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**“A CROOKED DEATH”: COATESVILLE,
PENNSYLVANIA AND THE LYNCHING
OF ZACHARIAH WALKER**

Prophet Andrew Jones, an itinerant black minister, preached a religious revival at the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Coatesville, Pennsylvania during the first week of August 1911. “The colored prophet,” the local newspaper noted, predicted a “great disaster,” a “great misfortune was about to fall on the town.” Jones counseled local blacks to “make no attempt at violence although they would be sorely tested.” Less than two weeks later, Jones’ prediction came true when a company policeman was killed and a black man was lynched. This essay will briefly describe the events of the lynching, but more importantly, will focus on the multiple factors that helped precipitate what John Jay Chapman called an “American Tragedy.”¹

Zachariah Walker was an obscure lever-puller at the Worth Brothers Steel Company, one of the two behemoth steel mills that dominated Coatesville. Brought from rural Virginia as an unskilled laborer, Walker hoped for a better life outside the Jim Crow South. After drinking all day Saturday, August 12, 1911, the black man staggered toward home and discharged his pistol twice to frighten two Polish workers. Edgar Rice, a commissioned coal and iron policeman of the Worth Brothers Company, heard the shots, found Walker along the darkened road and proceeded to question him. “I got a little sassy with him,” Walker later explained, and when Rice attempted an arrest, the two men began to fight. “I was too quick for him,” Walker later

bragged. "I had my gun out first," and shot Rice two times. The policeman staggered wildly down the street and died on the steps of a small immigrant store. Sensing the gravity of his crime, Walker fled the area and spent the night hiding in a barn. In reporting the confrontation thirty-six hours later, the *Coatesville Record* called the murder of Rice "the most awful crime in the history of Coatesville."²

Word of Rice's murder raced through Coatesville like heat lightning on a hot summer night. Edgar Rice, a former borough police officer, was one of the town's most popular and respected citizens. Word of his violent death shocked the close-knit community. Small crowds gathered along the streets Saturday evening and openly discussed the murder, but due to darkness and a steadily falling rain, most people went home distraught, hoping the police would soon find the fugitive. Police chief Charles E. Umsted, an adequate and politically adroit policeman, pressed his small force into search efforts, but darkness, the rain and fatigue, hampered the search. The all-night vigil proved fruitless. Early Sunday afternoon, volunteers from the Brandywine Fire Company found Walker hiding in a tree. As they approached, the black man attempted suicide with his revolver, managing only to wound himself severely in the jaw. Walker was taken to the police station, where a large crowd had gathered. Given the severity of his wounds, Walker was taken to the Coatesville hospital where surgery was performed to remove a bullet lodged in his jaw. Following surgery, he was placed in a private room, his arms restrained in a straight jacket and his right leg shackled to the iron bedpost. Several hours later, Charles Umsted, police officer Stanley Howe and Chester County District Attorney Robert Gawthrop heard Walker's confession. "I killed him easy," Walker boasted, although he insisted that Rice was killed in self-defense. Satisfied with the confession, Gawthrop and Umsted returned to town; Stanley Howe remained to protect the prisoner.³

Walker's arrest attracted considerable attention in Coatesville. Crowds gathered throughout the town in the early evening; the largest was located at the borough's social and political center, the Brandywine Fire Company on Main Street, where Rice had been a popular member. Wherever people gathered on "that quiet Sabbath evening," there were whispered suggestions that Zach Walker should be lynched to avenge the murder. At this point the people talked about what should be done, but there was no action. Two events helped agitate the citizens: the display of Edgar Rice's body in his home and Chief Umsted's loud discourse on Walker's confession before the throng at the Brandywine Fire Company. Small groups of people walked to the hospital to scout

Walker's location and observe the police protection, then returned to the growing crowds along Main Street. The group at the fire station was informed that "it was a cinch to get the nigger, that there was only one man on duty and that was officer Howe." About eight o'clock an angry mob left the fire hall for the one mile march to the hospital. Along the way Coatesville residents joined the procession, some leaving church services to join the crowd. One witness recalled that the road to the hospital was a log jam of people walking shoulder to shoulder. Many in the crowd were women and children.⁴

As a mob estimated at 2000 gathered around the hospital, a group of twelve to fifteen men stormed into the building. Stanley Howe, supposedly protecting Walker, was easily brushed aside and the men descended upon the hapless black man. When the men realized that Walker was shackled to the bed and Howe did not have the keys, they tore the bed apart and dragged the black man outside, while still connected to the bedpost. Various people took turns dragging Walker out Strode Avenue about a half-mile beyond the borough limits. Along the route, mob members threatened Walker, poked and threw objects at him, but the leaders took care that their prisoner not be rendered unconscious during this ordeal. Their vengeance required that Walker remain conscious so that the ordeal was both painful and agonizing.⁵

At an open grassy area opposite the Newlin farmhouse, the mob stopped and piled split-rail fence posts and straw from a nearby barn in a funeral pyre. As Walker was thrust on the fire, he pleaded with his executioners: "I killed Rice in self-defense. Don't give me a crooked death because I'm not white." One witness claimed Walker's "screams could be heard a half mile away." Three times the black man struggled out of the inferno and each time someone pushed him back. An area newspaper reported that "five thousand men, women and children stood by and watched the proceedings as though it were a ball game or another variety of outdoor sport." No one made an attempt to stop the lynching. The *Coatesville Record* noted the politeness of the crowd, with men stepping aside to allow women and children a better view of the burning. While some waited for the ashes to cool to collect souvenir bones, most witnesses went home with the feeling that Edgar Rice's death was avenged (Widow Rice agreed, but expressed remorse in not lighting the fire herself). The people of Coatesville believed the incident was over and should be forgotten; justice was served and now it was time to return to a normal life. They were grossly mistaken.⁶

Reaction to the lynching was both swift and hostile. Virtually every major newspaper ran editorials condemning Coatesville; Pennsylvania

papers were the most vociferous in their denunciation. Afro-American newspapers pointed to the lack of justice and the disgrace to humanity. The mob actions prompted ex-President Theodore Roosevelt to begin an anti-lynching editorial in *The Outlook* with specific references to Coatesville. Southern newspapers quickly noted that racial lynching, long associated with the South, was not exclusively confined to one section.

