AN INDUSTRIAL CONFEDERACY:
RELIGION AND NATIONALISM IN A SOUTHERN PROTESTANT TOWN,
1885-2006

Chad E. Seales

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the department of Religious Studies.

Chapel Hill
2007

Approved by:
Thomas A. Tweed, advisor
Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp
Randall G. Styers
Samuel S. Hill
Donald G. Mathews
Lauren G. Leve
ABSTRACT

CHAD SEALES: An Industrial Confederacy
(Under the direction of Thomas A. Tweed)

Since 1865, there have been three major historical challenges to white public power in the American South: Reconstruction (1865-1877); Desegregation (1950s and ‘60s); and New Latino Migration (1990s-). Following each period, southern whites reclaimed public power, securing it in new forms. The local history of Siler City illustrates those historical patterns. A few years removed from Reconstruction, white Protestants in Siler City used the vehicle of industrial production to construct a segregated urban landscape. In the early twentieth century, they forged an “Industrial Confederacy,” a cultural synthesis of religious regionalism and industrial nationalism. This synthesis was most clearly demonstrated in 1901, when a Confederate soldier led the first Fourth of July parade in downtown Siler City. In the second half of the twentieth century, white Protestants in Siler City adapted this ritual tradition to respond to racial desegregation and Latino arrival. Such efforts have implications for how scholars understand the relationship between religion, race, and class movements in the industrial South.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION: WELCOME / BIENVENIDO..................................1

II. THE MIRACLE OF MODERN INDUSTRY: RELIGION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN SOUTH.............................21

III. INCORPORATION: MANUFACTURING NEW SOUTH BODIES, 1885-1932........................................................................53

IV. PATRIOTIC BODIES: CONFEDERATE SACRIFICE IN DOWNTOWN FOURTH OF JULY PARADES, 1901-1954...............................88

V. A BODY OF BELIEVERS: DESEGREGATION AND PRIVATE FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATIONS, 1977-2006.................................119

VI. THE BODY OF CHRIST: LATINO ARRIVAL AND PROTESTANT RENEWAL OF DOWNTOWN FOURTH OF JULY PARADES, 1996-2006.................................................................147

VII. CONCLUSION: POLITICAL ECONOMIES OF SOUTHERN SACRIFICE.............................................................................168

TABLES AND FIGURES........................................................................192

BIBLIOGRAPHY..................................................................................200
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: WELCOME / BIENVENIDO

On the eve of the new millennium, former Klansman and Louisiana state legislator David Duke stood atop the steps of town hall in Siler City, North Carolina, and verbally assualted the city’s Spanish-speaking immigrant population. Representing the National Organization for European-American Rights, Duke blamed Spanish-speaking minorities, particularly Mexicans, for destroying the moral and social foundations of Anglo-America. A small group of Siler City residents, led by Richard Vanderford, a service station operator who obtained permission from local officials to hold the rally, invited Duke to speak out against the town’s dramatically-increasing immigrant population. The former Grand Wizard jumped at the opportunity, seeing in Siler City a “process…going on all over America.” More than one hundred people assembled in support of Duke, many carrying signs with epithets such as, “To Hell with the Wretched Refuse,” while a larger number of protesters and observers gathered across the street, at least one person yelling back, making a playful reference to college basketball rivals, “Duke who? Go Heels!”

David Duke’s brief visit in February 2000 catapulted Siler City into the national spotlight. Almost overnight, the town became an exhibit of the new forms of racial tension in the rapidly changing American South. The small southern town provided a representative case study of Latino migration to historically bi-racial communities. As of 1990, the Siler City population of 4,955 was 68% White, 27% African American, 3% Hispanic, and 2% other.5 But by the time Duke arrived ten years later, the demographics had changed drastically. From 1990 until 2000, the Hispanic population increased from 3% (147 persons) to nearly 40% (2,740 persons) of the town’s total population.6 The rapid demographic shift in Siler City statistically parallels changes in other urban areas throughout the South, especially those along the I-85 corridor from Atlanta to Charlotte to Raleigh-Durham to Washington D.C. In these larger cities, migrant populations are frequently segregated into peripheral communities and corridors, such as Doraville and Buford Highway in Atlanta.7 But in a rural town like Siler City, change is more conspicuous. Spanish-language businesses and organizations, from tiendas to storefront churches, line downtown streets, standing side by side with southern establishments, such as the Farmer’s Alliance Store, and positioned within a few steps of City Hall and its surrounding mainline Protestant congregations.

The image of David Duke at City Hall was a defining moment in the public perception of Siler City. Duke was a symbol of the worst elements of white supremacy still lingering in the South. And Siler City was a rural manufacturing town that, although

---

7 For a discussion of these areas, see Marie Friedmann Marquardt and Manuel Vasquez, “A Continuum of Hybridity: Latino Churches in the New South,” in Globalizing the Sacred: Religion Across the Americas (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 145-170.
it tried, could not easily distance itself from these elements. For example, according to Ilana Dubester, director of the Hispanic Liaison, a non-profit organization in Siler City, most Latinos assumed that local officials sponsored the Duke rally because it took place on the steps of Town Hall. In that sense, Duke’s performance spoke louder than Mayor Charles Turner’s disclaimer. Added to this, public perception of town officials’ attitudes toward Latinos already had been shaky. In 1996, Siler City leaders published a brochure in Spanish that asked newcomers to “not keep goats in the yard, beat your wife, or watch T.V. after 10 p.m.” Latino activists like John Herrera, president of El Pueblo Incorporated in Chapel Hill, decried the pamphlet as racist. Four years later, the presence of Duke in Siler City only reinforced such perceptions among Latinas. Outside observers picked up quickly on the local tension, noticing the reactionary measures taken by local officials.

In a short span of time, Siler City became a battle ground for social activists and a research laboratory for journalists and academics, many of them, including me, from the neighboring University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The investigative pace

---

8 On the term Latino or Latina, it is important to note that ethnic categories used to identify migrants from Latin America are problematic. Many scholars prefer the term Latino instead of Hispanic, which implies more Iberian origins. For example, Anthony Stevens-Arroyo and others argue that the category Latino or Latina better describes persons from Latin America who now migrate to or reside in the United States. Thus, some may protest the use of the “catch-all” term Hispanic in census data and surveys. At the same time, though, non-profit agencies and social activists still use the term Hispanic. To complicate matters further, a migrant is more likely to identify with his or her country of origin than to refer to himself or herself as Hispanic, Latino or Latina. Recognizing these difficulties, I prefer to use the category of Latina or Latino whenever possible, because it seems, for now, the most judicious category for academic discourse. See Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco and Mariela M. Paez, ed. Latinos: Remaking America (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 2-5; Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo, “Introduction.” In Old Masks, New Faces: Religion and Latino Identities, edited by Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo and Gilbert R. Cadena, Program for the Analysis of Religion among Latinos, no. 2 (New York: Bildner Center for Western Hemispheric Studies, 1995). On the Duke rally, see Ned Glascock, “Rally Divides Siler City,” News and Observer, 20 February 2000.

escalated after 2003, when PBS aired a piece on Siler City entitled, “The Divide,” part of the series, “Matters of Race,” directed by John Valadez. In terms of conveying racial tension, the film was powerful and provocative. I recall watching the initial airing from my rental home in north Durham, amazed at the geometry of the “lived” theoretical dilemmas. The lines were so clearly drawn. When I walked the streets of my Durham neighborhood, I routinely passed small homes filled with a range of tenants that differed in race, ethnicity, age, and political position. Spanish was even spoken on my street. But never did I notice the stark contrasts portrayed in the PBS film. “The Divide” featured an interview with a member of the National Alliance taking dead aim at new migrants in Siler City and flashed an image of a group of high school boys holding a noose while posing for a yearbook photo. While migrants had moved to Durham as well, disrupting the historical black-white “divide,” these changes, for some reason, were not as poignant as in Siler City; they were not as ethnographically enticing. In part, the PBS film lured me to Siler City. For the curious researcher, that town seemed the perfect place to study the changing religious landscape of the American South.

Apparently, however, the film did not sit well with Siler City residents. Locals said it skewed the facts. For example, Will Williams, the National Alliance member interviewed in the film, lived in Raleigh, not Siler City. This fact was never mentioned. Also, the film implied that the students holding the noose attended Siler City’s public High School, Jordan-Matthews. But again, this was incorrect. That infamous incident happened at Chatham Central High School, outside of Siler City. Why does this matter?


