republicans could bring economic prosperity and industrial development to the mountain region."<sup>152</sup>

Faced with dismal choices and unemployment, a party platform calling for prosperity and development appealed to many Carroll County residents. Before the dawn of the twentieth century, the county was chiefly Democratic. A series of elections rapidly changed the area to a predominantly Republican county in less than a decade. Heavily involved in those elections were the key individuals

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Gordon B. McKinney, *Southern Mountain Republicans*, p. 138.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid, p. 143.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid, 180.

involved in the courtroom shootout of 1912. Only a examination into their lives can explain why and at what costs.

## Chapter Two

### Life in the Blue Ridge

Dropping their plows and axes where they stood in field or forest, with flashing eyes and dilated nostrils, like mettlesome bulls that sniff the battle from afar, the Allens sprang for their weapons...the forked red tongues of the signal fires on mountain tops were leaping skyward, summoning the clansmen to arms. And they came; And as verdant valley and wild mountain retreat poured out these American soldiers, to the sacred cause of the world's freedom, they resounded with the hoarse cry of the clansmen: 'The Allens are coming.'

J.J. Reynolds' description of the Allen's participation in the Revolutionary and Civil War in his book, *The Allen Gang: Outlaws of the Blue Ridge Mountains*, 1912

In 1912, writer J.J. Reynolds quickly responded to the courtroom shootout by writing a book entitled *The Allen Gang*. His ornate telling of the tragedy begins with a brief history of the Allen family profoundly stereotypical in nature and at times grossly inaccurate. Curiously, his work shifts from a highly romanticized picture of the Allens to one of condemnation. More often than not, however, he is captivated by their cultural characteristics and ethnicity. He repeatedly refers to them as "the fearless Allen clan" who descended from the "rugged highlands of Scotland."<sup>153</sup> His high prose indicates an intrigue and fascination, not only with these "old Scottish warriors" but with mountaineers in general.<sup>154</sup> As if specifically in tune with the anatomy of Appalachian people, he provides a lengthy description of their innate characteristics.

Broad of shoulders, powerful of limb, tall, well-poised and erect

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<sup>153</sup> J.J. Reynolds, *The Allen Gang: Outlaws of the Blue Ridge Mountains* (Baltimore, Maryland: Kerner, Getts, and M. Ottenheimer Publishers, 1912), p. 7.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10.

of stature...with the firm elastic step of self-conscious independence, and the sinuous, graceful movement of the mountain lion, the typical mountaineer of the Blue Ridge, transmuted into stone, would roll down through the centuries an enduring monument to the sculptor's art, and would cause the student to ask if there were not some secret vital strength in the mountain wind and rain that whirled and beat around the giant limbs of such a model.<sup>155</sup>

Fascinated by this "vigorous race," Reynolds, like countless other journalists and writers, misrepresented the Allens, as well as the rest of Appalachia with such sweeping stereotypes.<sup>156</sup>

Eager to profit from the intense public interest surrounding the shootout, Edgar James also capitalized on the tragedy by publishing his book *The Allen Outlaws: A Complete History of Their Lives and Exploits*. The book went into print just a few months after the incident. Though proclaiming to be a complete history, James' account, steeped in false descriptions and preconceived ideas of Appalachian residents, was far from accurate. He noted that "to be an outlaw and to defy the laws of man is as natural to a Virginia mountaineer as is water to a young duck."<sup>157</sup> Embellished descriptions such as these, produced skewed images of the Allens as primitive, clan-based, uneducated, and defiant of law and authority. In reality, their lives exemplified the antithesis of many of the wronged reports and prevailing perceptions of them which emerged in the months following the tragedy. Most reports failed to recognize the fact that the Allens, in their occupations, interests, and exploits, typified the majority of rural Americans across the country. Buried beneath the sensationalized stories, a true representation of the Allens never emerged.

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>157</sup> Edgar James, *The Allen Outlaws: A Complete History of Their Lives and Exploits* (Baltimore, Maryland: Phoenix Publishing Co., 1912), p. 99.

### The Allen Family

J.J. Reynolds' rather poetic portrait of the Allens is correct in some respects. William Allen did indeed fight in the Revolutionary War, though not in the climatic call to arms Reynolds so eloquently displays in his exaggerated commentary. As a soldier in the patriot army, he participated in the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. Sidna Allen jokingly remarked in his memoirs that this was "probably the first courthouse battle an Allen ever engaged in."<sup>158</sup> According to Sidna Allen, the family could also trace their ancestral roots to Scotland. He was unsure whether the family first stopped in the northern colonies before coming to Virginia, but was certain that the Allen family found the Blue Ridge country a favorable place to settle. Allen believed that his great-great grandfather "William Allen may have visited the Blue Ridge country while soldiering with General Greene," and that after he was released from the army, he returned to become possibly "the first of his family to establish himself in what is now Carroll County."<sup>159</sup>

Sidna Allen's grandfather was Carr Allen, the son of William Allen, Jr. Carr Allen had four sons, Jackson, Robert, John, and Jeremiah. Jeremiah was Sidna Allen's father. His great uncle, Bailey Allen, had four sons, three of whom fought in the Civil War. One was killed at the second battle of Manassas. His brother William saw him fall.<sup>160</sup> Both William and Carr Allen returned to Carroll County after the war. Carr, however, met a tragic end when he was murdered at his home in 1898 by Mack Howlett, perhaps the first sign of violence for the Allen family. Records do not indicate

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<sup>158</sup> Allen, *Memoirs*, p. 7.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

the reasons behind the shooting.

Sidna Allen's father, Jeremiah, also served four years in the Confederate Army. He was forty-three years old when the war started and was among the first to volunteer. He served as a second lieutenant in Company E, the Twenty-ninth Regiment of the Virginia Infantry. Sidna recalled that his father fought to uphold, not slavery, "but the principle of state's rights."<sup>161</sup> Like most of the population in Carroll County, none of the Allens ever owned slaves. Altinia Waller, in her study of the Hatfield and McCoy feud, found that in Logan County, West Virginia, as in many other areas of Appalachia, residents supported the Confederacy because they believed it "stood for the continuation of the yeo-man republicanism enshrined in the American Revolution."<sup>162</sup> Whatever their individual reasons for fighting in the war, some reports indicate that Carroll County sent more men per capita to the Confederate lines than any other region in Virginia.<sup>163</sup>

After the war, each of the Allens became successful farmers. Jeremiah "devoted his entire life to farming."<sup>164</sup> E.J. Cooley, a teacher in the county at the time, portrayed Jeremiah and his wife Nancy Combs as a family faced with the hardships and devastation of the Reconstruction Period, but who at the same time, raised a family of ten children "who were thrifty, hard working, and prosperous citizens of Carroll County."<sup>165</sup> Jeremiah died in 1897 at the age of seventy-nine.

Jeremiah Allen fathered seven sons and three daughters. Each of them, like the majority of Appalachian residents, held a variety of occupations. Anderson Allen,

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>162</sup> Waller, *Feud*, p. 30.

<sup>163</sup> Bowman, *Carroll County, Virginia*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>164</sup> Allen, *Memoirs*, p. 9.

<sup>165</sup> E.J. Cooley, *The Inside Story of the World Famous Courtroom Tragedy*, p. 13-14.

who also enlisted in the Confederate Army, later became a farmer and miller who had five children. Victor Allen worked as a farmer, a teacher, and as a merchant. Garland Allen and his wife had eight children. He farmed, worked in lumbering and milling, and also served as a Primitive Baptist Minister for several years. Washington Allen, at the early age of fifteen or sixteen, was killed by a falling tree before his brother Sidna Allen was even born. The primary figures of the Allen family however, center around the three men Sidna, Jasper, and Floyd.

Floyd Allen, born on July 29, 1857, married Frances Edwards and together they had three children, one of whom became a central figure in the courtroom shootout. Floyd, a merchant who owned his own store, also farmed and served in several public offices. For example, on September 18, 1911, H.C. Allen and Floyd Allen were appointed Special Police Force (Peace Officers) for Carroll County.<sup>166</sup>

Opinions varied on the personality and character of Floyd Allen. E.J. Cooley viewed him as a man who "carried himself erect, went well and appropriately dressed at home or in public, was exceedingly polite and courteous to everyone he considered his friend."<sup>167</sup> G.M.N. Parker, who had never met the Allens but wrote about them in his book *The Mountain Massacre*, referred to Floyd Allen as the clan's leader and viewed each of the Allens as satisfactory citizens "when the breeze blew to suit them...but the moment it turned, they were fire-eyed demons."<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Election Abstracts, "Appointment of H.C. Allen and Floyd Allen," Carroll County Court Records, 1911.

<sup>167</sup> Cooley, p. 15.

<sup>168</sup> G.M.N. Parker, *The Mountain Massacre: A True Story of the Massacre of the Court Officials at Hillsville, Virginia by the Allen Clan* (Bluefield, West Virginia: Country Life, 1930), p.18.

Most of Carroll County's citizens did not feel quite as strongly about the Allens as Parker. Viola Haynes Tobler stated that,

...the Allens of Carroll County were just people like other folks. One was a Baptist preacher, another a farmer, another a mail carrier, another a school teacher. They were skilled workmen, smart, and they weren't as mean as people thought. They just had tempers. If a body wanted to slap an Allen, he could; but he wouldn't slap one but once. I was not afraid of them.<sup>169</sup>

Jack Allen, or Jasper as many liked to call him, married Katie Easter at age twenty-one. They had twelve children, seven boys and five girls. He was a prosperous farmer and sawmill operator who also held several public offices. His son, Friel, later became involved in the courtroom scene of March 14, 1912. Because of Jack Allen's ties to his family, he was shot to death in March 1916. After his death, the Mount Airy newspaper described Jack Allen as a

man of property and wide reputation. If let alone he was a quiet and peaceable citizen, but once aroused he would fight to the death...He would take an insult from no man and had the courage of a lion.<sup>170</sup>

Sidna Allen remains another controversial figure in the courtroom shootout. He was perhaps the most business-oriented of the family. From a young age, he attempted to earn money. As a child, he bought handkerchiefs at twenty-five cents a half dozen and would "then sell five of them for five cents a piece, leaving one for myself, or else sell all six and make a nickel profit."<sup>171</sup> He saved all of his earnings, no matter how small. By the age of sixteen, he had saved exactly sixteen dollars. Sidna taught school

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<sup>169</sup> Tobler, *Carroll County Memories, 1890-1920*, p. i.

<sup>170</sup> *The Mount Airy News*, Thursday, March 16, 1916, vol. xxxviii, no. 38.

<sup>171</sup> Allen, *Memoirs*, p.14.

for two years and received eighteen dollars a month. He wanted to return to farming, however, and did so to help his aging father.

Sidna Allen eventually owned his own mercantile business which was extremely profitable and lasted for eighteen years. In spite of this business, he found himself drawn to the farm and his love of land. His farm "lay on a tableland and was well drained and fertile." He noted that "it produced bumper crops of buckwheat, corn, rye, hay, and potatoes..." and that the "farm was ideally suited for cattle raising." Sidna and his brother, Garland, also owned an interest in a sawmill, a buckwheat mill, and a corn mill.<sup>172</sup>

Unlike the others, Sidna Allen expanded his interests in March 1898, when he decided to go to the Klondike in Alaska and search for gold. His train ticket from Pulaski County, Virginia to Seattle, Washington cost a little over forty-six dollars.<sup>173</sup> When he arrived in Alaska, he discovered that a number of other men from Carroll county were there as well. The winter weather proved vicious however, and significantly delayed their travels. At times, he regretted his decision. While in Skagway, he recalled that "as I stood there on that barren mountain top and thought of home my heart almost choked me and tears trickled down my cheeks. To think I had left home and its comforts for such a place as this!"<sup>174</sup> After Allen and his companions reached Skagway, they invested in real estate and made a quick profit, instead of searching for gold. During this time, he also traveled to the Hawaiian Islands and visited the western part of the United States. He toured Saint Paul, Minnesota and Chicago, Illinois among other areas. He stayed for approximately nine months before coming back to Carroll County. He admitted in the end that "the hills of old Carroll looked mighty good to me

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, p. 28.

on my return."<sup>175</sup>

In spite of reports that the Allens lived in typical log homes, Sidna Allen also spent a great deal of time and energy building his dream home. He insisted on using the best timber which, once cut, was taken to Mount Airy, kiln dried and dressed. The house contained eight rooms, a pantry, running water, and gas powered lights. All of the floors were made of oak except the floor of the living room which was white pine. Sidna recalled that "at the time it was built, it was said to be the most beautiful home in Carroll County."<sup>176</sup> Sidna Allen and his wife lived in their new home for only a year when the Courtroom tragedy occurred.