Pennsylvania Governor John K. Tener publicly declared that the Commonwealth would do everything in its power to enforce the law and punish the guilty parties. Legal authorities launched an investigation that was marred by confusion, misinformation and a conscious lack of cooperation from the self-righteous citizens of Coatesville. There were numerous false arrests, and errant reports carried in the local newspaper. Originally, townfolk stated that Southerners, "strangers in town," committed the lynching. Later, foreign immigrants were accused of the crime. The grand jury interrogated 160 witnesses, most of whom had to be subpoenaed before they would testify. In its final report, the grand jury denounced what it termed a "conspiracy of silence," a well-ordered campaign to conceal the crime and protect the participants. Townspeople wished that the notoriety would fade and the whole affair would, in the words of one resident, "blow over."⁷

On September 20, 1911, eight men were indicted for murder in the lynching of Zachariah Walker. Included in this group were Police Chief Charles Umsted and officer Stanley Howe for involuntary manslaughter. Both officers, the report noted, were blatantly negligent in their duties and failed on several occasions to prevent the lynching. In October, 1911, the trials for the original eight men indicted began in West Chester. The Commonwealth did not press charges against one man, and another who admitted participating in the lynching, turned state's evidence and became a witness for the prosecution. The prosecution presented its two strongest cases first: Joseph Swartz (Schwartz) and George Stoll (Stahl) testified that they were a part of the mob and witnesses attested only to their presence at the lynching. The juries deliberated a short time (three hours for Swartz and forty-five minutes for Stoll) and acquitted both men. The other four men indicted for murder were tried and one by one they were acquitted, in spite of strong evidence the grand jury had gathered against them. The remaining cases were rescheduled for the January 1912 term. Between October 1911 and February 1912, seven more men were indicted for murder. Nearly one-half of the fifteen defendants were under the age of twenty-one.⁸

In January, 1912, the Commonwealth took an unprecedented step

and petitioned the State Supreme Court for a change of venue because “a well-defined, deep seated, deliberately formed and openly expressed public sentiment” existed and “no white man will be punished for lynching a black” in Chester County. It was suggested that the remaining trials be transferred to adjacent Lancaster County. The State Supreme Court denied the change of venue on constitutional grounds and the outstanding cases were rescheduled for the May term. The prosecution brought “the strongest [case] they had against any person under indictment” as the first case and after an extremely short deliberation, the jury acquitted the defendant. Dismayed and frustrated, chief prosecutor Gawthrop asked that all charges against the remaining defendants be dropped; to continue, he observed, “would only tend to humiliate the administration of justice.” The jury quickly returned not guilty verdicts against each of the accused. No one was ever convicted in the lynching of Zachariah Walker. Commentaries on the acquittals appeared throughout the nation. Perhaps the *Harrisburg Telegraph* was the most matter of fact in the headline of a brief article buried on page ten: “Lynchers of Walker Will Go Unpunished.” The NAACP’s *The Crisis* was more emotional in its response. “America knows her true heroes,” editor W.E.B. Dubois wrote, “. . . the best traditions of the Anglo-Saxon civilization are safe. Let the eagle scream.”⁹

There is more to this tragedy than the veneer of the lynching. There is a second story, behind the scenes, that helps account for this tragedy. In a particular sense, Coatesville, Pennsylvania, was a town caught up in history. By the summer of 1911 Coatesville had come to embody the salient features (and tensions) of the national experience. Within a single generation, Coatesville experienced a physical and demographic transformation of unprecedented scope. Unlike many communities that underwent this revolutionary change, Coatesville responded with violence.

Coatesville was a steel town dominated by two leviathan mills—Lukens Iron and Steel Company and Worth Brothers Steel Company—that were central to the culture of the community. Between 1890 and 1920, as the steel works prospered and added new plate mills or increased productivity, Coatesville grew at an alarming rate. The period of most accelerated growth was from 1900 to 1910. New population groups arrived to work in the mills and the town took on new features. As more and more strangers arrived in the traditionally native-white Coatesville, residents found it difficult to adjust to or accommodate the newcomers. Pluralism brought new problems and eventual polarization. As an example of this polarization, one week before the lynching the

Coatesville Record published the following editorial comments:

Residents of Coatesville can well appreciate the social changes that are taking place in America by reason of the influx of foreign-born people. . . . At first glance the prospect does not look very encouraging, especially in Coatesville, where immigration has reached an acute stage. The foreigner is 'cussed' more, probably than any other class. The reason for this is that we see only the bad side of him, the police court side, the whiskey drinking and carousing side.¹⁰

United States census data reveals that Coatesville experienced two separate but related migrations in the first decade of the century. In 1890 there were 3,680 people living in Coatesville and that number rose to 5,721 by 1900; 87% were classified as native white. After 1903, the foreign-born and Afro-American populations increased dramatically and out of proportion to the increase of the native white population. In 1910, Coatesville's population was 11,084, nearly double the 1900 population and three times the number in 1890. The native white population declined to 73% of the total as 1200 European immigrants (principally Russian, Italian and Austro-Hungarian) and 1100 Southern blacks flooded into the borough. Between 1900 and 1910, Coatesville had the largest percentage increase in the black population of any community in Pennsylvania. By the end of the decade, the foreign-born and black population constituted over one-fourth of the total population, a dramatic change that took place in less than ten years. Coatesville, then, experienced the brunt of the "New Immigration" and the Great Migration of blacks from the South simultaneously. The steel mills employed labor agents to recruit unskilled workers. In addition, the town's prosperity acted as a magnet, drawing a steady flow of newcomers. But with the economic good times came new social tensions.¹¹