After all, as one professor at UNC put it, “These things did happen.” To residents of Siler City, though, these details matter because context matters, people matter, and place matters. When a racially and ethnically diverse group of faculty and students gathered at Jordan-Matthews in 2006 to revisit “The Divide,” they disagreed over the dynamics in their school, but they expressed a shared concern that the film “didn’t show Siler City.”

Most disturbing to them was the fact that Jordan-Matthews experienced a great deal of “white flight” after the integration of Latinos into the school. The student body that remained, which best represented the diversity of the town, was working hard to get along. And it was this student body that director John Valadez associated with the noose slinging actions of a white-supremacist student group. While Siler City residents may not be perfect, they claimed, the majority are not as extreme as those portrayed in the film.

Of course, race is still an issue in Siler City, as it is in Raleigh, Durham, Cary, and Chapel Hill, towns booming in the Carolina Piedmont. But lost in the over-production of place, the image or idea associated with a geographic location – whether it is David Duke on the steps of City Hall or white high school kids sneaking a noose into a yearbook photograph – are the historical and cultural complexities of the local. The history and

---

12 Fieldnotes, Jordan-Matthews High School Auditorium, 6 March 2006.

13 This is about more than just mistakes in a documentary film. It is methodological problem that extends across a number of disciplinary boundaries in the academy. For example, in his interpretation of Siler City, UNC anthropologist Donald Nonini generates startling generalizations concerning what he labels the categorical group of “poor rural white males” by leaping from the macro level of the state and global economic forces to the local level of human agency with little regard for what is in-between. In his words, “American neoliberalism... has reality effects that generate violence across differentially successful market ‘performers’ - such as the violence by white rural Southern men against Latino migrants in Siler City.” Between the lines of globalization theory and its requisite jargon, Nonini makes an interesting causal argument: larger structural forces, political and economic, produce the social conditions that surround the white rural Southern man, including the arrival of working-class Latino migrants. In other words, these “market performers” are like passengers (or prisoners) on two trains traveling the same track, now barreling towards one another in a collision course. Siler City is the site of this violent collision, a product of the State. I do not disagree with Nonini that this type of violence does happen. Of course it does. Nor do I disagree that the State is implicated in the perpetuation of such violence. Of course it is. These things do
The cultural geography of Siler City is much more nuanced than the sound bites from the spokesmen of hate, David Duke and Will Williams, suggest.

Further, their disturbing versions of Christianity misrepresent the bulk of white Protestantism practiced in this southern town. Progressive, cooperative, and paternalistic are better descriptors of white Protestants in Siler City than overt supremacy. This is a tricky issue because racism abounds there, as it does elsewhere throughout America. But after spending time in Siler City, excavating its history, and talking with the residents, I soon realized that the rural manufacturing town is not the backwoods miasma of poor southern white Protestants, an image popularized in the 1920s by iconoclast journalist H. L. Menken. Since the early twentieth century, Siler City has been home to upwardly mobile white Baptists and Methodists. Enamored with modern industry, these Protestants were vigorous consumers, discerners of millenary, and defenders of civility, charity, and civic duty.

Instead, I take issue with his use of categorical tropes associated with a particular place. Does Nonini’s analysis help the reader better understand Siler City? Does it help the reader better understand the particularities of violence? Or does it obscure the local, linking this particular place, Siler City, to the abstracted category of “poor rural white Southern men”? In other words, like the PBS film, what does this description leave out? After studying Siler City, I would say a great deal is left out. See Donald Macon Nonini, “American Neoliberalism, ‘Globalization,’ and Violence: Reflections from the United States and Southeast Asia,” in Globalization, the State, and Violence, ed. Jonathan Friedman: Altamira Press, 2002), 175.

14 H. L. Mencken, the northern journalist and critic who described the South in the 1920s as “a cesspool of Baptists, a miasma of Methodists, snake charmers, phony real estate operators and syphilitic evangelists.”
Research Questions and Theoretical Approach

Emphasizing the performance of racial identity and social status in everyday practices located within the geographic boundaries of Siler City, I focus on two related questions in this study: What were the historical conditions that occasioned the formation of a class of white evangelical Protestants in this southern town in the early twentieth century? And how have these Protestants responded to the demographic changes and increasing cultural diversity at the end of the twentieth century? In my extended answer to these questions, I study collective identity and social status, whether defined in terms of race, gender, or class, as constructed and negotiated through what Pierre Bourdieu referred to as the “structuring structures of everyday practice.” In other words,  

---

15 Two caveats. First, my interpretation of Siler City is by no means comprehensive. In what follows, I do not try to capture all the social complexities, particular those of racial interaction and cultural influence, that describe the local history of Siler City, North Carolina. As Sartre demonstrated in a Paris café, the existential reflections of personal observation are endless. Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Translated by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956). Although some anthropologists have tried, no book can capture the infinite details of human experience. For such an attempt, see James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: a Study in Comparative Religion* (New York and London Macmillan and Company, 1894). Second, I do not, and this is important, try to make an argument for cultural influence among and across racial groups. While cultural influence does occur, I do not know how to measure it without essentializing racial or ethnic categories. For example, I am sure that Latino Catholics have influenced white Protestant practices in Siler City. But so too have African-American Protestants. And, in turn, white Christians have influenced black Christians and Latino Christians. But in order to demonstrate cultural influence, I would need to distinguish one cultural group from another and then show change over time. I have found it nearly impossible, however, to isolate cultural identities without abstracting them from history. Rather than attempt such a task, I emphasize instead the social construction of identity and status through ritual performance. In other words, I am comparing the ritual practices and representations of specific people in particular places. I locate these persons by historical categories, such as congregational affiliation, occupation, gender, or race. But I do not link “culture” to such categories. For a cultural influence argument based on race, see Mechal Sobel, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth Century Virginia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). For a critique of cultural influence arguments, see Anthony K. Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

I do not think that social differences are natural. Biological explanations of racial and
gendered differences are ideological justifications of social order. Identity, difference,
and status are never given facts. They are neither stable nor static. Rather, they are
social principles, contingent on the continued performance of everyday practice.

Contingency is crucial for deconstructing white power and privilege in Siler City. Most white Protestants take “being white” for granted, without question and
without need for defense. But as Richard Dyer has argued, “As long as race is something
only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and
named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people.”

In all my childhood years spent in white Baptist congregations in the Florida Panhandle,
first in a Landmark Missionary Baptist Church and later in a Southern Baptist affiliated
First Baptist Church, I never once heard an explanation for why I was white. I did,
however, hear plenty of explanations for the creation of separate races. Most often these
explanations were based on the biblical accounts of Noah and the “curse of Ham,” the
Tower of Babel, or the banishment of Ishmael, Abraham’s “other” son.

---


18 This intellectual position runs counter to the beliefs of many of the Baptists and Methodists I interviewed. By default, humanist inquiry is a dangerous and potentially subversive enterprise. While I try to let the persons speak in their terms, using quotes to represent their interpretation, I cannot help but do violence to their “voice” in my interpretations. What I call religious, they often call a “way of life.” I recognize this problem. I do not claim to collect narrative accounts and chronicle them for the reader. Rather, I provide a theoretical and historical interpretation based on what I heard persons in Siler City say, what I saw them do, and what I read about in articles, newspapers and printed sources.

19 As Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has argued, “the recognition of racial distinctions emanates from and adapts to multiple uses of power in society” and a “metalanguage of race” masks the “construction and representation of other social and power relations.” Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, “African-American Women’s History and the Metalanguage of Race,” Signs (Winter 1992): 252, 253.


21 For an abolitionist reading of the “curse of Ham,” see Angelina Emily Grimké, Appeal to the Christian
interpretations, race was associated with color, measured in degrees of darkness, and seen as deviations from a pure source, whether as the free descendents of Noah versus the slave descendents of Canaan, of one language before Babel, or one nation of God’s chosen people without Ishmael. In the moment, I swallowed these explanations like punch and cookies at Vacation Bible School. It would have been absurd to question such stories at the time. But, as I read more, the explanations made less sense. Now, looking back, I would describe those narratives as social scripts for the production and performance of southern “whiteness.”