### **Education and Religion**

Contrary to some reports that the Allens were undereducated or not educated at all, obtaining an appropriate education remained a priority for each of them. Sidna Allen taught school for a brief time, as did his brother Victor Allen. E.J. Cooley, whose brother served as Superintendent of Schools in Carroll for twelve years, described Jack Allen as one of the most "loyal patrons in our school at Fairview and Woodlawn."<sup>177</sup> Jack Allen's son, Walter, later attended Washington and Lee University and graduated with a degree in law. Some remembered Jack Allen's other son, Barnett, as a "good faithful student" at Woodlawn.<sup>178</sup> Claude Allen, Floyd Allen's son, started at Fairview

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid, p. 34.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>177</sup> Cooley, p. 20.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

Academy at the age of fourteen and remained there for two years. He later attended business college in Raleigh, North Carolina.<sup>179</sup>

Dexter Goad of the court administration was no different with his children. Goad, who later became a member of the Virginia legislature, had seven children of his own. His son, Byrum Goad served on the Virginia House of Delegates in 1929, and later became commonwealth's attorney for Carroll County. His daughter, Martha, became a college professor. Out of his three remaining sons, Paul Goad took on a profession as an orthodontist, Grosvener Goad became a dentist, while another son, Robley Goad served as a physician.<sup>180</sup>

Though few residents became as highly educated as these particular individuals, acquiring some form of educational training remained an important priority for many residents. Census records for 1900, reveals that a large portion of the population in Carroll could indeed read and write. A sampling of residents in the Fancy Gap and Laurel Fork districts shows that out of 197 residents, 110 were literate.<sup>181</sup> Though these figures still represent a rather low literacy rate, they are proportional to other rural areas outside of the mountains.

As earlier established, religion also played a significant role in mountain communities as it did elsewhere. Historian Robert Weise notes that "interlocked with the exchange economy, mountain families, politics, and religion were vehicles by which people exerted power in both the private and public realms."<sup>182</sup> Many residents used religious affiliation to denote a certain level of civilized behavior. For example, Primitive

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<sup>179</sup> Gardner, *Courthouse Tragedy*, p. 54.

<sup>180</sup> Marie Jackson, "Dexter Goad's Granddaughter", phone conversation, 4-26-94.

<sup>181</sup> United States Census, "Carroll County," 1900.

<sup>182</sup> Robert Weise, *Economy and Society in Floyd County, Kentucky*, p. 126.

Baptists were often looked down upon as more aggressive and unpredictable than other denominations. Bob Childress, a resident and later minister on Buffalo Mountain, ten miles west of Hillsville perceived the Primitive Baptist Church as a subdenomination that sprouted like mushrooms from the dark corners of every hollow and cove."<sup>183</sup>

Childress blamed violence and lawlessness on the Primitive Baptist Religion. He believed that the Baptists'

traditions and social customs set the pattern for the mountains. It was the force that dominated the Blue Ridge-then its politics and courts-and its emphasis on predestination partly excused men of brutality and bloodshed...It was a power more sinister than bootleggers and moonshiners. And yet its preachers, or elders were good men...<sup>184</sup>

Perhaps Lewis F. Webb, Carroll County's sheriff, might have agreed with Childress. He was a Missionary Baptist whose beliefs were not in line with those of the Primitive Baptists, the religion of the Allens. In fact, Webb was one of the leading members and a deacon of the Missionary Baptist Church. The doctrine of the Missionary Baptists was clearly opposite that of the Primitive Baptists. Missionary Baptists fervently supported evangelistic mission work and believed their primary duties were to "spread the gospel" and "save souls."<sup>185</sup>

The church that Dexter Goad attended is unknown. It is highly probable that

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<sup>183</sup> Richard Davids, *The Man Who Moved a Mountain* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 8.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, p. 109.

<sup>185</sup> Howard Dorgan, *Giving Glory to God in Appalachia: Worship Practices of Six Baptist Subdemoniations* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press), p. 43.

he also belonged to a Missionary Baptist congregation. The preacher that conducted his wedding ceremony in 1889 was a Missionary Baptist, and one of the preachers that conducted his funeral in 1939 served as a Missionary Baptist.<sup>186</sup> William M. Foster, the commonwealth attorney, was a Presbyterian like Childress. Presbyterians stressed education and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were primarily concerned with "problems of Sabbath observance, of intemperance" and of "worldly amusement."<sup>187</sup> Presbyterians did not agree with the more liberal doctrine of the Primitive Baptists. Childress and others like him tended to blame the shootout of 1912 partly on the Allens' religion and their alleged emphasis on predestination. Sidna Allen refutes such claims. He notes that his father reared each of them to "fear the Lord and respect the law." As people's preoccupation with religious denominations demonstrates, "a person's moral standing in the community had as much to do with family name, political affiliation, and church membership as individual characteristics."<sup>188</sup>

While many attributed the tragedy to either a lack of spirituality or to a set of strange religious beliefs, others believed that alcohol may have played a more prominent part in the outbreak of violence. The Allens, like all Appalachians, were frequently depicted as liquor-loving clansmen where even boys growing into manhood carried "a bottle in one pocket and a pistol in the other."<sup>189</sup> *The New York Press* in 1912 remarked that the tragedy represented,

...the inborn lawlessness of the untamed denizens of a region where

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<sup>186</sup> Wills, "Dexter Goad," Carroll County Court Records, 1939.

<sup>187</sup> William Randolph Sengel, *Can These Bones Live? Pastoral Reflections on the Old Presbyterian Meeting House of Alexandria, Virginia Through Its First Two Hundred Years* (Kingsport Press, 1973), p. 67.

<sup>188</sup> Weise, *Economy and Society in Floyd County, Kentucky*, p. 125.

<sup>189</sup> G.M.N. Parker, *The Mountain Massacre*, p. 11.

American citizens are a law unto themselves. Their rule of life cannot comprehend the logic of the proposition that a man has not as much right to make whiskey out of the corn he grows as he has to make meal out of that same corn. To these primitive people the revenue officer is a common enemy, like the rattlesnake to be exterminated on sight...<sup>190</sup>

Once again however, the actual conditions within Carroll were much different than described.

### **Alcohol in Mountain Society**

When the newspapers came out after the courtroom tragedy, the Allens were called a gang of lawless bootleggers. Sidna Allen stated that the Allens were falsely accused of being moonshiners when they were not. He noted that,

Before it became necessary to pay revenue tax on whiskey, that is, prior to the Civil War, some of the Allens may have engaged in the manufacture of whiskey, but they were not the persistent violators of law they have been pictured.<sup>191</sup>

This appears to be the case. For example, Allen recalled making brandy one summer with his brother Jasper Allen only after they took out a government license to do so.<sup>192</sup> Even when the Allens produced alcohol, they cooperated with the laws of the county. Court records show that on two different occasions Jasper Allen received a government license, one with Walter S. Tipten in 1892 and the other with J.F. Shelon in 1900.<sup>193</sup> The judges' docket from 1907 to the end of 1912 does not list any charges against the Allens

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<sup>190</sup> *The Times Dispatch*, "Newspaper Comment on Murder of Court Officials at Hillsville," 17 March 1912, p. 9.

<sup>191</sup> Allen, *Memoirs*, p. 10.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid*, p. 18.

<sup>193</sup> Indictments and Bonds of Ordinary and Liquor Dealers. "Jasper Allen", Carroll County Court Records.

for illegal distilling. In fact, the same group of people appear under this charge between those years: Mitch Snow, Bob Snow, Zumer Carlan, Mr. Pack, Bob Fortner, J. Reed Greenwood, John Greenwood, and John O'Neal.<sup>194</sup>

Though many writers convinced their readers that bootlegging was an integral part of the Appalachian community, a large portion of residents were firmly against distilling of any kind. For instance, in December 1902, Carroll County voted on whether or not to grant licenses for the sale of intoxicating liquors. In the Laurel Fork District, the people opposed granting licenses 242 votes to 229. In the Sulpher Spring District residents were nearly split on the decision with 182 for granting liquor licenses and 176 against it. In the Fancy Gap District the people also voted for the granting of liquor licenses 175 to 110. The Pine Creek District, voted against the granting of liquor licenses 142 to 124.<sup>195</sup> Out of a total of 1380 votes, 670, almost half of the voters, were against the granting of liquor licenses. Despite the evidence that moonshining did exist as an all encompassing feature of mountain life, the idea that mountaineers manufactured "illegal or untaxed whiskey, had already become a part of the mythology of Appalachian otherness by 1900."<sup>196</sup>

### Land and Wealth

Land was a distinctive mark of wealth in Appalachia. A great deal of time went into writing down land transactions, "no matter how small."<sup>197</sup> Historian Ronald D. Eller found land "such a dominant factor in mountain culture that neighborhoods

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<sup>194</sup> Judges' Docket, Carroll County Court Records, 1907-1912.

<sup>195</sup> Election Abstracts. Carroll County Court Records.

<sup>196</sup> Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind*, p. 104.

<sup>197</sup> Waller, *Feud*, p. 22.

often drew their names from the creeks or branches that penetrated the settlement."<sup>198</sup> Churches, schools, and mills were usually named for the creeks they were built beside.

The deed books as far back as the Revolutionary War illustrate the accumulation of wealth by the Allen family. William Allen, Jr. obtained 400 acres of land on October 1, 1791, when he entered Carroll County. He later passed this land down to his children who he hoped would be able to stay in the region. To his son William Allen III, he deeded a tract of 400 acres, while his other sons, Carr, John, and Robert received 40 acres each. Both Carr and John Allen encountered financial difficulties around 1861 and their lands were sold for non-payment of taxes.<sup>199</sup>

By May 15, 1882, Jeremiah Allen owned 592 acres of land which included parts of Lovings Creek, Lovells Creek, and Pauls Creek. In November 1884, he gave his son Jack Allen forty acres of Pauls Creek. On March 16, 1892, Jack Allen bought thirty-five more acres at Pauls Creek from his father. From February 1884 to September 1, 1915, Jack Allen owned approximately 816 acres of land, some of which had been gifts from his father, Jeremiah, and some of which had been sold to him by Jeremiah and his brother Sidna. Between 1884 and 1915 Jack Allen sold a little over forty acres of land; an amount barely noticeable in comparison to the amount of acreage he actually owned.<sup>200</sup>

Between April 1892 and April 1911, Floyd Allen owned over 419 acres of land, having sold only one tract five years before. Sidna Allen, on the other hand, owned a great deal more. Even though he sold 115 acres of Pauls Creek to his brother

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<sup>198</sup> Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*, p. 7.

<sup>199</sup> Gardner, *Courthouse Tragedy*, p. 2.

<sup>200</sup> General Index to Deeds, A-J, Grantees 1842-1927, "Allen," Carroll County Court Records.