The established residents of Coatesville accepted the newcomers begrudgingly, if at all. An indication of this attitude was the discernible pattern of ethnic and racial separation that appeared in the borough. Native white and native black neighborhoods had existed side by side in Coatesville, but with distinct boundaries that were not crossed. Blacks lived in the "East End," surrounded on three sides by the white community (railroad tracks made the fourth side). Neither the native white nor black residents welcomed the newcomers to their established neighborhoods. The immigrants were forced to seek housing away from the native residents, clustering in ethnic "patches" on the periphery of town. The steel companies reinforced this pattern of spatial separation

and geographic isolation by offering inexpensive, company-owned housing away from the residential areas. What emerged were ramshackled areas called Rock Run, The Spruces, and Bernardtown, where recent immigrants, white and black, resided. These sections were at least one mile from the Coatesville business district and just beyond the borough limits. Ironically, the inhabitants of these areas were a part of Coatesville, but the native population considered them as outsiders because they lived beyond the boundary proper. Area newspapers frequently commented on the number of foreign-born and black immigrants that congregated along Main Street on Saturday evenings and noted they were outsiders. The papers also editorialized on the illegal and violent activities that occurred in Rock Run, The Spruces and Bernardtown, and asked that county and township officials (not borough authorities) bring order to these areas.¹²

In addition to this demographic change, Coatesville citizens also witnessed physical changes. Boosters proclaimed the borough a modern city with many fine amenities. "IDEAL TOWN FOR HOME AND INDUSTRY" read the Business Men's Association plaque in the "Twentieth Century Park." Residents took pride in their "White Way," a stretch of the business district on Main Street that was "better lighted than Broadway in New York." Besides a reputation as a stable community where jobs were usually plentiful and the people friendly, the town boasted several motion picture houses, a half-dozen banks and hotels, a number of concert bands and an opera house. In many ways, Coatesville had taken on the cosmopolitan mien of a twentieth century city, but it also retained less glamorous features of an earlier era. Only a few streets were macadamized, the remainder were dirt with a thin layer of trap rock. In summer dust became such a problem that people closed their windows, even on the hottest days. The fire companies regularly oiled and watered the streets to keep dust to a minimum. In winter the same roads became muddy quagmires or an abyss of frozen ruts. Residents were required to maintain the roadway in front of their home and pay for sidewalk construction. After a normal rain, sewers would overflow into the streets and a stretch of Main Street known as "the Flats" would flood for several hundred yards. Garbage choked the alleyways. Wild and domestic dogs roamed the streets in such alarming numbers that the police would embark on dog-killing expeditions. Each year there was either the threat of typhoid fever or an epidemic because of the poor water filtration system. Coatesville residents knew when spring arrived because they found tadpoles, frogs and small fish streaming from their water faucets. On the eve of the Walker lynching,

the Borough Council was beleaguered by such constant irritants, not to mention what appeared to long-time residents as a rising crime rate associated with newcomers. Coatesville, an industrial island surrounded by a sea of agriculture, was in some ways a part of the twentieth century, and in other ways it remained a provincial, small town.

The remainder of this essay will be concerned with the interconnection between the lynching and an unprecedented demographic change that occurred in Coatesville in those years. This is an attempt to come up with a plausible framework in which to understand not only the lynching but also the dynamics of social change and adjustment in the early twentieth century. As the subsequent investigation uncovered, the lynching of Zachariah Walker that "quiet Sabbath evening" was intimately tied to the web of community relations in this middling size steel town. The Coatesville incident provides a useful opportunity to consider the application of social theory to concrete historical experience, and in the process discern some larger meaning from the events.¹⁴

For several generations historians have struggled with explaining the phenomenon of lynching and its repetition over two centuries of American history. Although their interpretations have varied, with some proving more durable than others, all would agree with Ida B. Wells' observation that Afro-Americans were "Lynched for Everything or Nothing."¹⁵ Traditional explanations have ranged from an emphasis on the persistence of racism as a motivation for anti-black violence to an assortment of social and economic causes. Competition in such areas as employment and residential housing are perceived by whites as threats to their established position and authority in society. Others have suggested that lynching was a continuation of frontier vigilantism, rooted deep in the American experience. Lynchings, and other forms of racial violence, are seen as mechanisms of social control which send a powerful message to the intended victims.¹⁶

Recently two novel interpretations of lynching have become the subject of controversy. In his book *Chains of Fear*, Michael Cassity suggests that lynchings should be understood in relation to the competitive market imperatives generated by the intrusion of capitalism into a rural, agrarian (read "traditional") culture. Emphasizing the social and economic upheaval this process causes, Cassity argues the crime of lynching was a response by displaced and dispossessed persons to the crisis of *Modernization*.¹⁷ The other, more challenging thesis is presented by Joel Williamson in *The Crucible of Race*. With great sensitivity to the character of black-white relations after Emancipation, Williamson stresses a psycho-sexual impulse in Southern lynchings. In

the minds of white Southerners, he maintains, race prejudice fused with a near hysteria over black male sexuality to create an unholy crucible which found its release in lynchings.¹⁸

Customary explanations of lynchings have stressed the overwhelmingly Southern character of the phenomenon, an emphasis which makes sense in light of the prevailing statistics. Whether these explanations have a usefulness in considering lynchings outside the South is a matter open to debate, depending on the particular argument advanced. Especially in the case of the latter two interpretations, such factors may prove of limited or no significance when careful analysis is brought to bear. But for all of the shortcomings in the modernization thesis, Cassity has reinforced a critical point. Black-white relations, and by implication lynchings, must not be separated from other types of social relationships, but should be judged within a context of overlapping group contacts within a particular community at a particular time.¹⁹ Such an observation does not detract from the special character of race relations; it simply argues for an assessment within a broader context than most historians have allowed for.