I say all of this to acknowledge that my social formation as a southern Protestant has influenced my interpretations of Baptists and Methodists in Siler City. I grew up a white Baptist in the South, obtained a Master’s of Theological Studies degree at a United Methodist seminary in Atlanta, and married a white Methodist from a rural farming community in western Kentucky. Each of these experiences has left indelible marks on my scholarly endeavors. While it is difficult to measure theological influence, the separatist Baptist emphasis on “priesthood of the believer,” the denominational strife of the Southern Baptist Convention, and the spiritual and social optimism of Methodist liturgy have been especially significant. The rest has been academic formation. In terms of theoretical interlocutors, David Roediger’s work on the “wages of whiteness” has informed my understanding of the relationship between race and class. My attention to the formation of a “racial class” of white Protestants is indebted to Roediger, who has

---

called for “historical studies that focus on the racism of class as well as of society.”

Drawing on a tradition that emerged from the work of W. E. B. Du Bois, Roediger has skillfully linked the wages of whiteness – social status – with working class racism. In my ethnographic and historical observations of Siler City, the relationship between race and social status is well defined. But it also clear that religion has played a significant role in the historical formation of white class movements.

Though a New South town, one that was incorporated and industrialized after 1865, Siler City has been shaped by the religious and racial legacies of the Old South. For example, the history of Siler City does not include slave plantations or Anglican churches, the visible markers of the antebellum period. Even today, the closest Episcopal

---


23 I realize that “religion” has been defined in many ways. For this project, I think Durkheim’s understanding of religion is most useful. So I begin there. For Durkheim, every social institution is born out of the womb of religion. Every form of social action is religious. Religion is a form of ritual action, not just propositional, not just rational, but more like a dance, a drama, rhythmic, iconic, within and without self. Durkheim argued that religious actions are the building blocks of society. Religion both structures and reflects the whole of social arrangements. Religion is socially positive; it integrates individuals separated by divisions of labor into moral community. Church is analogous with society; the religious order of church is the social order of society. Thus, economic distribution of wealth within highly differentiated divisions of labor is by definition a theological problem. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1995). Working out of a Durkheimian tradition, I assume that religion (as a social action not an individual idea) has shaped the development of divisions of labor and the formation of economic classes. I also assume that religious practices are economically integrative; they work to bring laborers into larger moral communities. But also informed by theories of power and the politics of place, I do not believe, as Durkheim did, that social formation is a seamless enterprise. Contrary to Durkheim, I do not think society is synonymous with church. Rather I think of society as fractured, as a “living” ecology of organizations, whether religious, economic, or political. Here I am influenced by the “organizational ecology” approach of Nancy Eiesland, who sees congregations as interconnected within local webs of reciprocal relationships. Nancy L. Eiesland, *A Particular Place: Urban Restructuring and Religious Ecology in a Southern Exurb* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2000). See also Nancy L. Eiesland and R. Stephen Warner, “Ecology: Seeing the Congregation in Context.” In *Studying Congregations*, edited by Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson Carroll, Carl Dudley, and William McKinney (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 40-77. In short, I think a turn to ritual history in a particular place will help avoid the over-socialization of the religious subject that often has limited Durkheimian approaches. To help avoid this pitfall, I read Durkheim through the work of Mary Douglas, who has emphasized the continuous creation of social institutions. Religion indeed provides the social “glue,” but it never completely dries before the “social order” is reassembled, again and again. In other words, social construction is never complete. Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (Syracuse University Press, 1986), 101, 107-108.
Church to Siler City is in the neighboring town of Pittsboro, the county’s oldest, organized in 1771. As I note in the chapter on “Incorporation,” at least one of the mill owners in Siler City, the Hadley family, however, were descendents of plantation owners. And during the post-WWII boom, a group of mill owners and white business men in Siler City invoked the Anglican liturgical status that once reinforced that antebellum plantation hierarchy. In 1951, these men organized the Church of the Holy Cross, which first met at the Hadley-Peoples Manufacturing Company. In 1953, they moved an old Anglican Chapel from Gulf, North Carolina to Siler City. Constructed in 1847, the building served as the private chapel on the plantation of John Haughton.24 At that time, it had a slave gallery. On record, “23 colored children” were baptized in that church. The congregation faded in the 1970s and in 1979 the chapel building was moved to Raleigh, North Carolina, where it now stands in the historical district. In this example, southern Protestant businessmen claimed a particular social status by associating (or, in some cases, reconnecting) with the Anglican religious tradition of slave masters.

That local attempt is just one example of how plantation legacies resurfaced in the industrial South. Even though it was incorporated and industrialized after the Civil War, religious justifications of a divinely sanctioned racial order in the antebellum South survived the arrival of capitalism to the region. As historian Joel Williamson remarked, the North successfully abolished slavery in the South but not a southern culture predicated on the peculiar institution.25 Though the logics of capitalism, of free labor and free markets, did collide with the parochial order of the region, white southerners were

---


able to synthesize the cultural values of racial hierarchy with the capitalist ideals of profit and property, producing a paternalistic capitalism. For example, industry rendered Christian defenses of plantation economies anachronistic. In the New South, white southerners were stripped of those logics they took for granted, logics predicated on the racial order of slavery. Free markets blurred the lines between black and white because, at least in theory, it enabled all workers to sell their labor within “transparent” markets. The expansion of market access during Reconstruction threatened white economic and political ownership of black bodies. Once northern troops withdrew from the region in 1877, however, market protections were removed, and white southerners took up the task of reclaiming property through religious and industrial practices of segregation, dividing the New South along racial lines while performing public control of blackness within “white only” spaces. Incorporated in 1887, ten years after northern military retreat, Siler City illustrates this historical pattern. There, as elsewhere in the region, religion played a powerful role in the resurrection of southern white control after Reconstruction.26 In Siler City, religion was directly related to white economic mobility and racial hegemony. This relationship was most clearly revealed, I suggest, in the annual performance of Fourth of July parades in downtown Siler City.

---

26 Two key works by Don Mathews and Christine Heyrman provide wonderful surveys of the Old South. Donald G. Mathews, Religion in the Old South (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); Christine Leigh Heyrman, Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1998). But little is known about religion in the New South. Paul Harvey’s “Redeeming the South,” is the most notable exception. Paul Harvey, Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities among Southern Baptists 1865-1925 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). Harvey’s work both fills a gap in scholarship on religion in the New South and pushes the field of Southern Religious History in new directions. His recognition of multiple cultures and identities is a helpful corrective to simplistically biracial and exclusively denominational narratives. But there is still much work to be done, for scholars to better understand the role of religion in industrialization, the upward economic mobility of evangelical Protestants, and the reestablishment of white hegemony in the American South after Reconstruction.
Sources and Methods

In this project, I conjoin qualitative ethnographic methods with histories of ritual practices. I have dialogically produced the bulk of textual sources by conducting semi-structured interviews with Siler City residents. I also have produced field notes from selected multi-site participant observation, which have included congregational site visits, Fourth of July celebrations, community activities, and Good Friday and Easter events at selected congregations in Siler City. In addition to transcribed interviews and field notes, other written sources include Siler City newspaper accounts from 1901 to the present, and those periodicals have been supplemented by local histories, archival documents, and church records. Thus, I triangulate my method of ethnographic interviews with selected multi-site participant observation and social history methods.

27 James P. Spradley, The Ethnographic Interview (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1979). I assume that ethnographers produce “texts” through observation and interviews. James Clifford and George Marcus refer to this process as “textualization.” James Clifford and George Marcus, ed. Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). The meaning of this textual production, however, is not as static as Clifford and Marcus suggest, as Lila Abu-Lughod has argued. Lila Abu-Lughod, “Writing Against Culture,” in Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present, ed. Richard G. Fox (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 1991), 137-161. The dialogical encounter between ethnographer and subject is fraught with ambiguity, but no more or less than other textual productions that qualify as historical sources – for example, memoir, sermons, letters, or institutional records. In my use of oral sources, I recognize, with a number of other ethnographers, that these sources, and subsequent readings of them, “reconstruct” the past. Each reconstruction, though, is tied to collective histories and as such is not reducible by deconstruction to isolated signifiers. For an example of this argument, see John and Jean Comaroff’s “neomodern historical anthropology.” John and Jean Comaroff, Ethnography and the Historical Imagination (Boulder, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1992).