Jack, Sidna Allen still owned a little over a thousand acres of land by February 17, 1912, far more than the average Appalachian landownership of less than 100 acres.<sup>201</sup> The deed books indicate that once the Allens accumulated land, they rarely sold it and if so, they sold it within the family. The Allens were considerable landholders and with such real estate, they maintained a high status within the community.

Dexter Goad also owned a considerable amount of land. Between February 1890 and March 1913, he obtained over 932 acres of land within the county.<sup>202</sup> Examination of landholdings, demonstrates a distinct division in the area in which the Allens and Goads resided. The Allen family bought land primarily in the Fancy Gap region, while the Goads owned more land in the Laurel Fork area. The 1870 census indicates that out of the thirty-six Goad family members listed, twenty-nine lived in Laurel Fork. Out of ten Allen members listed in the survey, seven lived in Fancy Gap.<sup>203</sup>

Though Dexter Goad lived in Laurel Fork along with many other members of his family, he began buying land outside of that district in the late 1890s. On November 3, 1900, he purchased 250 acres of the Fancy Gap Pike which was believed to contain minerals. Mining activity accelerated in the 1900s with the discovery of various minerals in the Carroll County region. Dexter Goad may have taken an interest in this business and decided to invest in its prospects. Goad Mine, located in Laurel Fork, contained copper and pyrite.<sup>204</sup> Goad bought 204 acres of Little Reed Island in 1908 when such minerals as copper, zinc, lead, pyrite, iron, and arsenic were found in that area. He also purchased a great deal of land in the Pine Creek District. There he owned six

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> General Index to Deeds, A-J, Grantees 1842-1927, "Goad," Carroll County Court Records.

<sup>203</sup> United States Census, "Carroll County," 1870.

<sup>204</sup> Bowman, p. 85.

acres of Greenbrier Road and over 100 acres of Big Reed Island which contained a considerable amount of mineral resources.<sup>205</sup>

With two exceptions, the Allens owned land strictly within the Fancy Gap region. They did not support the mining that occurred in the districts above them because of the damage to the land. Jeremiah Allen owned large tracts of Lovells Creek and Pauls Creek. His son, Jasper Allen also owned a large portion of Pauls Creek. By 1903 he purchased 548 acres of it, all within the Fancy Gap region. Jasper Allen branched out, however, and bought part of Little Reed Island Creek, though nearly eight years before Goad did so. Floyd Allen owned land mostly on Fancy Gap Road where he had fifty acres, and Fancy Gap Pike where he had ninety-eight acres. The only land the Allens ever purchased in Laurel Fork was Snake Creek. Sidna Allen owned 165 acres of this area which ran through the Laurel Fork District. No minerals were on this land.<sup>206</sup>

Lewis F. Webb, who later became county sheriff, also owned land on Snake Creek. In 1870, Webb purchased seventy-six acres of Little Snake Creek. From 1876 to 1890, Webb bought 241 more acres of Snake Creek.<sup>207</sup> Webb, Foster, and Goad later moved to Hillsville, however, after winning in several public offices in the early 1900s. They kept nearly all of their land.

The fact that both the Allens and members of the court administration owned such large tracts of land was not typical of others in the mountain community. Though

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<sup>205</sup> General Index to Deeds, A-J, Grantees 1842-1927, "Goad," Carroll County Court Records.

<sup>206</sup> General Index to Deeds, A-J, Grantees 1842-1927, "Allen," Carroll County Court Records.

<sup>207</sup> General Index to Deeds, K-Z, Grantees 1842-1927, "Lewis Webb," Carroll County Court Records.

the episodes of violence which emerged in Carroll County in the 1890s had roots in economic hardships and the lack of land, the tragedy itself was grounded in a series of political battles that ultimately transformed the county.

### Politics in Carroll

E.J. Cooley, well aware of the political conditions of the time, recalled a young Republican in 1905 who "defeated a Democratic candidate for clerk of the court, a position" this individual "had held for forty years or more."<sup>208</sup> This individual's name was W.H. Sutherland and he lost to his opponent, Dexter Goad. Sutherland received a total of 1226 votes while Goad received 1284.<sup>209</sup> Goad won by only 58 votes, and in his subsequent years in office pushed for a Republican majority. Goad,

encouraged by defeating a Confederate Captain for Clerk of the Court, soon demonstrated that he had all qualities of a political leader by changing Carroll County from a banner Democratic county to a solid Republican county within a period of eight or ten years.<sup>210</sup>

Only later did some residents question the legitimacy of the election.

While Goad was in office "the county treasurer and the commonwealth's attorney, both Democrats by tradition, had been prevailed upon to join the ranks of the Republican Party."<sup>211</sup> William M. Foster, a former Democrat, switched parties and ran in

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<sup>208</sup> E.J. Cooley, p. 26.

<sup>209</sup> Election Abstracts, "Appointment for Clerk of Court," Carroll County Court Records, 1905.

<sup>210</sup> E.J. Cooley, p. 26.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

subsequent elections as a Republican candidate. For many, however, switching to another party was worse than belonging to the opposition in the first place. Floyd Allen stated in 1913 that in one particular election, he did not vote for the candidate Walter Webb because he did not know "whether Webb was a Democrat or a Republican. He was carrying water on both shoulders."<sup>212</sup> Floyd thought voting for a Republican was better than voting for a man of divided loyalties. Such rapid change and turnovers in political parties resulted in numerous conflicts.

In Sidna Allen's memoirs, he recalled an incident between William M. Foster and Floyd Allen. The disagreement occurred several years before 1912. The cause of the argument is unknown. Sidna claimed that it "came about because of political differences between the two..."<sup>213</sup> Afterwards Foster and Allen strongly disliked one another, an attitude that would not change.

Floyd Allen was a devoted member of the Democratic party. Once offered a position as a deputy sheriff by Judge Jackson (the judge prior to Judge Massie), he did not accept the appointment because he would have been under a Republican sheriff. He first encountered political difficulties with a man named Green Edwards. Floyd Allen recalled that,

This was over a political matter. I was a Democrat and he a Republican. This occurred at a political speaking. He called me a name that I would not stand for and I knocked him down for it.<sup>214</sup>

Floyd Allen started voting the Democratic ticket when he was twenty-one years

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<sup>212</sup> Rufus Gardner, "Last Statement of Floyd Allen," *Courthouse Tragedy*, (Nu-Line Printing, 1991), p. 46.

<sup>213</sup> Allen, *Memoirs*, p. 45,

<sup>214</sup> Gardner, "Last Statement of Floyd Allen," *Courthouse Tragedy*, p. 46.

old. He cast his first votes at the Leonard precinct. He then moved to the Wisler precinct and continued to vote there throughout his life. He stated that the precinct was "solidly Republican" and that he and his father were the only two to vote the Democratic ticket. Floyd admitted that in his life he had missed one election and then only because he was sick. He stated that if someone could have carried him to the polls, he would not have hesitated to vote. Most agreed that he was loyal to and very active in the party. He claimed that he even paid the poll taxes for Democrats unable to pay, so that they would not be disenfranchised.<sup>215</sup>

As Floyd Allen was loyal to the Democratic Party, Dexter Goad was equally devoted to the Republicans. Goad insisted that the "County of Carroll is Republican by a handsome majority, and in all elections held therein for years past, it has so voted."<sup>216</sup> When Allen spoke of Dexter Goad he recalled the animosity between the two of them. He referred to Goad and himself as having been political enemies for years. He also believed that "there was never an opportunity that Dexter Goad had to do me wrong that he did not do it."<sup>217</sup> Perhaps some of this animosity stemmed from an incident that happened around 1902 while Dexter Goad served as a United States Commissioner. Floyd Allen reported him for "selling blockade liquor in his offices."<sup>218</sup> Supposedly, the liquor he sold came from his father's blockade still. (Floyd Allen most likely used to term "blockade" to refer to this practice as illegal.) Dexter Goad testified in court in 1912 that he did in fact resign from this position. He did not state why. This incident, coupled with Floyd Allen's intense work for the Democratic party, created more distinct

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Election Abstracts, "Dexter Goad's Counter Complaint," Carroll County Court Records, p. 4.

<sup>217</sup> Gardner, "Last Statement of Floyd Allen," *Courthouse Tragedy*, p.47.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

divisions between the two. In his final statement, Floyd Allen emphatically stated that his active work for the Democratic party was the sole reason for the attempt on his life in the Carroll County courtroom in 1912.

The Allens were indeed active in politics, especially in the last half of the century. In 1883, Jeremiah Allen was elected supervisor of the Fancy Gap Magisterial District for two years. In 1885, Jack Allen was elected constable of the Fancy Gap District for two years. In 1887, he was again elected as constable for the Fancy Gap District. He was re-elected to the same position in 1889 and in 1891. In 1894, he also served as land assessor for the southern district of the county. In May 1897, Floyd Allen became supervisor for the Fancy Gap Magisterial District. Floyd Allen was a road overseer in 1906, and in 1911 both he and H.C. Allen were appointed to the special police force for Carroll County. They were to be the conservators of the peace, "clothed with all the rights and responsibilities" allowed by the law.<sup>219</sup> These were some of the positions of the Allens. They held most of these offices in the last part of the 1800s, however, and such positions for them declined considerably in the 1900s.<sup>220</sup>

In the May election of 1899, William M. Foster and Lewis F. Webb were unsuccessful in their attempts for Commonwealth's Attorney and County Sheriff. Webb lost by 211 votes and Foster by 716. Foster's luck changed on November 3, 1903, when he competed with C.L. Dickens for Attorney of the Commonwealth. Foster won by only eighty votes, 1484 to 1404. On November 1, 1911, Dexter Goad and his opponent Walter Webb vied for the position of County Clerk. Goad won a majority, 1622 to 1076. In this same election, William Foster once again assumed the title

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<sup>219</sup> Election Abstracts, "Appointment of Floyd and H.C. Allen," Carroll County Court Records, 1911.

<sup>220</sup> Election Abstracts, "County Officials," Carroll County Court Records.

Commonwealth's Attorney after securing 1567 votes to his opponent's 1138. Lewis F. Webb became Sheriff after winning 1542 of the people's votes. His opponent received 1003. These three men became the Allens' most bitter enemies and were the courtroom officials at the time of the tragedy. By and large these were important elections, but not the most significant. To find an underlying tension between the courtroom ring and the Allens, one must examine the elections of 1905 and 1907.<sup>221</sup>

Hostility grew between the Republican and Democratic parties. Out of this competitiveness some individuals apparently went to any length to secure a vote. Cooley asserted that politicians and political bosses resorted to "a variety of schemes and tactics" to increase "their prestige and power in the field of public service."<sup>222</sup> He saw this very thing occurring in his own region. Political differences generated verbal fights and sometimes physical violence. Cooley remembered that "going armed with an automatic was not unusual, especially on election day or when county or district court was in session."<sup>223</sup> Robert Weise in his study reveals that, "men went to great lengths and engaged in all manner of fraud to win those offices."<sup>224</sup> He also notes that political offices allowed candidates to "enhance their pocketbooks, their control of property, and their ability to resolve local disputes in their favor..."<sup>225</sup>

If there existed a courtroom ring of politicians, then it included the Sheriff, Lewis F. Webb, the Commonwealth's Attorney, William M. Foster, and the Clerk of the Court, Dexter Goad. Each of these men were bitter enemies of the Allens partly because of the Allen's association with the Democratic party. Sidna Allen believed that there was

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Cooley, p. 25.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid, p. 29.