When seen from the vantage point of Coatesville in the summer of 1911, there are layers of degrees of inter-group contact that have to be kept in mind in analyzing the Walker lynching. The interplay of native whites, native Afro-Americans, newly arrived Southern blacks and East Europeans created a milieu quite different from the circumstances of most, if not all, other lynchings in the period. An appreciation of the web of relationships, which was capable of fostering conflicting loyalties, is crucial to understanding the elements that went into the lynching, the response of the several population groups, and the subsequent trials and swift acquittals. Put another way, the lynching of Zachariah Walker was deeply rooted in the pattern of everyday interactions in the community.

In order to successfully integrate the two-fold drama that was acted out in Coatesville—the lynching and the process of social change and adjustment—conventional historical interpretations of lynchings are of limited use. In this instance, the social theory of Emile Durkheim and Kai Erikson provides a more complete explanation of this “American Tragedy.” In particular, it is the theory of *boundary maintenance* that Erikson developed in this book *Wayward Puritans*, a study of seventeenth century social deviance that built on Durkheim’s earlier writings, that is most helpful in discerning something of the participants and their world.²⁰

Emile Durkheim realized earlier than most sociologists the extent to

which a society would go to preserve order and stability. He argued that a close connection existed between criminality, deviant behavior, and repressive justice. In punishing acts of deviance, a society, a "collective conscience" in Durkheim's words, not only shows its displeasure with the criminal, it reaffirms the consensus on which harmony is predicated. In such a manner are the limits of acceptable conduct delineated. The more serious the threat to society, the more repressive the punishment inflicted by agents who in one manner or another are protected by the larger group.²¹

Drawing upon this insight, Kai Erikson formulated the theory of boundary maintenance to explain how communities react to defiance of the shared system of values and beliefs. In any society there is an understood (and accepted) set of relationships, a place for each member and group. These relationships are defined by law *and* custom. "The deviant," Erikson wrote, "is a person whose activities have moved outside the margins of the group, and when the community calls him to account for that vagrancy it is making a statement about the nature and placement of its boundaries."²² Quite obviously, the issue of acceptable conduct is directly tied to the question of authority. It is possible for a person to be within the law but to have transgressed the custom(s) of a community, and in Erikson's words to have threatened its integrity. Single encounters between a deviant and the community must be judged as "only fragments of an ongoing social process."²³

Punishment, acts of repressive justice, are intended to return the offender to the fold or in Durkheim's words to "expiate" the deviant. In such a way, society is both defended and avenged. Both Durkheim and Erikson recognized that there are moments of crisis when members of the group find mere penal sanctions of recourse to the courts, inadequate to the occasion; moderation simply will not suffice. In those instances, repressive justice sanctioned by the community is an extreme, though socially acceptable mechanism of restitution, of "boundary maintenance."²⁴

It is possible to see Coatesville, Pennsylvania, as a community in the throes of a boundary crisis, much as Erikson thought Salem Village experienced more than two centuries earlier. Such a view allows for the widest latitude in coming to terms with the lynching of August 13, 1911, and what followed over the next nine months. Jostled about by more than a decade of accelerated growth and the arrival of foreign immigrants—East Europeans and Southern blacks—the native inhabitants, white and black, found their world deteriorating. Not only was the borough changing physically with the expansion of the mills and the

development of new neighborhoods on the fringe of town, there were psychological adjustments as well.

Especially after 1903, when Lukens and Worth Brothers began to more vigorously recruit unskilled workers from Europe and the American South, the local newspapers are replete with accounts of immigrant drunkenness and disorderly conduct. It appears that an inordinate number of cases of violent crimes brought before the local courts were from Coatesville and involved immigrants. The *Record*, which led the defense of the accused and the town after the lynching, seemed never to miss the occasion to editorialize on the wayward behavior and indiscretions of "Hunkies" and Southern blacks, one of whom was named Zachariah Walker.²⁵ Clearly, in the minds of many inhabitants of Coatesville, Zachariah Walker did not stand alone; he represented the tide of change. By the summer of 1911, it is fair to say, the long-time residents had come to expect such unsettling behavior from the newcomers, and it was an extremely distasteful gruel for them to swallow. The fact that both groups of immigrants were excluded from the established neighborhoods reinforced the perception of them as outsiders who brought unwelcomed changes.²⁶ This attitude was shared by native whites and native blacks. There is no record of a native black coming to Walker's defense during his ordeal or afterwards.

If the commentary in the local newspapers is to be taken seriously, and it should be, Coatesville was a town whose established way of life, whose time-worn pattern of everyday interactions, was being sorely tested. Something of a siege mentality could be found throughout the borough. It was as if psychology, individual and collective, was waiting for circumstance. That circumstance came on the evening of August 12, 1911, when Edgar Rice, a respected figure in the community, came upon the person of Zachariah Walker on a darkened lane near the borough limits. Within twenty-four hours of Rice's murder, Walker was burned alive. Not a word of protest was uttered. The fifteen men indicted for the lyching were all found not guilty in short order, as a well-established "conspiracy of silence" shielded them from harm.