29 Documents include things like Siler City High School Annuals, public information pamphlets and literature from the Town of Siler City and local non-profits such as The Hispanic Liaison, as well as occasional memoirs and biographies. L. L. Wren, My Church: A History of Springfield Methodist Protestant Church - Organized in 1873 (Kathryn B. Rees Collection, Siler City, N.C); H. F. Seawell, Jr., Sir Walter: The Earl of Chatham (Charlotte: Heritage House, 1959). I have relied heavily on the records of the four oldest congregations in Siler City: Corinth A.M.E. Zion Church (1884), First Baptist Church (1887), First Missionary Baptist (1919), and First United Methodist Church (1968) which resulted locally from the merger of the Methodist Episcopal Church South (1886) and the Methodist Protestant Church (1894). Wade Hampton Hadley, ed. Church History: 1887-1980, the First United Methodist Church Siler City.
In terms of ethnographic approach, I have combined Robert Orsi’s historical urban cartography with Michael Burawoy’s “extended case method.” Similar to Orsi, I have focused on specific ritual performances, or “extended cases,” to use Burawoy’s term. In my interpretations, however, ethnographic methods of observation have not replaced textual sources. For example, although I have utilized techniques of participant observation, I have tried to avoid any ethnographic bias towards a “present presence,” which may at times privilege sensory experience (“being there”) over the oral and written narratives that surround an event. In other words, in light of the emphasis on “lived” and “popular” religion in current religious studies scholarship, I want to acknowledge the continued importance of institutional and textual sources. In the shift “from text to


In this project, I incorporate aspects of what Chafe has called a “problem-centered oral history,” which focuses on the details of a specific issue excluded from printed sources. William H. Chafe, Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 269. Similar to Chafe’s approach, I utilize interview techniques to cultivate historical sources; however, my method of cultivation is more like participant observation. As Micaela di Leonardo has argued, there is a difference between ethnographic and oral history methods, though they share similar epistemological challenges. See Micaela di Leonardo, “Oral History as Ethnographic Encounter.” Oral History Review 15 (Spring 1987): 1-20. For example, my method differs from oral history in at least three ways: I will focus more on group histories than individual history; I will not disclose the names of my consultants unless they are public figures; and I will not submit recorded interviews for public record. I consider the dissertation itself a public submission.


32 Scholars like David Hall have incorporated the term “lived religion” to overcome binaries of text and experience. While I find the modifier “lived” more theoretically useful than “popular,” it is not without problems; it still resonates Protestant tones. For an explication of the advantages of lived religion over the structures of opposition inherent in popular religion, see David Hall, ed. Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). For a discussion of popular
territory,” the importance of texts is not lost; rather, there is a heightened awareness of the conditions and locality of textual production. Ethnographic interviews fit this description; they are one site of textual production. Situating myself in the camp of post-positivist ethnographers, those who take seriously the positionality of authors and texts, I do not treat interviews as distinct documents unburdened by researcher bias. Instead, I recognize that I carry a theoretical agenda with me into the field – just as I am shaped by my experiences in the field – and my conversation partners may have agendas as well. In other words, the transcribed texts produced from ethnographic interviews are neither stable nor static; they represent a moment of dialogical exchange. I ask questions with a specific theoretical and historical problem in mind and participants respond within their own frames and perceptions, which may or may not overlap with my own.

As an ethnographer, I have a privileged role in the interpretation of these textual productions. But I also have a responsibility to the community to present the interpretations of Siler City residents as fairly as possible. Although I can never get the story exactly “right” – indeed there is no single story to get right – I can fill out the multiple narratives by interviewing a range of residents. Using a snowball approach, I have drawn on congregational networks to identify community members. Although these


Argument and Chapter Summaries

Since 1865, there have been three major historical challenges to white public power in the American South: Reconstruction (1865-1877); Desegregation (1950s and ‘60s); and New Latino Migration (1990s-). Following each period, southern whites reclaimed public power, securing it in new forms. The local history of Siler City illustrates those historical patterns. A few years removed from Reconstruction, white Protestants in Siler City used the vehicle of industrial production to construct a segregated urban landscape. In the early twentieth century, they forged an “Industrial Confederacy,” a cultural synthesis of religious regionalism and industrial nationalism. This synthesis was most clearly demonstrated in 1901, when a Confederate soldier led the first Fourth of July parade in downtown Siler City. In the second half of the twentieth century, white Protestants in Siler City adapted this ritual tradition to respond to racial desegregation and Latino arrival. Such efforts have implications for how scholars understand the relationship between religion, race, and class movements in the industrial South.

In “The Miracle of Modern Industry,” I detail how scholars of religion in the American South have, with few exceptions, considered industrialization at odds with antebellum religious practices. Because of a perceived tension between primitive religion and modern industry, scholars often have failed to notice the visible abundance of miraculous and technological mixtures in the twentieth century American South. In
American religious history, there are numerous examples where evangelicals have used media to distribute a gospel message, such as Jerry Falwell’s radio program, “The Old Time Gospel Hour.” To further illustrate how southern Protestants have used industry as a vehicle to distribute the sacred, I focus on “Miracles of Supervision,” a keynote address delivered by Southern Baptist minister George D. Heaton to the Southern Industrial Relations Conference in 1949. In this speech, Heaton declared industrial conversion of elements to products, such as chemical fluid to rayon, “as miraculous a thing as modern life witnesses.” Heaton’s description of industrial production as miraculous conversion suggests that industry in the twentieth century American South was not a disenchanting force, as scholars have argued. Once this assumption is removed, one can see that in the New South, industry provided more spaces – streets, stores, churches, banks, railroad cars – not fewer, for ritual enchantment. Using prevailing Protestant models of American religious history, which tend to focus on spoken word and printed text, however, it is difficult to make sense of persistent ritual enchantment in the industrial South. It is for this reason that I turn to Catholic models which consider ritual practice and sacred space.

In “Incorporation,” I describe the arrival of industry to this rural part of North Carolina. Drawing on corporeal metaphors to focus the narrative, I describe how Siler City was “incorporated” as a New South town from 1884 to 1932. I employ the term incorporation in two senses: it refers to the “union in or into one body” and the “action of forming into a community or corporation.” Throughout the chapter, I emphasize how industry was the primary mechanism for the incorporation of both the town of Siler City and the New South bodies that inhabit it, particularly congregations and corporations.

After arguing that southern Protestants were intricately bound up in the promises of industrialization, I contend that the religious and economic habits of a cadre of upwardly mobile white Protestants, as enacted in local congregations and corporations, reveal a great deal about how white evangelicals used industry to elevate themselves in the twentieth century United States. By focusing on the incorporation of a particular New South town, I can better describe the relationship between religion, the industrialization of the South, and the restructuring of white hegemony in the region after 1865.

After discussing the religious and industrial habits of white Protestants in early Siler City, I describe the most enduring public ritual practice of this manufacturing town: Fourth of July parades. In “Patriotic Bodies,” I argue Fourth of July parades function as a sacramental rite. Keeping with corporeal metaphors, I assume that a sacrament “incorporates” persons into a larger body. Fourth of July parades ritually incorporated the town of Siler City into an imagined nation-state. But this was a complicated process, one that I spend time interpreting in light of the continued persistence of southern Protestant conceptions of a divinely sanctioned social order. The nation-state they imagined was not seamless; rather, it was one vision, fragmented at best, among many visions of the United States. Through the New South version of Fourth of July parades, southern Protestants imagined a nation in their own image, fusing Lost Cause symbols with an effusive nationalism. In this way, each ritual performance expressed a southern “way of life.”

For example, in the early years, a former Confederate soldier led the parades, corporations sponsored “mammy floats,” and congregations held black-faced minstrel shows as part of evening activities. Like the nineteenth century Fourth of July

parades in Philadelphia, the Siler City parades, which began in 1901, were a public drama of life in a New South town.\textsuperscript{38} In this ritual performance, one can see the return of white public power following the political challenges of Reconstruction.

In “A Body of Believers,” I trace local changes in the Fourth of July parades following local desegregation in 1969. I link the economic decline of Siler City and the racial integration of parade participation to the discontinuation of downtown Fourth of July parades in the 1970s. I then argue that these changes precipitated the creation of a private Fourth of July celebration by a family of white Protestants outside of downtown Siler City. In that annual event, white Protestants recreate the moral order that was once performed in the “old time” downtown parades of the 1950s.

In “The Body of Christ,” I recount migrant arrival to Siler City in the early 1990s and survey white response. I propose that the performance of Catholic Good Friday processions in downtown streets in 1996 announced Latino public presence. I then describe how a group of white Protestants responded to those changes by renewing downtown Fourth of July parades in 1997. In these efforts, some white Protestants remembered a time before tiendas and a town without Latinos. Using a public ritual forged in the town’s New South history, these Protestants imagined a place, downtown Siler City, before migrant arrival.