<sup>224</sup> Weise, *Economy and Society in Floyd County, Kentucky*, p. 150.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid, p. 154.

indeed a "little courthouse ring of Republicans who hated us bitterly, and with us out of the way it would be easier for them to run things."<sup>226</sup>

Goad, Foster, and Webb were staunch members of the Republican party. Each of these men ran for various offices throughout the early 1900s, but found opposition from the Democratic Party. A driving force behind this party were the Allens. These two groups confronted and competed with one another throughout the years in elections, in physical and verbal disagreements, and through legal actions. Though both the Allens and the courtroom officials were respected members of the community, they were separated from one another by their strong political beliefs.

On November 16, 1905, Floyd Allen petitioned the Carroll County Court, charging Dexter Goad with creating false returns in the November 1 election in which Goad beat W.H. Sutherland for the position of County Clerk. Floyd's petition stated that

false returns and insufficient returns was made by the judges and officers in some of the election districts or precincts, and that in others, no returns whatever were made at the time and in the manner required by law, and that if such irregularities and illegalities are corrected that W.H. Sutherland was duly elected County Clerk of said county.<sup>227</sup>

Out of the twenty-four precincts in the county, the complaints were against the Quesenberry, Little Vine, Hebron, Lindsey, Mcgee, and Freemont precincts. Floyd Allen and others who contested the election listed a variety of grievances. They believed the poll books were not signed by judges or attested by the clerks, and that the judges did not count or ascertain the number of votes cast at the end of the election.

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<sup>226</sup> Allen, *Memoirs*, p. 48.

<sup>227</sup> Election Abstracts, "Election Complaint," Carroll County Court Records, 1905.

They believed that other individuals besides the judge were allowed to handle the ballots, and that the judges at the said precincts did not cover the poll books, seal them, and direct them to the clerk of the court. Floyd Allen and the contestees were bothered by the belief that other individuals besides the elector, including judges and clerks, came to the precincts and entered the room where the ballot box was kept. Here they approached the booths and inspected the ballots as voters prepared them. They included a complaint against Dexter Goad and his partisans that stated that they had printed copies of the official ballots and on election day provided them to the electors in order to give them information about the ballot. Seventeen individuals signed the petition contesting the election. Floyd Allen was the first name on the list.<sup>228</sup>

Goad denied the charges against him and filed a counter complaint against Floyd Allen and the sixteen other people, purporting to contest the election of contestee to the office of County Clerk of Carroll County. Goad protested the petition, and stated that it was not filed within the manner prescribed by law. He believed that the contestees singled out the six precincts because those were the ones with substantial Republican majorities. Goad denied that the poll books were not signed by judges and clerks and refuted the claim that the judges did not count the votes for the candidates at the closing of the polls. He went on to say that his opponent, Mr. Sutherland "spent large sums of money and quantities of liquor in order to corrupt and debauch the voters of the county, and induce them to vote for him..." Thus, he claimed the petition was invalid and stated that the charges were not specific or definite enough.<sup>229</sup>

This was a vital election and one that ultimately spelled the end of the Democratic

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Election Abstracts, "Dexter Goad's Counter Complaint," Carroll County Court Records, 1905, p. 1.

majority in Carroll county. With Goad's victory as clerk of the court, he quickly turned the community into a Republican region. Did the significance of this election lead to false election returns or was the petition a final desperate attempt to reverse the outcome? J. Morgan Kousser, author of *The Shaping of Southern Politics*, asserts that between 1880 and 1910 "Virginia elections were crimes against popular government and treason against liberty."<sup>230</sup> Almost anything could have been possible.

The election of 1907 also proved important to the Allens. This example is unusual, however, showing an Allen in a race, not for the Democratic Party, but as a Republican. Jack Allen's son Walter, a graduate in law from Washington and Lee University, wished to become a candidate for the Commonwealth's Attorney position. Jack Allen hoped to gain the support of the courthouse crowd, so that his son might win the election. Members of the court administration informed Allen and his son however, that they endorsed William M. Foster, the former Democrat. In spite of this, Walter Allen declared himself an independent Republican and ran against Foster in the 1907 election. The race was "hot and close" but the winner was Foster, 1450 votes to Allen's 901. Cooley remarked that this incident "did not help to alleviate the feeling that existed between the Allens and the courthouse crowd." Resentments became more pronounced and differences more broad.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics*, p. 47.

<sup>231</sup> Cooley, pp. 26-27.

### Court Days

Court days, though less exciting than elections, also attracted a crowd to the county seat. This was another opportunity for social gatherings, as many congregated on the street, conversed, and visited various stores. "The ladies may have stopped off to visit a relative on the way in," while the men usually took a genuine interest in watching the courtroom.<sup>232</sup>

Though the court was respected and frequently used, there existed a great deal of familiarity within the system. Family members or neighbors were often judges, jury members, or witnesses. For this reason, no one was an "objective bystander."<sup>233</sup> Justice was either very difficult to obtain, or extremely easy, depending on whom you knew within the community. For many this posed a problem. Historian Edward L. Ayers describes in his book *Vengeance and Justice* one mountaineer who stated, "It doesn't make any difference what the evidence is, the case goes the way they want it to go."<sup>234</sup> Ayers concludes that "Southern justice appeared to know no moderation..." and that the "courts tended to impose either vengeful and dramatic punishment or no punishment at all."<sup>235</sup> E.J. Cooley saw this within his own region. He stated that "it was common talk that unless you belonged to a certain crowd you could not get justice in a Carroll County Court."<sup>236</sup> The significance of this statement would be tested by the Allens and the court administration with the last remaining incidents leading up to March 1912.

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<sup>232</sup> Bowman, *Carroll County, Virginia*, p. 79.

<sup>233</sup> Waller, *Feud*, p. 86.

<sup>234</sup> Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, p. 264.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid*, p. 269.

<sup>236</sup> Cooley, p. 29.

### **Chapter Three** **The Carroll County Shootout**

Send troops to the County of Carroll at once.  
Mob violence. Court, Commonwealth's attorney,  
Sheriff, some jurors and others shot on the  
conviction of Floyd Allen for a felony. Sheriff  
and Commonwealth's Attorney dead. Court  
serious. Look after this now.

Telegram sent from Hillsville to Governor William Hodges Mann  
in Richmond, Virginia, March 14, 1912.

If the Allens were indeed responsible for the Carroll County shootout, economic frustration did not characterize their particular motives; nor could it have for members of the court administration. Though most homicides during this time were either directly or indirectly linked to economic issues, the shootout itself typified something much different. Evidence indicates that the reasons behind the tragedy were grounded in purely political conflicts instead of anxiety over economic factors. For instance, the Allens financial situation improved at the turn of the century and declined only after 1912. They continued to purchase large amounts of land while running their own profitable businesses. Sidna Allen moved into his thirteen thousand dollar dream home in 1911.

Hard work and thrift of the Allens had brought them unusual prosperity. They were said to be worth some \$70,000 or more. Consequently, they were looked up to as leaders, admired by some and envied by others.<sup>237</sup>

This continued wealth vastly increased their influence within the community as

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<sup>237</sup> Louise Jones Du Bose, "The Fatal Doom of the Allens of Carroll County, Virginia," (reprinted from *Virginia Record*, 1948-1949) *Virginia Record*, December, 1964, p. 17.

well as their political activism. Furthermore, the events of March 14 did not transpire without some forewarning. Political animosity and personal bitterness between the Allens and members of the court administration had smoldered for years; some said as far back as Dexter Goad and Floyd Allen's fathers.<sup>238</sup>

Perhaps factors such as these led to an elaborate scheme to frame the Allens in order to diminish their wealth, popularity, and political influence, or perhaps the Allens purposely planned the events of March 14, 1912 to do away with their republican rivals. The full truth may never be known, yet one thing is for certain: the origins of the shootout lay firmly rooted in personal hostilities and political party loyalty.

Whoever is to blame for the burst of gunfire on that fateful morning, whether it be the Allens, the court administration, or both, the consequences were devastating. Within a few hours of the tragedy, however, culpability for the crime fell entirely on the Allens. Never again would their family be the same.

### **The Edwards Brothers**

One Sunday morning in the fall of 1911, the preacher Garland Allen, Floyd Allen's brother, began his usual church services in a small schoolhouse in the Fancy Gap community.<sup>239</sup> Among others, Wesley and Sidney Edwards, Floyd Allen's nephews and the sons of his sister, Alvirtia Edwards, were present. During Garland Allen's service,

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<sup>238</sup> Allen, *Memoirs*, p. 48.

<sup>239</sup> The following reconstruction of events has been derived from studying a variety of sources, among them: J. Sidna Allen, *Memoirs*, (1926); Louise Jones Du Bose, "The Fatal Doom of the Allens of Carroll County, Va.," *Virginia Record*, (1948-1949); E.J. Cooley, *The Inside Story of the World Famous Courtroom Tragedy*, (1915); Rufus Gardner, *Courthouse Tragedy*, (1991); *Commonwealth of Virginia vs. Floyd Allen*, Circuit Court of Wythe, (1912). Other miscellaneous court documents, housed in the Carroll County Courthouse, were also used to verify much of this information.

a young man came to the door and beckoned Wesley Edwards to come outside. When Edwards did so, he encountered William Thomas, a young man he had confronted on several other occasions. In March of the same year, Wesley had appeared in court for attempting to assault Thomas with a pistol.<sup>240</sup> No evidence has surfaced to explain why, though some say that it concerned an argument over a young woman in the area. The reason behind Thomas's appearance at the church that morning with three other men is also unknown. After a heated dispute, the four men and Wesley fought with one another for several minutes. Sidney Edwards, hearing the noise, ran out of the church to help his brother and also became involved in the altercation.

After the incident, friends of William Thomas went to the Commonwealth's Attorney, William Foster, who disliked Floyd Allen in particular, and charged the Edwards brothers with disturbing religious worship. Court records show that the four who came to the church that morning, including William Thomas, had no charges brought against them.

Several days later, Wesley and Sidney Edwards traveled to Floyd Allen's home and asked if he could arrange bond for them since they had no money to do so. Allen, sick in the bed with pneumonia at the time, advised his nephews to travel to the Virginia-North Carolina border until he could pay for their bond. Wesley and Sidney took his advice and went to Mount Airy, North Carolina, approximately ten miles from their home, and began working at a nearby Granite Company. A few days later, Floyd Allen made his way to Hillsville to pay for the bond.

Within a short time, however, two officers, Tom (Pinky) Samuels and Peter

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<sup>240</sup> Court Cases, "Indictment for Wesley Edwards," Carroll County Court Records, 1911.

Easter, crossed the state line into North Carolina, and arrested the young men. Neither officer carried extradition papers from the Governor. After the officers found Wesley and Sidney Edwards, they proceeded to handcuff and tie them to a buggy for the trip back to Hillsville.

On the way back, the officers traveled along the Fancy Gap Turnpike, which ran directly past the home and store of both Floyd and Sidna Allen. Some residents observed that the officers could have used the Wards Gap road and avoided passing by the Allens' homes, but they chose not to.<sup>241</sup> Sidna Allen viewed this as a deliberate action on the part of the officers, considering that they chose not to use the much shorter route along Ward's Gap Road.<sup>242</sup> As a result, along the Fancy Gap Turnpike and in front of Sidna Allen's store, the officers met up with the peace officer, Floyd Allen. Allen, infuriated at the treatment of his nephews, confronted the officers. He later stated that many times as an officer, he had "arrested men for murder and other crimes, and did not have to handcuff them. It was seldom seen in our county," he claimed, and was thus irate at seeing his nephews humiliated and shackled because of a misdemeanor."<sup>243</sup>

In Floyd Allen's last statement before his execution in 1913, he relayed his version of the incident. He asked the officers if they had obtained requisition papers for his nephews. Deputy Samuels answered that he had not. According to Allen, the officers drew their guns on him several times. He eventually grabbed Samuel's weapon and smashed it against a rock. He told the officers to untie and unlock the handcuffs and to take the boys to court like gentlemen. When the officers refused, Floyd Allen took

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<sup>241</sup> Cooley, p. 43.