As defined by the residents of Coatesville, Zach Walker was an outsider, a "deviant" in the classic sense. A Pennsylvania newspaper called him "a negro desperado." Not only had he broken the law in killing Edgar Rice. He also violated a solemn custom, the established racial etiquette. The Rice-Walker confrontation assumed a greater significance in the eyes of the community than simply a personal quarrel that had an unfortunate end. Walker's was an offense against the public order, a challenge to the community's boundaries if you will. In a very

real sense on the evening of August 13, Zachariah Walker ceased to be a flesh-and-blood human being and became an object to those who participated in his death. In their eyes his burning was an act of purgation, and instance of repressive justice so swift and complete. Coatesville was defended and avenged. The limits of acceptable conduct were grotesquely reaffirmed in the smoldering ashes which souvenir hunters rummaged through the next morning. There can be no doubt that this lynching fostered a consensus and conformity of striking proportions. The events of the next nine months bore this out. Throughout the entire affair, down to the final acquittals in May, 1912, the *Record* led the chorus in defense of the accused and the community. The paper bitterly resented criticism from the outside, which it interpreted as unnecessary and unwarranted interference.²⁷

That native blacks said and did little or nothing in defense of Walker is understandable. In the words of a popular expression of the day, Walker might have been *skinfolk* but he was not *kinfolk*. From the standpoint of existing relationships, Walker was an outsider to the native Afro-American community. He was one of a kind of folk that meant trouble by their very presence. The conduct of the new Southern immigrants threatened the precarious balance that existed between the races in Coatesville. In this instance, it seems, race instilled no special loyalty. Contrary to the *Record* account, it was not Prophet Jones' prediction which explained black quiescence.²⁸ The roots of that dilemma lay much deeper. (The foreign-born population chose not to come to Walker's aid either. Perhaps this was not their quarrel and silence was prudent.)

Cast in such a light, the varying dynamics at work in Coatesville in the summer of 1911 are easier to comprehend. Those involved in the lynching thought they were acting with a higher purpose, a purpose that the community would sanction. Theirs was not a wild or irrational action, but a course which seemed reasonable and justified. It was a case where psychology created a mechanism of justification, but which also bred a tendency toward self-deception. In the minds of the lynchers and their followers, they were defending *honor*, and not to have responded would have been an act of cowardice, an occasion of shame. "Honor . . .," Edward Ayers has written, "shaped character and bred violence."²⁹ This insight is as true of Coatesville, a northern steel town, as it is of the American South at the turn-of-the-century.

A culture of violence permeated Coatesville, and other steel towns large and small. Work was violent, with debilitating injuries a constant concern. Leisure also carried the potential for violence, especially when

centered around the local saloon. Two of the greatest concerns in 1911 in Coatesville were the amount of off-hour drinking and the number of persons who carried unregistered pistols. Violence was a fact of life; it was expected and it fostered a peculiar concept of chivalry. This was a world in which one's manhood was routinely tested. For young boys manhood was not to be assumed, it had to be earned, and defended.³⁰ It is not without significance that nearly half of the defendants in the lynching trials were under the age of twenty-one, and by the accounts of numerous observers they were the ones most agitated on the road to Sarah Newlin's farm.

Eight months after the final acquittals, Governor John Tener addressed a session of the Pennsylvania General Assembly.³¹ Citing as authority a 1901 State Supreme Court decision, Tener called on the legislature to revoke the charter of the Borough of Coatesville: "People of this Borough by fomenting murder and consorting with murderers have not only violated the laws and obstructed the administration of justice, but in my judgment have forfeited the high privilege of further acting as a governmental agency of the State." Claiming that the Commonwealth had been "disgraced and her fair name dishonored," Tener asked for legislation which dissolved boroughs that "outrage the peace and dignity of the Commonwealth."³² Tener's words echoed the sentiments espoused by John Jay Chapman, who held a memorial service in Coatesville on the first anniversary of the Walker lynching. Although the Assembly did pass legislation which allowed for the dissolution of borough charters with the consent of local citizens, Coatesville's charter was never in danger.³³ By 1920 she had obtained a sufficient population to be recognized as a city in the federal census of that year.

Also in 1913, legislation was introduced into the General Assembly that would make lynching a state crime. The subject of much controversy, the state's anti-lynching bill took ten years to clear both houses.³⁴ It became one of the most significant pieces of reform legislation that Governor Gifford Pinchot would sign. By the time of its approval, however, the events which prompted the bill's original consideration had become blurred by the passage of time. A world war and other developments had intervened to cause new concerns.

Zachariah Walker was the eighth and final person lynched in Pennsylvania.³⁵ He was one of the anonymous Southern blacks who made their way to the North in what became known as the Great Migration, a migration that converged with another in the community of Coatesville in the first years of this century. History, in a sense,

intervened to rescue Walker's name from those of the forgotten millions. Zachariah Walker's experience gave meaning to Zora Neal Hurston's epitaph to her skinfolks who came North seeking opportunity and deliverance: "And Black men's feet learned roads. Some said goodbye cheerfully . . . others fearfully, with terrors of unknown dangers in their mouths . . . others in their eagerness for distance said nothing. The daybreak found them gone. The wind said North. Trains said North. The tides and tongues said North, and men moved like the great herds before the glaciers."³⁶