In the Conclusion, I extend southern historian C. Van Woodward’s thesis that “one of the most significant inventions of the New South was the Old South” by arguing

\textsuperscript{38} Historian Susan Davis interpreted Fourth of July parades in nineteenth century Philadelphia as "kinds of communication that are part of the social forces that shape our lives." For Davis, they are political actions and public dramas that reveal local power dynamics. But they did not just reflect social patterns; they "have been part of the very building and challenging of social relations." Susan G. Davis, \textit{Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-century Philadelphia} (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 5.
that one of the most significant white Protestant inventions of the Nuevo South has been the New South. Like its early twentieth century correlate, this historical invention is a territorial imagining. It is a nationalist projection of regional identity. In this southern Protestant remembering, some persons are included, others are excluded. White residents are American. Latinos are not. Although the historical complexities betray those simplistic dichotomies, a consistent pattern emerges across twentieth century Siler City. In this southern industrial town, white Protestants used the nationalist rite of Fourth of July parades to take place and claim it as their own. Broadening the scope of inquiry beyond the local, I reflect on how the history of white Baptists and Methodists in Siler City might help scholars better understand the political economies of southern sacrifice that persist into the twenty-first century.
CHAPTER 2

THE MIRACLE OF MODERN INDUSTRY:
RELIGION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN SOUTH

On a Saturday morning in July 1949, industrial chaplain George D. Heaton delivered “Miracles of Supervision,” the keynote address to the Southern Industrial Relations Conference (SIRC) at the Blue Ridge Y.M.C.A. in Asheville, North Carolina. Leading industrialists and factory supervisors from across the region congregated in Robert E. Lee Hall, a magnificent structure with towering white columns, to hear the conference chaplain deliver his annual homily, an event many attendees considered the highlight of the program (Figure 1).39 That day, Heaton invoked Jesus as model supervisor, calling his first miracle, turning water into wine at a wedding in Cana of Galilee, the “basic miracle of the whole industrial process.” Heaton observed that just as Jesus gathered men, pots, and water, managed his resources, and produced a needed good

39 Heaton received numerous letters praising his speeches. Here are three examples. In a hand-written letter dated 23 July 1961, Ronald Hayes, a self-described layman at First Baptist Church Dublin, Georgia, wrote to Dr. Heaton requesting “a written copy of your talks made at Blue Ridge...so that I could read them over again and again.” B. Rhett Turnipseed, Personnel Director for Pacolet Mfg. Co., Plant #4 of New Holland, Georgia wrote in a typed letter to Heaton, “By every standard of measurement you have earned one of the greatest reputations for inspiring men to seek the good things in life.” And in a correspondence dated 9 April 1948, E. G. Wilson, Executive Secretary of the SIRC forwarded the following quote from “the Armstrong Cork people” to Heaton: “Thank you very much for sending me copy of last year’s Conference proceedings. It certainly is very interesting and I enjoyed very much reading Dr. Heaton’s address. Some years ago in Chicago at the A.M.A. Convention I thought he was the hit of the whole program.” In George D. Heaton Collection. Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama.
for the people to consume, supervisors “do the same thing day after day in many varieties of industry.” Having “seen the need of clothing, of machinery, of construction materials, of airplanes, of aluminum – all met by the miracles performed through supervision,” the Southern Baptist minister declared industrial production “as miraculous a thing as modern life witnesses.”

Vigorously engaged in the economic life of his region, George Heaton does not fit the ideal type of otherworldly southern Baptist portrayed in American religious historiography. For over five decades, Heaton touted his Baptist congregational principles within the secular universe of economic organizations. He toured the South, preaching against “the fetish of collective bargaining” while instructing corporations how to increase worker productivity through Christ-like management strategies. Heaton got his start as a pastor in Paducah, Kentucky, where in 1939 he helped settle a hosiery mill strike. That same year, Rueben B. Robertson of Champion Paper and Fibre Company

---

40 George D. Heaton. 1949. Miracles of Supervision. In George D. Heaton Collection. Auburn University, Auburn, AL.

41 Scholars have consistently argued that Baptist have worked to save souls for the next life, not to change the social order of the present. For example, Samuel S. Hill has observed that separatist Baptists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were concerned only with doctrine relevant to conversion. Samuel S. Hill, Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 60-61. See also Bill J. Leonard, Baptist Ways: A History (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2003), 45-46. Baptist ability to incite conversion through revival has been considered a democratizing impulse. Nathan Hatch, The Democratization of American Christianity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 3-10. Baptist support for disestablishment, of disentaglement of this-worldly church matters from state government, has been hailed a hallmark of American democracy. But such scholarly respect for democratic individualism has been tempered by criticism of Baptist disregard for economic life outside the church. For example, Robert Bellah, who declared Roger Williams a “moral genius” but “sociological catastrophe,” felt that Baptist individualism eroded the protections of religious institutional mediation against unrestrained capitalist markets. Robert N. Bellah, “Is There a Common American Culture?,” Journal of the American Academy of Religion 66 (3): 622.

42 George D. Heaton, Undated speech delivered to SIRC, early 1940s. In George D. Heaton Collection. Auburn University, Auburn, AL.

43 Heaton. 3 December 1963. Heaton Address to The Aiken Foundation, Florence, SC. In George D. Heaton Collection. Auburn University, Auburn, AL.
assumed corporate leadership of the SIRC, formerly known as “The Southern Conference on Human Relations in Industry,” a development program in the Industrial Division of the Y.M.C.A. After hearing of Heaton’s successful negotiation of the Paducah labor dispute, Robertson invited the minister to speak at their first meeting. Heaton was so popular that he was invited back every year after, until he passed away in 1996. In all, he delivered the keynote address and morning devotionals at 57 consecutive conferences. Today, a monument stands in his honor on the assembly grounds. Over the course of his ministry, Heaton was an ambassador of industrial chaplaincy in the South, a vocation that has endured and expanded in the twenty-first century.

The case study of George Heaton and the Southern Industrial Relations Conference illustrate the themes of religion, industry, and nationalism present in the practices of white Protestants in Siler City, North Carolina. Southern Protestants like Heaton melded religious and industrial rites and used those ritual productions to nationalize southern cultures, projecting them beyond the region. Such efforts have implications for how scholars interpret evangelical Protestants regionally in the American South regionally and more broadly in American Religious History.

---


47 By evangelical, I mean those Protestant Christians who actively try to change the world, making it conform to their theological understandings of morality and society. It is important to note that neither Heaton nor the Protestants I study in Siler City are “liberal.” Although their gospel is inherently social,
of this chapter, I argue that the practices of New South Protestants are not easily
categorized by the binaries of primitive and modern that scholars have used to narrate the
history of religion in the American South. Industrialization was not inimical to religious
practice. In industrial cities, religious practices did not decline, but became important
markers of social status. In the second section, I illustrate this point by tracing the ritual
innovations of indoor baptisteries among urban Protestant congregations. While industry
manufactured the city, religion helped make it urban. In the third section, I turn to
“Catholic” models of American religious history to construct a method for studying
southern Protestants. I suggest that paying closer attention to themes of ritual practice
and sacred space, as American religious historian Jon Butler has suggested, should help
scholars better understand the enduring displays of sacrifice and suffering in the New
South, such as those performed annually in the Siler City Fourth of July parades.

**Evangelical Protestants in the American South**

Remarkably, George Heaton and the Southern Industrial Relations Conference
have received little, if any, scholarly attention.\(^48\) This exception is reflective of larger
patterns. Until the last decade, historians of religion in the American South seldom have

\(^48\) I would like to thank Sam Hill for informing me about George Heaton. While scholars have written
about Willis Duke Weatherford, who served as president of the Blue Ridge Assembly from 1906-1944, I
have yet to find any studies of Heaton or the Southern Industrial Relations Conference. For references to
Weatherford, see Nina Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness: African Americans and the YMCA, 1852-1946*
(Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 2003), 103-105; John B. Boles ed. *A Companion to
the American South* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2002), 399; William A. Link, *The Paradox of
Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 251; Ralph
Luker, *Social Gospel in Black and White: American Racial Reform, 1885-1912* (Chapel Hill and London:
Duke Weatherford: An Interpretation of His Work in Race Relations, 1906-1946,” (Vanderbilt University,
1969).
noticed the economic work performed by religious laborers like Heaton. Searching for
survivals of that “old-time” religion, scholars often miss the visible abundance of “new”
Protestants in the Old South as defining characteristics of regional distinctiveness.\footnote{Admittedly, there are good reasons to cite antebellum religious habits as a defining characteristic of southern identity. Until the end of the Civil War, the South was the only region in the United States where it was legal to claim another human being as personal property. Scholars have diligently demonstrated connections between white evangelical Protestantism and the peculiar institution, noting a historical movement away from radical abolitionism to institutional concession. Mathews, \textit{Religion in the Old South};}
Beth Barton Schweiger has noted, historians have frequently interpreted southern churches and pastors as “bastions of premodern and antimodern sentiment.” By default, such readings consider religion, in the form of southern nostalgia, antagonistic with modern industrialization. Because of this perceived tension, scholars of religion in the American South have struggled to make sense of the dynamic relationship between evangelical Protestants and modernity.