<sup>242</sup> Allen, p. 46.

<sup>243</sup> Rufus Gardner, "Last Statement of Floyd Allen," in *Courthouse Tragedy*, p. 48.

the boys, and the following day brought them to the Hillsville court himself, where he had already pre-arranged their bond. In reflecting on the incident, Sidna Allen stated that his brother was willing for "Wesley and Sidney to be tried for their alleged offense but he could not see the necessity of their being carried bound as felons."<sup>244</sup>

From this disturbance over twenty indictments were filed against the Allens. Some reported that the Commonwealth's Attorney, William Foster, "seemed given to the 'multiple indictment' habit as far as the Allens and their blood kin were concerned and Judge Massie had not approved altogether." Some Carroll citizens felt that the Allens were unfairly focused on because of their democratic party loyalties. For example, over "70 cases of the same caliber had been dismissed against Republicans since Foster had taken office a few months before." As a result, Wesley Edwards served sixty days in jail, while his brother Sidney served a total of thirty days. The other four young men were never charged.<sup>245</sup>

In December 1911, the court charged Floyd Allen with "interfering with officers of the law in performance of their duty."<sup>246</sup> Sidna Allen, along with Barnett Allen, Jack Allen's son, were also indicted for interfering with the officers, even though they had nothing to do with the incident. Dexter Goad testified in court that there were indeed two indictments made against Sidna and Barnett Allen each. The State later dropped the case against them for lack of evidence. Sidna Allen stated, "I was indicted, I suppose, because I am an Allen."<sup>247</sup>

On the day before his execution, Floyd Allen asserted that after his indictment,

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<sup>244</sup> Allen, p. 47.

<sup>245</sup> Du Bose, "The Fatal Doom of the Allens of Carroll County, Virginia," p. 20.

<sup>246</sup> Gardner, p. 8.

<sup>247</sup> Allen, p. 47.

a friend of the Allens, John Moore approached him. Supposedly, Moore discovered that if Allen supported Dexter Goad for clerk of the court in the fall election, Goad would get the jury to acquit him. Votes separating democratic and republican candidates in Carroll County elections were of a small margin. If this incident were true, perhaps Dexter Goad believed that by winning the support of Floyd Allen, the primary leadership behind the town's democratic party, he could enlarge the support for the republican party. Floyd Allen flatly refused, telling Moore that he "did not sell himself in that way."<sup>248</sup> His court date was subsequently postponed for three months.

### **Court Convenes: Day One**

On March 13, 1912, Floyd Allen appeared in court for the charges against him. The fifty-five year old Allen appeared confident as he entered the courtroom. He wore a "dark suit with a red and gray sweater." Some observed that his,

...sandy hair was graying and his mustache was already white. Keen blue-gray eyes gleamed beneath shaggy brows. He was neater and better groomed than most of his fellow citizens. A comb and toothbrush were in his breast pocket and his shirt was freshly washed and ironed.<sup>249</sup>

Other members of the Allen family also appeared for the alleged charges pending against them. Pinky Samuels, one of the chief witnesses, never showed up. Rumors spread that the Allens were intimidating witnesses for the case. In Judge Massie's private office," (Massie appointed Floyd Allen as peace officer

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<sup>248</sup> Gardner, p. 30.

<sup>249</sup> Du Bose, p. 20.

several months before), Allen "managed to get Massie to tell him who had been circulating the rumors that he and his family were scaring witnesses away and the reply, given on a promise of secrecy, was 'Clerk Dexter Goad.'"<sup>250</sup>

Floyd Allen's attorneys, Walter S. Tipton and D.W. Bolen, worked hard to defend their client. The Commonwealth made this a difficult task, however, by portraying Allen as "high-handedly taking his nephews away from the officers in defiance of the law."<sup>251</sup> Dexter Goad recalled the vivid closing speech by the Commonwealth's Attorney, William Foster. Foster pleaded with the jury to "take courage and do their duty in relieving" the "county of mob violence" which had reigned "for fifteen or twenty years."<sup>252</sup> Sidna Allen noted that they made the offense "appear as black as possible."<sup>253</sup> The jury nearly reached a decision when Massie, the presiding judge, decided to adjourn the court and have the jury stay in Thorton's Motel for the night. Court would convene at eight o'clock the next morning.

The heavy rains throughout the day made the roads unfavorable for travel and some impassable. Floyd Allen lived fourteen miles south of Hillsville from the courthouse, while Sidna Allen lived only seven. Because of the weather and the early court date the next morning, Floyd Allen decided to stay with his brother Sidna overnight. Many perceived this as a deliberate attempt on the part of the two brothers to plot the death of the court officials. Some questioned whether Floyd Allen stayed at Sidna's house that night because of the tiring and muddy horse-back ride to his own home, and his early court date the following morning, or whether it was a plan which

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Allen, p. 51.

<sup>252</sup> *Commonwealth of Virginia vs. Floyd Allen*, "Dexter Goad Testimony," Circuit Court of Wythe, Virginia, vol. 1, p. 295.

<sup>253</sup> Allen, p. 51.

set in motion the events of the next day. On this question, like so many others, opinions vary. There is no evidence to reveal what the brothers discussed in Sidna's home that night. Evidence does show however, that no other Allens were present with the exception of Sidna Allen's wife.

### **Day Two**

The weather proved poor into the next morning. Sidna Allen stated that he and Floyd overslept and were "consequently late in reaching the courthouse."<sup>254</sup> When the two arrived in Hillsville, Floyd Allen heard someone say that he was needed in the courthouse immediately. When Floyd and Sidna Allen entered the courtroom, both carried pistols. No officer or single individual made an attempt to check for concealed weapons that day. Allegedly the former sheriff, J.B. Blankenship, advised Judge Massie that he should check people before entering the courtroom. The judge reportedly said that "he was there to prosecute - not persecute."<sup>255</sup> Some allege that the Allens made threats towards court officials should they be found guilty. Others attested that William Foster simply wished to see Floyd Allen dead.

Floyd Allen later stated that he started keeping a pistol with him since there had been rumors that Pinky Samuels carried a loaded Winchester that he planned on using against him. He further testified that in Hillsville one day he spoke with the judge about carrying a gun. The judge told him that he had no right to carry one, but that if he must, he had to at least carry a small one so that it was concealed. If he ever saw it, he explained to Floyd, he would fine him. Sidna Allen stated that

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<sup>254</sup> Allen, p. 52.

<sup>255</sup> Du Bose, p. 20.

in "Carroll County, furthermore, the practice of carrying a pistol was general. Almost every man carried a pistol of some sort."<sup>256</sup> He stated that he kept a gun with him because he frequently traveled to the bank to make cash deposits from his store. In this case, one should not be surprised to find that Floyd and Sidna Allen were not the only individuals carrying weapons into the court that day. Dexter Goad carried two pistols. He stated that he carried the small pistol "nearly all the time."<sup>257</sup> He ordered the automatic pistol and 150 cartridges a couple of months before the trial.<sup>258</sup> Dexter Goad is said to have armed eight other "officers of the court the night before the shooting."<sup>259</sup> Woodson Quesinberry, the clerk's deputy, also carried a gun. A storekeeper by the name of Church Alderman, told that he had loaned Sheriff Webb "a .32 automatic, loaded with eight steel jacket bullets, early on the morning of the fourteenth."<sup>260</sup> Deputy Ayers was said to have carried "three guns, two in his pockets and another in a scabbard."<sup>261</sup> Several other deputies and court officials, as well as other Allen family members, carried weapons into the courthouse that morning.

On the morning of March 14, a large number of spectators filled the courtroom. At 9:30 a.m. people anxiously listened to the jury's verdict: guilty. The jury sentenced Floyd Allen to one year in prison. Dexter Goad said this was "the very lightest they could sentence him."<sup>262</sup> E.J. Cooley deduced from the evidence that Allen should have been acquitted or fined. He believed that the jury was biased and

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<sup>256</sup> Allen, p. 62.

<sup>257</sup> *Commonwealth of Virginia vs. Floyd Allen*, p. 289.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Louise Jones Du Bose, "The Fatal Doom of the Allens of Carroll County, Va." (reprinted from *Virginia Record*, 1948-1949) *Virginia Record*, December 1964, p. 20.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid, p. 295.

that "personal and political bitterness entered into the prosecution."<sup>263</sup>

After the reading of the verdict, Floyd Allen's lawyer stood up to make a motion for an appeal and the Judge agreed, but refused to release him on bail. The judge set the hearing for the next day. E.J. Cooley later explained that the decision rendered by the judge meant that "Floyd was to be in the hands of his enemies who would humiliate him and his people by incarcerating him in the county jail."<sup>264</sup> What followed the verdict however, was nothing less than mass confusion.

When the judge ordered Allen taken into custody, some including Dexter Goad, saw Sheriff Webb advance two steps towards Floyd Allen and then reach behind his back, as if grabbing a pistol or some other object. Members of the jury and other observers noticed that Webb had indeed stepped forward before Floyd Allen stood up. Allen then rose to his feet and stated "Gentleman, I ain't going nowhere," or something very similiar. In his later testimony, Allen stated that the reason he said this was because he had seen both Goad and Webb with guns and feared that they would kill him.<sup>265</sup> After Floyd Allen's statement a pistol shot rang out in the courtroom. Some remembered seeing Floyd Allen fumble with the front of his sweater as if trying to reach for his gun, though most did not recall actually seeing a weapon.

Who fired the first shot has been open to speculation ever since the shooting. Floyd Allen stated that he saw Sheriff Webb fire first. Dexter Goad stated that he did not know where the first shot came from, but that when he heard it, he pulled his gun and fired only on Floyd Allen. Some later testified that Dexter Goad fired first

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<sup>263</sup> Cooley, p. 48.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

<sup>265</sup> *Commonwealth of Virginia vs. Floyd Allen*, p. 1407.

while others pointed the finger at Floyd Allen and the incessant fumbling at his sweater. Some blamed Sheriff Webb, who reached behind his back and advanced towards Floyd Allen, while still others said that it was Claude Allen, Floyd's son.

Sidna Allen recalled that when he heard the first shot, he saw guns in the hands of Dexter Goad and Lewis Webb. Both men aimed directly at Floyd Allen. He stated that he snatched his revolver and "began firing at Goad, for by this time he was popping away at me, as Floyd had already fallen to the floor inside the bar, and as far as I knew was dead."<sup>266</sup>

Who fired the first shot will never be known, but whoever it was set in motion a fatal round of gunfire. Floyd Allen, shot several times, fell to the floor on top of his attorney, "as bullets spat around his head, shattering the banisters of the railing just beyond" him.<sup>267</sup> His attorney screamed, "Get off of me for God's sake, before they kill me shooting at you."<sup>268</sup> Claude Allen allegedly fired in defense of his father. Friel Allen, Jack Allen's son, and Wesley Edwards also fired shots to defend themselves. E.J. Cooley believed that "a sense of self preservation suddenly and forcefully presented itself to everyone in the courtroom."<sup>269</sup>

In spite of his injuries, Floyd Allen stood up, jumped over the railing of the bar, and began firing. He stated that he directed his fire at Goad and Quesinberry, Dexter Goad's deputy clerk, who fired from the jury room. Most accounts indicate that the sheriff,

slumped to the floor, a spurt from his gun pointing to the ceiling as he fell. Commonwealth Foster, his big book in one hand

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<sup>266</sup> Allen, p. 56.