NOTES

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1. "Prophet Jones," *Coatesville Record*, 5 August 1911 (hereafter cited as *CR*); "Colored Prophet Had Predicted Great Disaster," *CR*, 16 August 1911. John Jay Chapman held a memorial service in Coatesville one year after the lynching and called the event an "American Tragedy." "Address of John Jay Chapman," *Harper's Weekly* 56 (21 September 1912): 6; "A Penitent at Coatesville," *Literary Digest* 45 (5 October 1912): 566-67; John Jay Chapman, "Coatesville," *Memories and Milestones* (1915; Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 225-232. There are two contemporary articles on this lynching: Eric F. Goldman, "Summer Sunday," *American Heritage* 15 (June 1964), 50-53, 83-87; and William Ziglar, "'Community on Trial': The Coatesville Lynching of 1911," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (April 1982), 245-270.
2. *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. George Stoll*, October 1911, Number 3, Testimony of Stanley Howe, In the Court of Oyer and Terminer and General Jail, County of Chester, Pennsylvania, Chester County Courthouse, West Chester, Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as *Commonwealth v. George Stoll*, October 1911, testimony of Stanley Howe; Goldman, "Summer Sunday," 51-52; *CR*, 14 August 1911.
3. *Commonwealth v. William Gilbert*, October 1911; *Commonwealth v. Al Berry*, October 1911, testimony of Al Berry. The Pennsylvania State Police report corroborated Walker's suicide attempt, but also noted that one witness said someone in the posse "shot Walker with a rifle, causing him to fall from the tree." 1911 Annual Report, Troop C, Pennsylvania State Police, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. *Commonwealth v. George Stoll*, October 1911, testimony of Stanley Howe.
4. *Commonwealth v. George Stoll*, October 1911, testimony of Stanley Howe; *Commonwealth v. William Gilbert*, October 1911; *Commonwealth v. Al Berry*, October 1911, testimony of Al Berry; testimony of Norman Price; testimony of Stanley Howe; testimony of Nathan Rambo; *CR*, 21 September 1911; *Commonwealth v. Oscar Lamping*, October 1911, testimony of Oscar Lamping; testimony of Norman Price; *Commonwealth v. Joseph Schofield*, October 1911, testimony of Daniel Pinkerton; "Coatesville Mob Takes Murderer from Hospital; Burned Him Alive," *Johnstown (Pa.) Weekly Democrat*, 18 August 1911 (hereafter cited as *JWD*).
5. *Commonwealth v. Joseph Schofield*, October 1911, testimony of Norman Price; *Commonwealth v. George Stoll*, October 1911, testimony of Raymond Day; testimony of J.W. Belt; testimony of Chester Bostic, testimony of Norman Price; "Hospital Policeman

Tells His Story," *Lancaster Intelligencer*, 15 August 1911 (hereafter cited as *LI*); "Evidence Tightening Around Mob Leaders," *CR*, 18 August 1911; *CR*, 14 August 1911.

6. *Commonwealth v. Joseph Schofield*, October 1911, testimony of Jonas Newlin; testimony of Norman Price; *Commonwealth v. George Stoll*, October 1911, testimony of Norman Price; testimony of J.S. Belt; "Coatesville Mob Takes Murderer from Hospital; Burned Him Alive," *JWD*, 18 August 1911; "Coatesville Mob Burns a Negro," *West Chester Daily Local News*, 14 August 1911 (hereafter cited as *WCDLN*); *CR*, 14 August 1911; "State Police in Coatesville; To Arrest Lynchers," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 August 1911 (hereafter cited as *PI*); "State Police Sent to Coatesville," *The New York Times*, 15 August 1911 (hereafter cited as *NYT*).

7. The *Coatesville Record* can be credited with forming public opinion, leading that opinion and orchestrating the conspiracy of silence which hindered the successful prosecution of those indicted. *CR*, August 1911–May 1912; "Burn a Negro at State in Pennsylvania," *NYT*, 14 August 1911; "Topics of the Time," *NYT*, 15 August 1911; *PI*, 14 August 1911; "Coatesville's Shame," *PI*, 15 August 1911; "Pennsylvania Disgraced," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 August 1911; *Pittsburgh Leader*, 18 August 1911; *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, 18 August 1911; "Coatesville's Disgrace," *Harrisburg Telegraph*, 14 August 1911 (hereafter called as *HT*); "Coatesville's Lessons," *HT*, 16 August 1911; *WCDLN*, 16 August 1911; "The Coatesville Lynching," *LI*, 14 August 1911; "Retribution," *Washington Bee*, 19 August 1911 (hereafter cited as *WB*); "Wake Up, Pennsylvania," *WB*, 2 September 1911; "The Coatesville Lynching," *Chicago Defender*, 26 August 1911; "Coatesville—Its Lessons," *Boston Guardian*, 19 August 1911; "Negroes Deplore Lynching," *Indianapolis Freeman*, 19 August 1911; Theodore Roosevelt, "Lynching and the Miscarriage of Justice," *The Outlook* 99 (25 November 1911), 706–707. Some of the other magazines carried editorials that chastised Coatesville are: "A Blot on Civilization," *The Outlook* 98 (26 August 1911), 889; "The Pennsylvania Lynching," *The Nation* 93 (26 October 1911); "Lessons of Coatesville," *The Nation* 93 (31 August 1911); "Christian Responsibility for Lynchings," *Current Literature* 51 (October 1911); "Is Burning at the State to Continue?," *The Outlook* 99 (4 November 1911), 551–552. Some southern newspapers' editorials are: "The Pennsylvania Lynching," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, 15 August 1911; "The Mob of Pennsylvania," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 15 August 1911; "Not Confined to South," *Daily Clarion Ledger* (Jackson, Mississippi), 15 August 1911; "The Stake in Pennsylvania," *Richmond Times*, 15 August 1911; "Governor Tener Insists on Punishing Mob," *NYT*, 18 August 1911; "Governor Tener Returns Tonight," *HT*, 15 August 1911; "Sheriff Does Not Want Help," *LI*, 14 August 1911; "State Police Guard Coatesville," *LI*, 15 August 1911; "State Government on Lynching Case," *HT*, 17 August 1911; "State Police in Coatesville; To Arrest Lynchers," *PI*, 15 August 1911; "State Officials Keep Eye on Coatesville," *PI*, 15 August 1911.