The case of Baptists and Methodists in Siler City challenges those assumptions. It also suggests that Heaton’s public profession of Protestant faith in industrial production as miraculous event was not an aberration, but broadly representative of the historical mixtures of “primitive” religion and “modern” industry that pervaded New South towns and cities. Modern industry did not erase “premodern” habits in the American South; rather, it accelerated their production. In Siler City, white Baptists and Methodists welcomed industry with open arms. Across the twentieth century, they paraded icons, were actively engaged in their communities, and demonstrated nostalgia for public

Mitchell Snay, Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). Paul Harvey, Freedom's Coming: Religion Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2005). In turn, southern historians have traced connections between religion and racial order into the twentieth century, describing the South’s resistance to social change as a form of “cultural captivity” rooted in the evangelical soil of the Old South. Samuel S. Hill, Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited; John Lee Eighmy, Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987). These surveys were groundbreaking and have proved foundational for a growing field. But much like the long shadow of Puritan studies cast on the field of American Religious history, such views of antebellum religion clouded interpretations of evangelical Protestant embrace of modern industry and its mass-produced goods in the New South.


displays of sacrifice and suffering. Keeping an eye on the streets and other public places, it is clear that these Protestants were anything but iconophobic, otherworldly, and textually obsessed. There, evangelical women and men cleaned up both churches and businesses. They converted souls and made good workers. They used religious language to describe racially and class segregated neighborhoods. And they sanctified industry and claimed a place in their vision of the American nation-state through the sacramental performance of their own Civil War hero.

Contrary to prevailing scholarly descriptions of religion in the rural South, Protestants in Siler City were not “antimodern.” Along with their agrarian ties, evangelicals in the early New South were already familiar with “modern” revival techniques, the methods of mass-conversion. In the late eighteenth century, changes of heart depended on the miraculous hand of God, like crops to rain. But in the nineteenth century, spiritual conversion became the handiwork of the revivalist; just as industrial conversion would become the good work of the supervisor, as articulated by George Heaton. For example, as the itinerant Methodist preacher Jesse Lee observed in 1787, in Virginia “it was known that the people…would quit work and pray together in the fields, and their neighbours hearing them would run and join them; and the Lord blessed

---

55 Confederate Kitsch is another example of mass-produced southern nostalgia. For example, The Colonel John Randolph Lane Society in Chatham County, North Carolina sells “Society Sutlery,” which includes an image of the 26th North Carolina Infantry Battle Flag, an image of Colonel Lane, as well as “Victory or Death Battle Flag Pins.” (http://www.lanesociety.org). For a textual reference to Confederate kitsch, see Tony Horwitz, Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998).

These spontaneous gatherings were sparks to the kindling of a nascent evangelical Protestant movement in the American South, one that spread like wildfire. According to historian Rhys Isaac, southern evangelicals helped transform the parochial order of parish and plantation into the voluntary associations of congregation and cohabitation. With each gathering, language of heart, soul, and personal salvation rivaled rhetoric of natural justice, duty, and station. During this period, southern evangelicals reformed Anglican landscape, turning their soul gaze inward to the hearth of the heart. Following wherever and whenever the spirit led, evangelical Baptists and Methodists altered church services from orderly to unexpected, reset sacred time to anytime, and moved sacred place to anyplace.

---


58 Emphasizing the miracle of conversion, New Light evangelicals were catalysts of territorial transformation. In the early American South, they bypassed priestly authority, disrupting the ordered relationship between sacred space and social place. At the time, the spatial arrangements of Anglican churches displayed the symmetry of religion and colonial society. Church seating was sectioned by status, with landed gentry positioned closest to the lectern, followed by poor whites, and then the slave gallery behind or to the side of them. In the early nineteenth century, some evangelical Protestant churches in the South, such as the Cane Ridge Meeting House in Kentucky in 1829, removed the slave gallery, a symbolic gesture that reflected an abolitionist stance. On Cane Ridge Meeting House, see Peter Smith, “Meeting House Shows Its Age – In a Good Way,” *The Courier Journal*, 2001. Reprinted on the American Academy of Religion website, [http://www.aarweb.org/awards/journalism/winners/2002Smith.asp](http://www.aarweb.org/awards/journalism/winners/2002Smith.asp)

59 Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia*, 153. In his description of “the peculiarity of the southern religious situation,” historian Samuel S. Hill contrasts the urban concentration of Northerners to the rural distribution of Southerners. Hill proposes that Northerners were more organized and able to project a corporate destiny (such as the theological formulation of Puritan destiny) whereas southerners, as individuals scattered across vast geographic space, were motivated by survival and individual needs. Samuel S. Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis Revisited*, 49. In the New South, the railroad brought together what was once apart and industry enabled white southern Protestants to fuse a language of religious individualism and embattled struggle with a corporate destiny that was their own projection.

60 Historian and cultural geographer J. B. Jackson described the evangelical conversions of eighteenth century revivals as instantaneous, forming habit in the miraculous moment, as opposed to a slow progressive work where habit is acquired over time. J. B. Jackson, “The Order of a Landscape: Reason and Religion in Newtonian America,” in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, ed. D. W. Meinig (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 156-163.
The road from field to factory in Siler City, North Carolina, was dotted with congregational descendants of those eighteenth century revivals that gathered bodies and converted souls. As I note in the next chapter, the first settlers to the Siler City area were separatist Baptists from Virginia. They were later joined by Methodists in the early twentieth century and together these two groups of evangelical Protestants institutionalized the religious innovations sparked in the colonial countryside. During the period of incorporation, leading white Methodists and Baptists in Siler City regulated a democratic spirit of voluntary association. They brought order to the unexpected, organizing revivals in warehouses, in contrast to spontaneous gatherings in open fields. They set sacred time by the schedule of the work week, from the Monday mill whistle to the Sunday church bell. And they moved sacred spaces inside, to the hearts of believers, the houses of God, and the homes of Christian families. In short, they fused a religious individualism with the industrial order of their New South town.

Still Waters in the House of the Lord

In the New South, industry provided more opportunities for southern Protestants to practice a faith that was simultaneously inward and public. For example, in the Old South, rural Protestant congregations were of simple design. Few, if any, had steeples, organs, or even adequate seating. With holes in the roof and exterior walls, their condition was often less than ideal for extended periods of worship. For example,

---

61 On separatist Baptist in the Old South, Donald G. Mathews points out that, “the balance between tradition and innovation which formed the need and goals of eighteenth-century southerners made the Separates important to an increasing number of people. Separates offered comforts and supports of church life, but offered them without the encumbrances of patterns which reminded people of a highly stratified society or of unresponsive and arrogant clerical elites.” Mathews, Religion in the Old South, 25.
nineteenth century Baptist minister Jeremiah Jeter (1802-1880) complained that the wooden or log churches had cracks so big “a stout dog might have passed through.” He recalled that church pews were “narrow, low benches, without backs.” Lacking windows or stoves, curtains or cushions, Jeter concluded that these “meeting-houses” were not fit to stable horses and mules. He trumpeted the advantages of industry, although he was uncertain whether the “social and moral influence” of its “useful inventions” would be for “good or for evil.” Reservations withstanding, he did count the indoor baptistery as one of these advantages. In 1836, in his first year as pastor of First Baptist Church Richmond, Virginia, Jeter oversaw the construction of the church’s earliest indoor baptistery. For the Southern Baptist minister, the still waters inside the house of the Lord were much preferred to the unpredictable currents of the countryside streams.

While Jeter promoted the construction of the indoor baptistery in the name of technological advantage over nature, other southern Baptists in his congregation utilized the architectural innovation as a symbol of social and racial status. For example, two years into his pastorate at FBC Richmond, Jeter initiated plans to build another building

---

62 Ibid., 312-313.

63 According to Joyce Chrisman, Secretary for the Pastor, and resident historian, Virginia Darnell, “the first installation of a baptistery was in the second building of four buildings of First Baptist Church Richmond in 1836.” Email correspondence 20 October 2006. Jeremiah Bell Jeter served as pastor of First Baptist Church Richmond from 1836-1849 (http://www.fbrichmond.org/fbhome/history.htm). This date matches the official church history. See Blanche Sydnor White, First Baptist Church Richmond, 1780-1955 (Richmond, VA: Whittet and Shepperson, 1955), 54.