<sup>267</sup> Du Bose, p. 22.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Cooley, p. 48.

and a gun in the other, staggered out of the enclosure, on around the rail to the jury room, blood pouring out of the right side of his head. Judge Massie fell forward on his desk... Goad fired as he ran from his desk toward the door of his office. A bullet had hit him through his open mouth, nicked off a tooth, and passed out the back of his neck...<sup>270</sup>

Spectators dashed "wildly for the doors," or crouched down behind benches. "Guns flashed and roared," as "men cried out in fright, women screamed and the wounded groaned in agony."<sup>271</sup> Within the small courtroom, "chairs and tables and benches slammed over the floor, blocking the flight of the crowd."<sup>272</sup> Sidna Allen recalled that the "acrid odor of burning powder...was stifling." He remembered thinking that "it was like a bad dream and I expected to awake any moment and find that it had been only a nightmare." He thought to himself that he had "better act or be killed."<sup>273</sup>

Sidna Allen then reloaded his gun and ran from the courtroom to the yard between the courthouse and the street. Here the shooting began again. Dexter Goad testified in court that when he saw Sidna Allen in the yard he began firing at him. Sidna stated that the "man seemed bent upon killing me" so he leveled his pistol and fired back, then diverted his attention to his brother.<sup>274</sup> Floyd Allen attempted to mount his horse, but severely wounded, he fell to the ground in agony. The gunshot shattered the femur bone in his leg. His brother Sidna "believed...that his time had come."<sup>275</sup> Floyd Allen's other son Victor Allen who had not been involved in the shootout, stood in disbelief over his father's bloody body and "began to realize the enormity of the day's tragedy."<sup>276</sup> Sidna Allen, Claude Allen, Friel Allen, and Wesley Edwards left Floyd

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<sup>270</sup> Du Bose, p. 22.

<sup>271</sup> Allen, p. 56.

<sup>272</sup> Du Bose, p. 22.

<sup>273</sup> Allen, p. 56.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid, p. 57.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid, p. 63.

Allen in his son Victor's care as they quickly rode out of town.

Inside the Carroll County Courtroom, the fatally wounded included Sheriff Lewis Webb, Commonwealth's Attorney William M. Foster, and Judge Thornton Massie. Nineteen year old, Nancy Elizabeth Ayers died the next day from her gunshot wounds, and two days after the shootout, a juror Augustus C. Fowler also died. Floyd Allen, Sidna Allen, Dexter Goad, Columbus Cain, Andrew Howlett, and Stuart Worrell were also wounded.

Those who blamed the Allens believed that they had deliberately planned the shootout. Some pointed to Floyd Allen's temper and said that they had overheard him comment that he would rather "die and go to hell" than serve time in prison.<sup>277</sup>

Supporters of the Allens however, such as Dr. George W. McDaniel, pastor of First Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia stated that the

Commonwealth's Attorney went beyond the bounds of law in his arraignment of Floyd Allen for releasing his widowed sister's son from an officer who had tied them like hogs. His death, as unfortunate as it was, may be attributed to the personal bitterness of his prosecution.<sup>278</sup>

McDaniel believed that "the clerk of the court was determined to disgrace the man he hated," and that "the prisoner at the bar had a better reputation for truth and veracity than the man whose office placed him in the position for putting the names in the jury box."<sup>279</sup> Fred Lamb, who owned land near the Allens around the time

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<sup>276</sup> Du Bose, p. 23.

<sup>277</sup> Seth Williamson, "Hillsville Massacre," in *The Roanoker*, Nov. 1982, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 29.

<sup>278</sup> Cooley, p. 48.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

of the tragedy, stated in 1970 "that the whole thing was a frameup job."<sup>280</sup> Whatever individual opinions were about the tragedy, an intensive manhunt for the Allens began.

### **The Search for the Allens**

A telegraph immediately went out from Hillsville to Governor William Hodges Mann. He offered a three thousand dollar reward for the capture of an Allen, dead or alive. The telegram asked the Governor to send troops to Carroll County at once. Governor Mann responded by contacting the Baldwin Felts Detective Agency, known for their controversial work as strike-breakers in the coal mines of West Virginia. T.L. Felts and some of his associates made immediate plans to come to Hillsville. Felts, who had offices in Roanoke, Virginia, was a native Republican of Carroll County and some said a "close friend of Dexter Goad."<sup>281</sup>

Floyd Allen, in too much pain to leave Hillsville, stayed with his son, Victor, at Tom Hall's hotel on Main Street. Though most people knew of their whereabouts, Floyd and his son were undisturbed until the next day when T.L. Felts and his posse stormed into the room with their weapons drawn. As they entered the room, one of the officers noticed a slight movement under the blanket near Allen's neck. When they pulled the covers back, "they found Floyd was attempting to cut his throat with the broken blade of a rusty pocketknife."<sup>282</sup> They promptly took Floyd Allen to the Hillsville jail, and Victor Allen to a cell in Roanoke. Over 48 cases were made against the Allens for the five murders, even though many questioned the evidence

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<sup>280</sup> *News and Daily Advance*, "The Truth About the 1912 Hillsville Tragedy," Lynchburg, Virginia, October 16, 1970.

<sup>281</sup> Cooley, p. 49.

<sup>282</sup> Du Bose, p. 24.

against them. For example, the coroner could not tell "what sort of bullets had killed the victims nor had he determined the angle of entrance of the fatal shots."<sup>283</sup>

When Wesley Edwards, Friel Allen, Claude Allen, and Sidna Allen left Hillsville, they decided to meet at Jack Allen's home at nightfall. All, except Claude Allen, appeared that evening. They agreed not to surrender, believing they "would be unable to obtain fair trials in Hillsville."<sup>284</sup> Officers captured Claude Allen within seven days. He had hidden around the mountains near his home. Sidna Edwards also stayed in the area and surrendered a week later to officials.

Friel Allen's surrender was more complex. T.L. Felts and other officers allegedly went to Jack Allen's home and made him an offer. They stated that if Jack brought his son in to surrender, Friel "would not have to serve more than five years in the penitentiary."<sup>285</sup> Jack accepted the agreement, and Friel surrendered.

Sidna Allen and his nephew Wesley Edwards stayed in the mountains for several weeks. Sidna stated that eluding the posse was easy and that even though they had "spent the latter half of March and the first part of April in hiding," they were "never hungry and never cold."<sup>286</sup> Their friends provided for them in spite of the large rewards being offered. Sidna and Wesley grew tired of being idle about the hills, however, and decided to go west. The detectives diligently searched for them, but with little luck. Sidna stated that "the grand posse literally rode all over Carroll County investigating worthless clues."<sup>287</sup> Finally on April 13, 1912, after the two said a difficult goodbye to relatives, they headed to Des Moines, Iowa, and found jobs as carpenters under

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Allen, p. 65.

<sup>285</sup> Cooley, p. 50.

<sup>286</sup> Allen, p. 67.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid, p. 70.

different names.

Six months went by while the two men worked different jobs and stayed in a boarding house. Sidna Allen stated that he was miserable, thinking constantly of his wife and daughters, yet unable to write or see them. The situation was not much better for Wesley Edwards. He longed to see his family and his fiancé Maude Iroller who lived in the Laurel Fork region of Carroll County. As the months passed, the situation grew worse for Wesley, who confessed to Sidna that he had "made arrangements for his sweetheart to join him in Des Moines, that they might be married."<sup>288</sup> Sidna believed that the moment she appeared, their doom would be sealed.

On September 14, 1912, exactly six months after the Hillsville shooting, Sidna Allen heard a commotion outside and walked to the top of the stairs of the boarding house. A young detective immediately confronted him with a gun.

Before I had time to turn, he flashed it in my face and yelled out to me, "Sidna Allen, put up your hands!" I gazed at him a moment in silence, smiled and did as I was told. The long pursuit was over. And while my emotions were varied, I think my greatest sensation was that of relief.<sup>289</sup>

Maude Iroller accompanied the detectives. Some say that she deliberately showed the men where Sidna and Wesley were staying. A bit of controversy surrounds her intentions. No one really knows whether she was attempting to help or hurt Wesley, though some believe that the officers paid her a few hundred dollars to show the whereabouts of the two men. Sidna Allen considered her guilty and was later told by the detectives that she told them everything for five hundred dollars. Not long

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<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid, p. 80.

after her return to Hillsville, she married another man.<sup>290</sup> Wesley and Sidna were soon brought back to Roanoke, Virginia where they faced trials of their own, along with the rest of the Allens.

### **The Aftermath**

For many throughout the country, reading the headlines over the next few days and listening to the many versions of the shootout, Goad became a hero, the court administration martyrs, and the Allens outlaws. In the midst of this confusion another startling series of events took place.

On March 18, 1912, just four days after the shootout and before any trial took place, the court granted Floyd Allen's land to P.C. Massie, the administrator for Thornton L. Massie. His belongings such as his barn, buggy, and "farm tools were put in a pile and burned."<sup>291</sup> Sidna Allen's land was given under court order of P.C. Massie, S. Floyd Landreth, and Norman H. Webb, to the administrators for Thornton Massie, William Foster, and Lewis Webb.<sup>292</sup> The value of Sidna Allen's home, farm, and store was estimated at forty thousand dollars. The Carroll County Court confiscated their place of business and their farm, while also forcing Sidna Allen's wife and two daughters out of their home. Sidna Allen's wife "rode into town...to plead that the store be exempted and a little later she posted bond for use of land, horses, and tools so she could plant a crop," to support her children.<sup>293</sup> With their land confiscated however, they found it extremely difficult to find money to pay for

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid, p. 83.

<sup>291</sup> Gardner, p. 30.

<sup>292</sup> General Index to Deeds, A-J, Grantees 1842-1927, "Allens," Carroll County Court Records.

<sup>293</sup> Du Bose, p. 24.

lawyers and other trial expenses.

The Allens hired four defense lawyers. With no assets to help pay for their attorneys, the lawyers scrambled to find their own funds. One of the attorneys, R.H. Willis, stated that "the only money we had to defend the Allen cases was four thousand dollars that Judge Hairston and I borrowed on our own note in Roanoke."<sup>294</sup> They acknowledged that they

tried these cases, involving the lives of these men, almost without money. We paid all of our own expenses, as well as the board of a hoard of witnesses whom it was necessary to keep in Wytheville during each trial, lost part of the money we borrowed to carry on the cases, and of course never received one copper compensation for nearly a half year of work.<sup>295</sup>

The trial could not be held in Carroll County because of the participation of court officials in the shootout. It was scheduled to be tried in Wytheville, Virginia. Onlookers flocked to the courtroom after the trials began. Observers noticed that Floyd Allen "showed no fear, little animosity, but...calm dignity." Others took notice of his wife who "shrouded in black from her shoes to her long straight black bonnet," became known among newsmen as 'The Woman of Woe.'<sup>296</sup>

As the trials came to a close, the juries meted out various sentences. Wesley Edwards received twenty-seven years in prison. Friel Allen, tried in Wythville along with Floyd, Claude, and Sidna Allen, received eighteen years, but under the agreement was supposed to have been pardoned at the end of five years. The agreement was never kept. The Wythe County jury sentenced Floyd Allen and his son Claude to the

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<sup>294</sup> Cooley, p. 55.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Du Bose, p. 27.

death penalty. Some recall that Floyd Allen "wept effortlessly as his son repeated his assertion that he had shot at Goad only in defense of his father."<sup>297</sup>

By the time of Victor Allen's trial, public opinion began to change. A number of "church organizations," and "individuals donated funds for them and began urging leniency." Subsequently, he was acquitted of all charges six months after the shootout. Some recalled that after the reading of his verdict, "the courtroom burst out with shouts of approval...hand-clapping, and sighs of relief." Victor Allen reportedly "shook hands with members of the jury, then gathered his wife and children in his arms."<sup>298</sup>

The events surrounding the case and the later trials received a great deal of attention from the media. Stories were quickly circulated and made up "in the name of a dollar."<sup>299</sup> The sensationalized accounts distorted any semblance of truth. The town of Hillsville was angered by the portrayal of mountain people as ignorant hillbillies inclined only to violence. Sidna Allen, disgusted at the media's role in misrepresenting the facts of the tragedy, stated that "overnight the boss of a courthouse ring of selfish politicians became a brave champion of the law, while those hitherto opposing this courthouse ring sank into the role of villains- such is the power of the press."<sup>300</sup>

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297 Ibid, p. 29.