8. "One Man Arrested for Lynching Negro," *LI*, 16 August 1911; "Three More Arrested for Lynching Negro," *LI*, 17 August 1911; "Arrest Three, One a Boy on Charge of Negro Lynching," *PI*, 17 August 1911; "State Will Back Lynching Arrests," *PI*, 17 August 1911; "Arrest Five More in Lynching Case; Police Let Alone," *PI*, 19 August 1911; "May Punish All Lynching Mob, Court Declares," *PI*, 23 August 1911; "Early Trial for Alleged Lynchers," *PI*, 24 August 1911; "Lynchers Mob are Called Murders," *PI*, 29 August 1911; "Indict Eight in Lynching Case," *NYT*, 2 September 1911; "Lynching Jury Balks," *NYT*, 10 September 1911; "Indict Four for Lynching Negro," *HT*, 20 September 1911; "Grand Jury Report," *CR*, 20–22 September 1911; *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Charles Umsted*, In the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania/Eastern District, January Term, 1912, Pennsylvania State Archives, Supreme Court R6-33, 3210, Number 512, Miscellaneous Docket Number 2, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as *Commonwealth v. Charles Umsted*, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, January 1912); *Commonwealth v. Stanley Howe*, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, January 1912; *Commonwealth v. Chester Bostic*, October 1911; *Commonwealth v. Joseph*

Swartz, October 1911; *Commonwealth v. George Stoll*, October 1911; "Joseph Swartz Found Not Guilty," *WCDLN*, 5 October 1911; "Acquit Alleged Lyncher," *NYT*, 7 October 1911; "George Stoll is Acquitted," *WCDLN*, 7 October 1911; *Commonwealth v. Joseph Schofield*, October 1911; *Commonwealth v. Oscar Lamping*, October 1911; *Commonwealth v. Albert Berry*, October 1911; *Commonwealth v. William Gilbert*, October 1911.

9. "Indict Three for Murder," *NYT*, 1 February 1912; *Commonwealth v. Lewis Denithorne*, January 1912; *Commonwealth v. Lewis Keyser*, January 1912; *Commonwealth v. John Conrad*, January 1912; *Commonwealth v. Charles Umsted*, Stanley Howe, Walter Markward, Richard S. Tucker, John Conrad, Lewis Denithorne, Lewis Keyser, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, January 1912; "Won't Convict Lynchers," *NYT*, 6 February 1912; *Commonwealth v. Lewis Denithorne*, January 1912; *Commonwealth v. Lewis Denithorne*, January 1912; "All Lynching Cases Abandoned," *WCDLN*, 5 May 1912; "Coatesville Lynchers Free," *NYT*, 4 May 1912; "Coatesville Lynchers Free," *The Literary Digest* 44 (18 May 1912); *CR*, 4 May 1912; "Lynchers of Walker Will Go Unpunished," *HT*, 4 May 1912; "Triumph," *The Crisis* 4 (June 1912): 74.

10. A. Howry Epenshade, *Pennsylvania Place Names* (State College: The Pennsylvania State College, 1925), 209-210; Kenneth Warren, *The American Steel Industry, 1850-1970: A Geographic Interpretation* (Oxford; 1973), 156-157; *A Visit to the Plants of Worth Brothers Company*, Coatesville, Pennsylvania, 1913; *The American Steel Industry*, 156-157; "Social Changes Here," *CR*, 5 August 1911.

11. U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population* (Washington, D.C., 1902), 1: 146, 1: 637; U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Supplement for Pennsylvania* (Washington, D.C., 1913), 596, 632-633; *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population*, Bulletin No. 36, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C., 1923), 7, 21; *Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915*, (Washington, D.C., 1981; reprint ed., New York, 1969), 102; John Bodnar, "The Impact of the 'New Immigration' On the Black Worker: Steelton, Pennsylvania, 1880-1920," *Labor History* 2 (Spring 1976): 214-229; Bodnar, Michael Weber and Roger Simon, "Migration, Kinship and Urban Adjustment: Blacks and Pole in Pittsburgh, 1900-1930," *Journal of American History* 66 (December 1979): 548-565; Dennis Clark Dickerson, "Black Steel Workers in Western Pennsylvania, 1900-1950," *Pennsylvania History* 4 (December 1977): 52-58.

12. *Thirteenth Census, 1910, Microfilm Roll T624-1327*; *CR*, June 1911-July 1912. See especially the period 16-30 July 1912; *CR*, 14 June 1912. By late July 1912 Worth Brothers had nearly completed construction on a "very large dormitory" to "house colored laborers coming from the South." The site was above Bernardtown and the mills. *CR*, 30 July 1912; "Lockup," *CR*, 1 July 1911; "Concealed Deadly Weapons," *Coatesville Weekly Times*, 28 March 1908; "Coatesville," *WCDLN*, 3 May 1911; "Coatesville's Boro Fathers Meet," *WCDLN*, 16 May 1911; "Coatesville's Story of Yesterday," *WCDLN*, 31 May 1911; "Coatesville's Murder Sensation," *WCDLN*, 5 June 1911; "Coatesville's Grave and Gay Side," *WCDLN*, 17 July 1911; "Police Called to 'Eighties' Last Evening," *CR*, 26 September 1911; "Negro Attacks High School Girl," *CR*, 10 October 1911; "Another Daring Negro Outrage on White Girl," *CR*, 21 November 1911; "Negro Attempted Assault on Two Coatesville Women," *CR*, 22 November 1911; "Coatesville Reports Two Outrages," *WCDLN*, 22 November 1911; "Racial Battle in Coatesville," *WCDLN*, 30 August 1911; "Coatesville News Condensed," *WCDLN*, 29 September 1911; "Coatesville Has Another Seance," *WCDLN*, 9 October 1911.