64 At the end of his autobiography, southern Baptist minister Jeremiah Bell Jeter (1802-1880), proposed that “all the elements of nature seem to be at war with man,” pointing out that fire burns “hard-earned property,” air “may be fraught with death,” and water “may overflow the lands, wasting the products of man’s toil, and leaving desolation, want, and sickness in its track.” Over the course of his many years, Jeter endured his share of natural calamities, what he referred to as the “dark side of human life,” surviving cholera, treacherous river crossings, and torrential rain and flooding at camp meetings. Jeremiah Bell Jeter, The Recollections of a Long Life (Richmond, VA Religious Herald Company, 1891), 154-155, 199-200, 300-303.
for white congregants. The move was intended to alleviate racial tension in the church. According to local church history, Jeter had “studied the problems of his large, bi-racial membership. Convinced that neither group in the church would achieve its maximum effectiveness under existing conditions, he sought the wisest way to bring about a separate house of worship and church organization for the colored Baptists in Richmond.” In Jeter’s plan, black members would remain in the former church and white members would construct a new building. In an initial meeting that included both black and white members, the proposal narrowly passed (eleven to nine with most abstaining). A second meeting was called by “male members of the church” and “the sisters and the colored members were not asked to participate.” Excluding all opposing views from congregational conversation, the white male leadership successfully approved the building plan without a recorded complaint.

Completed in 1841, the new First Baptist Richmond church building was designed by Thomas U. Walter, the architect that would later oversee the construction of the Capital building in Washington D.C., and it was financed in part by selling and renting pews. In contrast to the old building – occupied by the black membership, organized in 1841 as the African Baptist Church – the new church was distinguished by a towering steeple, “glistening white” ceilings, pew cushions of a “lovely blue,” a “wide white desk” of a pulpit, a cushioned Bible rest, and “massive Doric pillars.” The baptistery was placed in a recess that “extended back of these columns, the wall of which was ornamented with a large square of blue quilted damask, with a bright star in the
center.” And “when the floor of the platform was moved, the baptismal service was in full view of the congregation, both on the main floor and in the galleries.”

Such uses of elaborate architectural displays surrounding an indoor baptistery distinguished urban Baptist churches from their rural counterparts. And at least in the case of FBC Richmond, it also was used to distinguished white congregants from black congregants. The overall pattern of urbanization and architectural innovation appears typical among other urban Baptist congregations during the antebellum period. For example, when the First Baptist Church of America in Providence, Rhode Island, constructed its interior baptistery in 1838, it did more than just move water inside; it surrounded what Jeter later referred to as “one of Heaven’s best gifts” with the architectural designs of the English Georgian style commonly used in Anglican churches. In effect, the baptistery domesticated nature, bounding a space for a ritual practice that previously took place in the rivers and streams that carved the countryside.

---

65 In the years after construction, Jeter professed to “unusual barrenness” in the church, one that led him to resign in 1848 and travel west to frontier St. Louis (60). He protested some of the improvements, including instrumentally accompanied music, what he referred to as “mechanical music.” (58) The church raised Jeter’s salary from $1,000 to $1,500 in an attempt to persuade him to stay. Jeter was replaced by Dr. Basil Manly, Jr. Blanche Sydnor White, *First Baptist Church Richmond, 1780-1955* (Richmond, VA: Whittet and Shepperson, 1955), 55-61. Manly, Jr. was son of the pastor of FBC Charleston, which had made similar architectural improvements to its new building in 1822. According to local church history, it was designed by the first American-born architect Robert Mills, who declared that, “The Baptist Church of Charleston exhibits the best specimen of correct taste in architecture in the city. It is purely Greek in style, simply grand in its proportions, and beautiful in its detail.” The church also boasted a “solid mahogany pulpit, material which was brought from the West Indies.” (http://www.fbcharleston.org/history.html).

66 In the oldest Baptist Church in America, such elements included “exterior portico and steeple and many interior elements, such as the Palladian window behind the high pulpit, the groined arches in the balcony, and the split pediments over the doors,” onto the basic design of plain Baptist structures. In 1775, FBC Providence became “the first Baptist meeting house in New England to have a steeple,” measuring 185 feet high. Additional improvements were made in the early nineteenth century, with new pews added in 1832 and an organ installed in 1834. See “Architecture,” *The First Baptist Church in America* (http://www.fbcia.org/page112.html). See also, J. Stanley Lemons, *FIRST: The First Baptist Church in America.*
While some evidence suggests that industrialization precipitated the construction of baptisteries in America, it is more likely that the ritual innovation corresponded with increased urbanization. For example, in Providence, it was possible that the mechanizations of the mills influenced the change in Baptist practice, since their arrival in the 1820s preceded the construction of the downtown FBC baptistery. But it is important to note that technological developments of pipes and pumps were not made publicly available for some time later. For example, the city of Providence did not construct a water system until after 1864, under the leadership of Mayor Thomas Doyle (1827-1886), who was later memorialized as a “Pioneer of Urban Renewal.”67 That title itself suggests that the “urban” preceded the “industrial.” Although manufacturing accelerated urbanization, it was congregants’ desire to domesticate urban space, rather than the pervasive forces of a dominant mode of economic production, that helps make sense of the construction of baptisteries inside city Baptist churches.

Take Richmond, for example, a nineteenth century city built on the slave economy of the South, not on the northern manufacturing industries present in Providence. A distribution port for agricultural products such as tobacco, Richmond experienced rapid growth after a canal system was finished in 1822.68 Fourteen years later, First Baptist Richmond constructed its indoor baptistery, notably two years before FBC Providence. In this case, an urban architectural innovation of a southern church

67 The reference to Mayor Doyle as a leader of urban renewal indicates that the urban landscape in Providence developed before the industrial innovations of electricity, water, and sewer. These latter innovations were employed in the interests of the city, as a body politic. Following incorporation in 1831, the city of Providence could regulate its local manufacturing economy and govern its immigrant population. Thomas Doyle Monument Description (http://www.providenceri.com/arts/arts.html).

preceded that of its northern counterpart, the oldest Baptist church in America. Also, in Richmond, the construction of the baptistery preceded connection of a public water system, which occurred the following year.\(^6^9\) Thus, the ritual change in baptism was as much about the development of urban cultures as it was industrial innovation. These events are important for understanding religion in the New South because they suggest that religious rites were as much a marker of social status as industrialization was a vehicle of urban expansion. Based on these patterns, it should come as no surprise that southern Protestants were able to use industrial production to construct religious worlds as urban order, as they did in Siler City. Such patterns were not new at all. They were already present in the antebellum period, as displayed among Baptists in Richmond and Providence, who built their elaborate baptisteries and then used city pipes to transport water to them.

Technological innovations, though, were a catalyst for urban growth. Canals made possible the construction of port cities inland and steamboats moved them upriver. Trains went even farther. Fraying the tether to the natural landscape, they made it possible to build a town or city pretty much anywhere. In the American South, a region with only a handful of cities before the Civil War, the arrival of the railroad in the early twentieth-century helped rebuild existing urban areas, many of them on rivers or the coast, while incorporating numerous small manufacturing towns across the southern countryside. Connecting cities with towns, the railroad facilitated the mass-production, distribution, and consumption of city cultures, distributing urban tastes and styles to rural

---
\(^6^9\) According to the local church history, “During the next year [following the installation of the church baptistery in 1836] the interior of the meting-house was white-washed and painted and the City of Richmond was persuaded to connect the house with its central water supply, thus eliminating the necessity of buying water from a nearby well.” White, *FBC Richmond*, 54.
areas like Siler City. Admittedly, in terms of urban chic, the small southern town was no New York City. The density of cultures and levels of sophistication varied significantly between northern metropolitan centers and southern manufacturing towns, although sophistication was a relative term dependent on regional affiliation. Still, ritual innovations in Siler City followed similar patterns demonstrated in older and larger cities like Providence and Richmond. For example, the First Baptist Church of Siler City constructed its interior baptistery in 1907, a decade after the town was incorporated. Like Providence, the church baptistery was built before the public water system, which was completed in 1925. And it also preceded public electricity, which did not come on line until 1913. So even though technological advancements did accelerate urban growth, they did not necessarily cause the change in Baptist practice in Siler City.