298 Ibid.

299 Gardner, p. 29.

300 Allen, p. 66.

## Conclusion

### **Mountain Culture and the Media**

At the day of judgment, I feel confident, those editors and reporters who so inflamed the public against us will be held responsible for the deaths of Floyd and Claude Allen and for the heavy sentences imposed upon the rest of us. More than anything else, the many untruths circulated by the press were responsible for the execution of my brother and nephew.

Sidna Allen, *Memoirs*, 1929

March 14, 1912 proved detrimental, not only to those involved in the tragedy, but to all Appalachian communities as well. Incidents like the Carroll County shootout, inaccurately described in newspapers, paperback books, and articles, perpetuated the mythical image of Appalachians as violent, lazy, independent, isolated, and uneducated. Writers failed to recognize the actual conditions of mountain life, including the diversity, mobility, and strong sense of community among its residents. Observers also disregarded the "normal complexity of social and economic conditions which prevailed in the mountains as in every other section of the nation."<sup>1</sup> In fact, by the turn of the century, newspapers no longer cited political and economic factors as reasons for the rise in criminal activity within Appalachia. As historian Altina Waller makes clear, the "mountaineers, wherever they lived, were rapidly being removed from the real world of political and economic conflict and located in a mythological universe of instinctual passions and legendary hatreds."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Minds: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), p. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> Altina Waller, "Feuding in Appalachia: Evolution of a Cultural Stereotype," in

Stereotypes about mountain life pervaded the nation, and any attempts to portray Appalachia otherwise were openly ignored. For instance, when the highly popular local color writer Mary Noailles Murfree continued writing stories "emphasizing the quaint and picturesque qualities of mountain life," most editors refused to accept her work.<sup>3</sup> The focus on Appalachia had moved from one of wonder and romanticization, to a perceived problem that most Americans felt must be immediately remedied.

The tragedy at Carroll County serves as a prime example of the type of mythmaking that emerged concerning mountain culture. Newspaper reporters fed off of this idea and formed elaborate stories of alleged "demons" and desperadoes of the mountains which were fueled by their own preconceptions and the prevalent stereotypes put forth by local color writers years before.<sup>4</sup> Most truly imagined Appalachia as an isolated frontier which harbored a primitive people prone to violence and lawlessness. Though these characteristics were often associated with mountain residents, it "was not until after the murder of governor-elect of Kentucky on the steps of the state house in 1903 and the outbreak of feuding in 'bloody Breathitt' county...that Appalachia itself came to be seen as a 'community of lawlessness,' a thing unto itself."<sup>5</sup> Even though many areas of Appalachia were indeed becoming increasingly violent, few, if any individuals, made an attempt to examine causality. If any individual had, their findings would have inevitably emphasized something much different from cultural

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p. 362.

<sup>3</sup> Shapiro, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> G.M.N. Parker, *The Mountain Massacre*, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> Shapiro, p. 104.

characteristics or the nature of life in the mountains. Most would have discovered that social reform was not the answer to reducing the abrupt episodes of violence in Appalachia.

The increase in violence for most areas in Appalachia was firmly grounded in economic and political struggles following shortages of tillable farm land, a dramatic increase in population rates, lack of economic opportunities outside of agriculture, and the onset of a national depression in 1893. In Carroll County, the decades prior to the 1890s proved to be quiet ones, primarily because of the availability of land, and a significantly lower population, which created a sense of financial security and contentment among most residents. Only four murders marred the county's court records from 1870 to 1890. It wasn't until the 1890s that Carroll's once stable community was rocked by a series of violent homicides, filling the judge's court docket at an sudden and alarming rate. Only after 1920 did such rates once again drastically decrease.<sup>6</sup>

Catering to the public interest, newspapers and writers harnessed these abrupt instances of crime in the mountains and distorted them for the sake of headlines. Such reporters were largely responsible in molding the negative outlook of Appalachia and the immediate need to reform its people. Just as reporters labeled the Hatfields and the McCoys of Kentucky, "white, barbarous, savages," so too did the media characterize the Allens.<sup>7</sup> Despite their affluence, status, and community leadership, few outside of Appalachia could accept that the Allens or other mountaineers in any way resembled themselves. Even though a large number of homicides during this time were "directly

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<sup>6</sup> *Coronor's Inquest File, 1851-1959*, Carroll County Court Records, documents 1-266.

<sup>7</sup> Altina Waller, *Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 224.

related to political party conflict and featured participants who were frequently wealthy merchants and prominent community leaders, the press described them as irrational and barbaric."<sup>8</sup> Few realized the blatant contradictions of their reports.

Valentine Hatfield, a peace officer in Mingo County, West Virginia, involved in the McCoy feuds and sentenced to life imprisonment, was stunned at how the press made judgments about mountain culture. He complained, "Well...we have been tried, convicted, and sentenced by the press before they knew the facts of our case."<sup>9</sup> Sidna Allen viewed the media in a similar fashion. He lamented that the Allens were not only falsely accused immediately after the shootout, but that everyone "considered them "desperadoes of the worst type, having gotten their impressions from exaggerated newspaper stories of the Hillsville affair."<sup>10</sup>

On March 15, 1912, *The Roanoke Times* headlines read, "Judge T.L. Massie and Two Court Officers Murdered by Allen Gang at Hillsville."<sup>11</sup> The front page of the *New York Times* read "Outlaws Slay Judge in Court." The paper continued to state that the Allen "band burst into the courtroom and began its fusillade."<sup>12</sup> On the same day on the front page of *The (Richmond) Times Dispatch* the headlines read "Expecting Death in Discharge of Their Duty, Court Officials are Shot Down in Cold Blood by Carroll County Desperadoes." The Richmond paper commented that the court officials "fully expecting their doom...walked smiling and unperturbed into the very

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<sup>8</sup> Waller, "Feuding in Appalchia," pp. 361-362.

<sup>9</sup> Waller, *Feud*, p. 217.

<sup>10</sup> Sidna Allen, *Memoirs*, p. 82.

<sup>11</sup> *The Roanoke Times*, "Judge T.L. Massie and Two Court Officers Murdered by Allen Gang at Hillsville," vol. L1-No. 53, March 15, 1912, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> *The New York Times*, "Outlaws Slay Judge in Court," vol. LXI-No. 19,774, March 15, 1912, p. 1.

jaws of that death which they disdained to avert by any means which might have indicated weakness in the power of the courts." Reporter, Alexander Forward continued his account by stating that the tragedy was "the most horrible and dastardly blow at civilization in the history of Virginia."<sup>13</sup> Paperback writers created the same type of sensationalism. G.M.N. Parker, in his dramatic recounting of the tragedy, wrote that,

Dear Old Dominion tied crepe on the door, bowed her head and wept. So did America-so did the civilized world. Who would not turn toward Hillsville, as towards Calvary, wipe away a tear, and with one hand clasping his drawn sword, and the other lifted in patriotic wrath, swear by the Great Avenger of human wrongs that the blood of the Courthouse Martyrs should be his banner, under which his sword would not be sheathed until the last fragment of clanism is scourged from Virginia-from the whole United States!<sup>14</sup>

Many years later, some writers who researched the tragedy noticed that "so confusing and contradictory were some reports of the affair and so fraught were they with emotion, prejudice, exaggeration, and lurid imagination that even now...it is virtually impossible to find an indisputably true narrative of all the circumstances or to reach perfectly objective conclusions."<sup>15</sup>

The difficulty in the media's perception of the tragedy was not only who the papers defended or what they upheld as the truth, but how in their branding of the Allens as outlaws, they stereotyped the entire mountain culture. Bob Childress,

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<sup>13</sup> *The Times (Richmond) Dispatch*, "Expecting Death in Discharge of Their Duty, Court Officers are Shot Down in Cold Blood by Carroll County Desperados," No. 18,925, March 15, 1912, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Parker, p. 30.

<sup>15</sup> M. Clifford Harrison, "Murder in the Courtroom: Sensational Newspaper Accounts Distorted the Hillsville Massacre," in *Virginia Cavalcade*, Summer 1967, p. 41.

a minister on Buffalo Mountain near Hillsville, joined the posse which searched for the Allens. The amount of press that the tragedy received amazed Childress, and he was deeply disturbed at specific editorials he read.

The majority of mountain people are unprincipled ruffians. They make moonshine, 500 horsepower and swill it down; they carry on generous and gentle feuds in which little children are not spared, and deliberately plan a wholesale assassination, and when captured either assert they shot in self-defense, or with true coward streak deny the crime.<sup>16</sup>

Childress, agitated that society viewed the entire mountain community in this way, became further irritated when he read another editorial that stated, "the Scotch-Irish mountaineers are more ignorant than vicious, victims of heredity and alcohol, and now that their isolated region has been invaded, must change or perish."<sup>17</sup> Some papers even advocated the "extermination" of those mountain residents who refused reform. Other papers such as the *Louisville Courier Journal* stated that the problem of eugenics "reflects itself in the bloodshed that occurs frequently in the Virginia and Kentucky mountains, and elsewhere in the Appalachians." The problem was not so much primitiveness as a "degeneracy in the backwoods communities which produce the type of 'bad man' that figures in such outbreaks."<sup>18</sup>

On March 18, the *Mount Airy News* refuted claims of degeneracy by putting an article in the paper supporting Carroll County residents. The article asserted that

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Davids, *The Man Who Moved A Mountain*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), pp. 34-35.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 36.

<sup>18</sup> *The Times Dispatch*, "Newspapers Comment on Murder of Court Officials at Hillsville," No. 18,928, March 17, 1912, p. 7.

writers and newspaper reporters had done a "great injustice by sending out certain reports that are not true and greatly misrepresent the people." The paper noted that reports had circulated that "would have the outside world believe that the citizenship of Carroll is composed of a lawless element and that the people are poor and ignorant and depraved." The *Mount Airy News* argued that anyone driving through the county would take notice of the "large and fertile fields well fenced with wire...the large, comfortable and even expensive farm houses...stock barns...nice churches and school houses," the "large and spacious hotels," and "stores," as well as the "intelligent" citizens of Carroll and the surrounding counties. The paper went on to state that Carroll County people were by no means inferior.<sup>19</sup>

The struggle to show that mountain culture was not as people perceived it, however, proved useless. Journalists like T.C. Crawford were "convinced that it was not just the feudists who were lawless and violent," but that "Appalachian society and culture were the root of the problem."<sup>20</sup> Newspapers classed all Appalachian communities as a uniform culture. "Whether the feudists were" Hatfields, McCoys, or Allens, "was of no consequence; they were all guilty," and must be punished accordingly.<sup>21</sup>

### **Punishment: Swift and Severe**

The day after the tragedy, Virginia authorities felt immense pressure both within and outside of the state to charge someone for the deaths of the five individuals killed

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<sup>19</sup> *The Mount Airy News*, "The Massacre at Hillsville," vol. xxxiii, no. 36, March 18, 1912.