13. *CR*, 19 July 1912; "The Great White Way," *CR*, 2 August 1911; "Our White Way Puts New York in the Gloom," *CR*, 3 August 1911; "Band Concert Will be Held Friday Night," *CR*, 2 August 1911; "101 Ranch," "At the Palace," *CR*, 3 August 1911; "Large

Crowd Enjoyed Concert Last Evening," *CR*, 5 August 1911; "Concert Tonight," *CR*, 5 August 1911; "First Band Concert," *CR*, 15 July 1911; "The Street Committee," *CR*, 22 July 1911; "Notice to Contractors Macadamizing," *CR*, 1 August 1911; "Mud in Flats," *CR*, 5 August 1911; "Pavement is Complete," *CR*, 5 August 1911; "Council Matters," *CR*, 8 July 1911; "A Severe Storm," *Coatesville Weekly Times*, 1 July 1911; "Coatesville to Have Good Streets," *WCDLN*, 2 May 1911; "Coatesville's Streets," *WCDLN*, 13 May 1911; "Coatesville's Saturday Letter," *WCDLN*, 13 May 1911; "Coatesville in the News Line," *WCDLN*, 19 May 1911; "Coatesville's News Report," *WCDLN*, 17 April 1912; "Coatesville Tells of Fever Ban," *WCDLN*, 10 June 1911; "Record of Local News," *Coatesville Weekly Times*, 6 June 1908; "Coatesville," *WCDLN*, 20 August 1910.

14. Authorities do not agree on the precise number of lynchings which occurred in American history. A reliable count is that 3500 lynchings took place from 1880-1919, with somewhere on the order of 2800 of the victims being black men. Walker was one of sixty-three black persons lynched in 1911. See *Memorandum for Mr. Philip G. Peabody on Lynch-Law and the Practicality of a Successful Attack Thereon* (NAACP, 22 May 1916), Papers of the NAACP, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Testimony of James Weldon Johnson, 16 February 1926, in United States Congress, Senate, *Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Judiciary* (Washington, D.C., 1926), 24; Robert Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia, 1980).

15. Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *A Red Record*, in *On Lynchings 2* (New York, 1969): 43.

16. Standard works on lynching include James E. Cutler, *Lynch-Law: An Investigation into the History of Lynching in the United States* (Reprint ed., Montclair, N.J., 1969); Frank Shay, *Judge Lynch* (1938; Reprint ed., Montclair, N.J., 1969); Walter White, *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (New York, 1929); Arthur Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching* (Chapel Hill, 1933); James R. McGovern, *Anatomy of a Lynching: The Killing of Claude Neal* (Baton Rouge, 1982).

17. Michael Cassity, *Chains of Fear* (Westport, Conn., 1984), xiii-xxxiii, 54-57.

18. Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race* (New York, 1984), 183-189, 282, 306-308, 318-319.

19. Cassity, *Chains of Fear*, xii-xv.

20. Kai Erickson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York, 1966).

21. Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893; Reprint ed., New York, 1966), see especially pages 69-132.

22. Erickson, *Wayward Puritans*, 11.

23. Erickson, *Wayward Puritans*, 13.

24. Works which have suggested the value of this theory to the study of violence and social change include Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor* (New York, 1983), xii, 367; Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice* (New York, 1984), c.f. 32, 337; James M. Inverarity, "Population and Lynching in Louisiana, 1889-1896: A Test of Erikson's Theory of the Relationship Between Boundary Crisis and Repressive Justice," *American Sociological Review* 41 (April 1976): 262-280.

25. See miscellaneous editorials and articles, *CR*, January 1910-December 1912.

26. *Thirteenth Census, 1910; Enumeration District Data*, Microfilm Roll T624-1327, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Household census data for the Borough of Coatesville is found under District 6, Chester County, plates 49-165; *CR*, 1910-1912.

27. "Coatesville Mob Takes Murderer from Hospital; Burned Him Alive," *JWD*, 18 August 1911; *CR*, August 1911-May 1912.

28. "Colored Prophet Had Predicted Great Disaster," *CR*, 16 August 1911. The editors claimed that Jones' prediction "was commonly known" in the black community and that explained why local blacks said and did nothing.
29. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, 234. On the subject of "honor" see Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Honor," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, edited by David L. Sills (New York, 1968), 6:503-511; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, especially chapters 12 and 16; Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, 9-34, 223-276. American historians have tended to associate "honor" as a cultural value with the South, especially in the antebellum period. This paper argues for its centrality to the culture of violence in Coatesville and in Northern industrial society during the transition from a Victorian to so-called Modernist culture.
30. There is a growing literature on the subject of "manhood" and concepts of manly conduct. For an introduction see Peter Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Sex Roles in Modern America* (New York, 1975); Filene, "Between a Rock and a Soft Place: A Century of American Manhood," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 84 (Autumn 1985): 339-355. Ewa Morawska has observed that steel towns were known as "a man's place." Morawska, *For Bread With Butter: The Life-worlds of East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940* (New York, 1985).
31. *Message of the Governor of Pennsylvania to the General Assembly, January 7, 1913* (Harrisburg, 1913).
32. *Message of the Governor*, 9.
33. "John Jay Chapman Comes to Coatesville," *CR*, 19 August 1911; "Address of John Jay Chapman," *Harper's Weekly* 56 (21 September 1912): 6; "A Penitent at Coatesville," *Literary Digest* 45 (5 October 1912): 566-67; John Jay Chapman, "Coatesville," *Memories and Milestones* (1915; Freeport, New York, 1971), 225-232. Three people attended Chapman's memorial service on the first anniversary of the lynching. Act No. 435, *Laws of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, 1913), 910.
34. Samuel Scott to Oswald Garrison Villard, 4 February 1913; [Oswald Garrison Villard] to Samuel Scott, 3 April 1913, Papers of the NAACP, Administrative File, C-1, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Act No. 183, *Laws of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, 1923), 283-287. Pinchot signed the legislation on 19 May 1923. Representative Scott drafted the original bill in consultation with the NAACP.
35. We have been able to identify the only two other incidents of the eight. One occurred in Northampton County, outside Bethlehem, and the other at Stroudsburg. In 1938 there was a near-lynching of a black man in Coatesville. His life was saved by the timely intervention of a respected black police officer named "Mr. Mack," whom the would-be lynchers were unwilling to challenge. Interviewed with the Reverend Joshua Groves, August 1986.
36. Zora Neal Hurston, *Jonah's Gourd* (Philadelphia, 1934), 232.