<sup>20</sup> Waller, *Feud*, p. 223.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 233.

within the Carroll County courtroom. Newspaper reporters played an integral part in advocating the swift capture and elimination of those involved, despite the fact that no one knew for certain who fired the first shots that morning or whose bullets were responsible for the deaths of the victims. The implications for Governor William Mann of Virginia were made clear in papers all across the country. Virginia must serve as an example that such violence would not be tolerated. For instance, the *Raleigh Times* reported that "the civilized world will watch Virginia in this instance and will hope that the reputation of her course will be sustained and that speedy and sure punishment will be meted out to these men who have defied the commonwealth."<sup>22</sup> The governor knew that he had to act quickly in apprehending the Allens, who were already targeted in newspapers as those solely responsible for the courtroom tragedy. The *Wilmington Dispatch* which characterized the tragedy as "a premeditated bloody insult to civilization" stated that the incident

demands there be not a moments delay, no matter the cost in hunting down and putting to death these brutes in human form. If it were necessary to drive them out of their dens, why even mountains should be leveled and the militia should storm with big field guns, but the lesson that law and order shall prevail must be taught. Only the quick and sure punishment of these criminals will teach the lesson that future protection calls for.<sup>23</sup>

Even though the Allens had yet to go to trial, and no autopsies were performed, the governor worked hard to locate them for prosecution. The papers demanded it. The *New York Press* wrote that "the unexampled outrage to civilized authority is one which the state cannot let go unpunished, even if it should be necessary to enlist

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<sup>22</sup> *The Times Dispatch*, "Newspapers Comment on Murder of Court Officials at Hillsville," No. 18,928, March 17, 1912.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

half the male population in the purpose."<sup>24</sup> The *Petersburg-Index Appeal* noted that "the outraged law should be avenged with all speed," while the *Baltimore Sun* asserted that it was "full time" that Virginia "stamp out the spirit of bloodthirsty lawlessness."<sup>25</sup> Pressure went beyond just the capture of the Allens however. Most advocated severe punishments for their alleged crimes. The *Pittsburgh Dispatch* echoed the sentiments of many papers when it declared that "it would certainly be worth while for Virginia to see that such gangs are exterminated."<sup>26</sup>

### **Death Sentences Carried Out**

On March 28, 1913, Floyd Allen said goodbye to his son Claude and, accompanied by prison guards, limped to the electric chair in the Richmond penitentiary. After officers strapped Allen in, they carried out the sentence at 1:22 p.m. Within minutes the surgeon pronounced Floyd Allen deceased and officials quickly removed his body. A few moments later, according to the *Roanoke Times*, Claude Allen marched with "measured stride, his head held high, his wonderful nerve with him to the end. As he took his seat, he moved his arms to assist the guards who were adjusting the straps, and like his father, he went silently and unafraid."<sup>27</sup> Many held out hope that his execution would be postponed. In fact, the state had rescheduled both executions numerous times because of a growing sentiment in the state to save Claude Allen's

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> *The Times Dispatch*, "Newspapers Comment on Murder of Court Officials at Hillsville," No. 18,927, March 16, 1912.

<sup>26</sup> *The Times Dispatch*, "Newspapers Comment on Murder of Court Officials at Hillsville," No. 18,928, March 17, 1912.

<sup>27</sup> *The Roanoke Times*, "Allens Meet Death Bravely," March 29, 1913.

life who many felt had fired only in defense of his father. After four postponements however, the governor held firm and Claude Allen's sentence was carried out.

After the executions, officials took the bodies to Blyle's Funeral Home where a vast crowd gathered and passed through to view the remains without Victor Allen's permission. Reports indicate that as many as 15,000 people flocked to view the bodies. At times, "the throngs became so dense that a special force of police had to be sent to the scene to maintain order."<sup>28</sup> On March 30, 1913, Floyd and Claude Allen's caskets were brought back by train to Mount Airy, North Carolina and taken to the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains, fourteen miles south of Hillsville, for burial. Nearly 5,000 people from all over the county attended the service. Buried side by side, family and friends erected a grave marker with the epitaph, "Murdered by the Judiciary of The State of Virginia over the Protest of 40,000 people."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Gardner, *Courthouse Tragedy*, p. 59.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 77.

## Epilogue

On March 16, 1916, the Allens once again made tragic headlines. The front page of the *Mount Airy News* read, "Jack Allen Murdered! Last of Famous Clan Killed by Noted Blockader." Jack Allen, Floyd Allen's brother, had stopped at the home of Mrs. Roberta Martin on his way back from Mount Airy, North Carolina. While there, a man by the name of Will McCraw also visited the Martin residence. He was known by many as a noted criminal. The two men talked for some time and during the course of the evening, the conversation switched to the courthouse tragedy and more specifically to Wesley Edwards. McCraw reportedly made the remark that "Edwards did not have the nerve people gave him credit for."<sup>30</sup> An argument between the two men ensued and shortly thereafter, McCraw fired two bullets into the body of Jack Allen. "McCraw ran from the room, his clothes and face covered with the...blood of his antagonist."<sup>31</sup>

Controversy surrounded this event as well. Some believed that because the detectives could not keep the five year prison sentence agreed upon for Jack Allen's son, Friel, at his surrender in 1912, that he was murdered. Before his death he started to press for compliance with the agreement. Others simply viewed Jack Allen as the last member of the ill-fated Allen clan. The paper coldly declared that, "with the passing of Jack Allen the last of the members of the now famous clan is gone."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *The Mount Airy News*, "Jack Allen Murdered," vol. xxxviii, no. 38, March 16, 1916.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

### **Pardoned**

Several years later in the early 1920s, Sidna Allen noticed that a number of individuals had organized a movement to have each of the Allens pardoned. The petitions succeeded. In 1922, Virginia's governor pardoned Friel Allen and Sidney Edwards after a ten year imprisonment. A different governor, Harry F. Byrd, pardoned Sidna Allen and Wesley Edwards four years later in 1926.

None of the Allens returned to Carroll County. Their wealth, homes, and businesses were now gone. Wesley and Sidney Edwards, along with their mother, Alvirtia Edwards moved to Richmond, Virginia. Friel Allen, took his few belongings and moved across the country to California. Sidna Allen and his family decided to reside in Leakesville, North Carolina, approximately 86 miles from Hillsville. As for Victor Allen and his mother, Floyd Allen's son and widow, they moved to New Jersey. Sidna Allen believed that she was dealt the "cruellest blows" of all. The tragedy "broke her heart, bowed her frame, and sent her to reside among strangers far from her native Carroll hills," where for the rest of her life, she continued to grieve for lost her husband and son.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Sidna Allen, *Memoirs*, p. 109.

**GENEALOGY CHART  
FOR THE ALLEN FAMILY**

\* The number following a name indicates the generation of the individual. \*

I. William Allen Sr.<sup>1</sup> [1725-1788]

married Mary Lewis

From this marriage were the following children:

- A. Ruben Allen<sup>2</sup>
- B. Meredith Allen<sup>2</sup>
- C. Pleasant Allen<sup>2</sup>
- D. Mary Allen<sup>2</sup>
- E. Darling Allen<sup>2</sup>
- F. James Allen<sup>2</sup>
- G. Another daughter<sup>2</sup> (name unknown)
- H. William Allen Jr.<sup>2</sup> [d. 1823-ancestor of the Carroll County Allens]

II. William Allen Jr.<sup>2</sup> [Son of William Allen; Fought in American Revolution]

married Ann Stuart of North Carolina

From this marriage were the following children:

- A. John Allen<sup>3</sup>; farmer [1784-1877]
- B. Robert Allen<sup>3</sup>; fought in War of 1812 [1792-1879]
- C. Carr Allen<sup>3</sup>; farmer who lived in Va.
- D. Bailey Allen<sup>3</sup>; farmer who lived in Va.

[Carr and Bailey Allen are direct ancestors of the Carroll County Allens]

- E. Willam Allen<sup>3</sup>; moved to Ohio
- F. James Allen<sup>3</sup>; farmer, also moved to Ohio
- G. Mary Allen<sup>3</sup>
- H. Henry Allen<sup>3</sup>
- I. Isaac Allen<sup>3</sup>

J. Nancy Allen<sup>3</sup>

K. Anna Allen<sup>3</sup>; moved to Ohio

III. Bailey Allen<sup>3</sup> [son of William Allen Jr.]

From his marriage were the following children:

A. Lemuel Allen<sup>4</sup>; [killed in the Civil War]

B. Carr Allen<sup>4</sup>; [served in the Civil War]

C. William Allen<sup>4</sup>; [b. 1835, served in the Civil War]

D. Bailey Jr.<sup>4</sup>

IV. Carr Allen<sup>3</sup> [son of William Allen Jr.]

From his marriage were the following children:

A. Jackson Allen<sup>4</sup>

B. Robert Allen<sup>4</sup>

C. Jeremiah Allen<sup>4</sup>

D. John Allen<sup>4</sup>

V. Jeremiah Allen<sup>4</sup> [ 1825-1897; son of Carr Allen]  
married Nancy Combs

From this marriage were the following children:

A. William Anderson Allen<sup>5</sup> [b.1847]

B. Washington Allen<sup>5</sup> [b.1849]

C. Jeston Allen<sup>5</sup> [b.1851]

D. Floyd Allen<sup>5</sup> [b.1857]

E. Jasper (Jack) Allen<sup>5</sup> [b.1858]

F. Alvirtia Allen<sup>5</sup> [b.1861]

G. Carenia Allen<sup>5</sup> [b.1864]

H. Sidna Allen<sup>5</sup> [b.1866]

I. Garland Allen<sup>5</sup> [b.1868]

J. Victor Allen<sup>5</sup> [b.1854]

VI. Jasper Allen<sup>5</sup> [son of Jeremiah Allen]

married Catherine E. Easter

From this marriage were the following children:

A. Jestin Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1880]

B. Emaline Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1881]

- C. Daniel Allen<sup>6</sup> [?]
- D. Walter P. Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1886]
- E. Barnett Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1888]
- F. Caroline Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1890]
- G. Friel Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1892]
- H. Lawrence Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1894]
- I. William Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1895]
- J. Viola Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1899]
- K. Lilia Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1901]
- L. Troy Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1903]

VII. Alvirtia Allen<sup>5</sup> [b. 1861; daughter of Jeremiah Allen]  
 married John Jasper Edwards

From this marriage were the following children:

- A. William Sidney Edwards<sup>6</sup> [b.1889]
- B. Wesley V. Edwards<sup>6</sup> [b.1891]
- C. Luther Edwards
- D. Lina Edwards

VIII. Sidna Allen<sup>5</sup> [b. 1866; son of Jeremiah Allen]  
 married Bettie J. Mitchell

From this marriage were the following children:

- A. Marguerite Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1902]
- B. Pauline Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1908]

IX. Floyd Allen<sup>5</sup> [b. 1858; son of Jeremiah Allen]  
 married Frances Edwards

From this marriage were the following children:

- A. Jeremiah W. Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1880]
- B. Victor M. Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1883]
- C. Claude A. Allen<sup>6</sup> [b.1889]

\* This information was compiled through the help of Savada Bedsaul, the granddaughter of Jasper Allen, and her husband

Woodrow Bedsaul. Also through the extensive notes of Ethel A. Wolfe, whose grandfather was a fourth generation William Allen. Through these notes, I was able to gather some helpful information. J. Sidna Allen's Memoirs was also used as a source (pp. 7-13) as well as the Voter Registration of Carroll County 1902-1903 put together by Virginia and Richard Phillips, pp. 2-3. \*

**DEXTER GOAD AND  
FAMILY**

I. Dexter Goad [1867-1939]

Married Martha Ellen Quesenberry, Jan. 1, 1889

From this marriage were the following children:

- A. Mary [b. 1889]
- B. Byrum P. [b. 1891]
- C. Grosvener M. [b. 1893]
- D. Martha [b. 1895]
- E. Robley [b. 1899]
- F. Paul [b. 1902]
- G. Clara E. [b. 1905]

\* This information was compiled through the help of Marie Jackson, Dexter Goad's granddaughter. \*

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