Again, much like in Providence and Richmond, the construction of the indoor baptistery was one of the characteristics that distinguished the First Baptist Church Siler City from its rural congregational predecessors. As I detail in the following chapter, FBC Siler City was an organizational decedent of Rocky River Baptist and Loves Creek Baptist, the two oldest Baptist churches in the Siler City area, dating back to 1756. Although all three churches have remained members of the Sandy Creek Baptist Association, the oldest Baptist association in America, there is a noticeable difference between FBC and the other two churches. For starters, just look at their names. The rural churches were named after bodies of water – Rocky River, Loves Creek. In contrast, the names of city churches seldom referenced nature, whether rivers, creeks, rocks, shady groves, or brush arbors. Instead, they were designated as first, second, or even the third church of its kind within the incorporated city limits, as was the case with First Baptist
Church Siler City. Or when those options were exhausted, they were often named after their streets or avenues of residence, such as Grace Street Church in Richmond or Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas.\(^{70}\)

Other evidence suggests a distinction between urban and natural landscapes. In the nineteenth century, Baptist churches in the Siler City area were not only located near moving water, they were at times divided by it. For example, in the early 1800s some members of Rocky River Baptist Church living on the other side of the river often had trouble making it to church during heavy rains. Growing weary of their spring-time struggles to cross high water, they asked to be released from their membership in order to start a new church.\(^{71}\) In 1825, they helped organize Loves Creek Baptist. Of course, Baptists seldom needed an excuse to split churches, parting company over any multitude of disagreements. But at least in this case, the natural landscape played a role in the creation of a new Baptist church. The arrival of the railroad, though, brought a new dividing line, creating an urban pocket in rural Chatham County. In the newly incorporated Siler City, the members of the First Baptist Church were the first white Baptists to take residence on the other side of the city limits.

Although a branch of Loves Creek Baptist, FBC Siler City quickly distinguished its meeting house as a city church through its architectural design, including a steeple and, of course, an indoor baptistery. Among the three Baptist congregations, FBC was the

---


\(^{71}\) This story was recounted to me in an interview with Reverend Greg Burriss, pastor of Rocky River Baptist Church. 06 October 2006.
first to make such improvements. Rocky River Baptist did not add a steeple and baptistery until 1956, when it expanded its building. Despite the architectural innovations, the earliest FBC church structure still resembled more closely its rural Baptist “sister churches” than elaborate urban congregations. This changed, however, in 1928, when FBC hired Greensboro architect Harry Barton to design its second church home. According to local historians, the church was “easily the most ambitious in Chatham County.” Replicating the style he had previously used in 1924 to design the First Methodist Church of Asheboro, North Carolina, Barton “chose a heavy Romanesque style made popular by architect Henry Hobson Richardson before the turn of the century.” When construction was completed in 1930, the church boasted a new M. F. Moeller pipe organ from Hagerstown, Maryland (a gift of the Woman’s Missionary Society and the Ladies Aid Society), auditorium lights (a gift of Dr. W. C. Thomas), and an elevated baptistery with a hand-painted mural in the background. Baptists in Siler City had come a long way from their rural church homes.

---

72 In a quick survey of the Beulah Baptist Association of North Carolina, which is comprised of mostly small rural congregations, it appears that its member churches began constructing indoor baptisteries in the early nineteenth century and continued to do so as late as the 1980s. For example, Roxboro Baptist Church first used a baptistery in 1898, “eliminating the need to baptize in Turtle Creek.” Baynes Baptist constructed a small church in 1913 with a baptistery under the pulpit and filled it with water with a “drain pipe from the roof.” And Antioch Baptist Church added a baptistery in 1982, when it renovated the sanctuary. Ron Boswell, *The Blessing of Beulah: Prepared for the Sesqui-centennial Celebration of the Beulah Baptist Association of North Carolina* (Roxboro, N.C.: Beulah Baptist Association, 1984), 188, 118, 116.

73 Andrew, *First Baptist Church*, 26.


75 Andrew, *First Baptist Church*, 27.
Other examples from around North Carolina suggest that the pattern displayed at FBC Siler City was standard for New South Baptist churches. In Gastonia, another mill town and site of Liston Pope’s classic study, *Millhands and Preachers*, the earliest building of the First Baptist Church, built in 1885, “was a simple rectangular structure without tower, steeple, or baptismal facilities.” But in 1900, the congregation remodeled the church, adding balconies, a new wing for Sunday School rooms, a tower, a steeple, and a baptistery behind the pulpit.” Sanford, the next closest mill town to Siler City, connected by the railroad and located roughly 24 miles southeast is an even better comparison. Paralleling Siler City in terms of demographic and economic development, its religious growth is strikingly similar. For example, the First Baptist Church Sanford moved from a small frame structure, constructed of native pine in 1896, to a new brick building in 1925. According to its members, the new church was a vast improvement over the old. John P. Fore, Jr., a long-time member of First Baptist Sanford who spent time in the old church as a child, remembered the smell of pine and the slatted pew backs and bottoms “that would pinch your backside.” Despite its rustic qualities, the first Baptist building inside the Sanford city limits also had a baptistery, though it was hidden behind the pulpit underneath a door “that went down to the ground.” John recalled that a “stopper” kept the baptistery full and could be pulled to let water run through “a little pipe” and “out beside the church.”

In contrast to the old building, at the new First Baptist Church Sanford, the baptistery was put on full display with initial designs to surround it with a “stained glass

---


77 Like Siler City, Sanford was incorporated after the Civil War and grew rapidly in the early 1900s after the arrival of the railroad. For a quick history of Sanford, see http://www.downtownsanford.com/history.htm.
scene” and warm the water with an electric heater. There was enough interest surrounding the Baptist innovation that John Fore’s uncle, a church member and town barber, was able to convince his wife, who was a Methodist, to join First Baptist if given the opportunity to experience the baptistery first hand. According to John, his uncle’s wife, Euna Coone Watson, “was crazy over new things and wanted to be the first person baptized in the new brick church. She would join if she was first!” The use of the baptistery, however, was delayed two years because the stained glass company “went busted,” the “electric waterheater would not knock the chill off the water,” and the “baptismal pool sprung several leaks and had to be welded.” The church finally decided to use plain glass and plugged the leaks, but on the night of the first baptism, the heater failed once again, leaving the water “too cold for Mrs. Watson.” Another boy also tried but in the end, John Fore, Jr. was the first person to be symbolically buried with Christ in the chilly waters and raised to walk in the newness of First Baptist Church Sanford.

While the construction of indoor baptisteries began as an urban technological convenience in New South towns, despite some early glitches, it evolved in the early twentieth century, following the same pattern of FBC Richmond and FBC Providence, into a marker of social status, along with organ pipes, new pews, stained glass, magnificent steeples, high arches, and chandeliers. Often elevated behind the choir loft,

---

78 James Vann Comer, First Baptist Church, Sanford, NC: 1893-1993 (Sanford, N.C.: J.V. Comer, 1993), 88-89.

79 The first baptism at First Baptist Church Raleigh also took place in icy waters, literally. In 1822, the pastor broke ice in a nearby river to baptize Lucinda Briggs in the dead of winter. I could not find any mention of when the indoor baptistery was constructed. The Dream Lives On: Celebrating 175 years of Witness and Ministry in North Carolina’s Capital City, (Raleigh, N.C.: First Baptist Church, 1987).

80 For another example of church architecture as a marker of social status, see Wilmington, North Carolina, which was advertised on post cards as the “City of Beautiful Churches.” Walter H. Conser, Jr., A Coat of
on a higher plane than the pulpit, the baptistery was the architectural center of New South Baptist churches.\textsuperscript{81} Not only was the baptistery surrounded by domestic improvements, it was housed in churches constructed in Gothic or Romanesque architectural styles, as the case was at First Baptist Church Siler City. And these architectural designs were frequently reproduced. As I noted earlier, the design of the FBC Siler City was based on the First Methodist Church of Asheboro. Like its neighbor, FBC Sanford also has a “twin church.” Its building is identical to First Baptist Church Winchester, Virginia.\textsuperscript{82} The industrialization of the South facilitated these kinds of religious constructions; it concentrated evangelical Protestants in small towns; it generated wealth and a rising business class in those manufacturing places; and, along with the railroad, it made mass-produced goods and services, including organ pipes and church designs, available to a new type of urban American.

Within the segregated New South, both black and white Protestants displayed hybrid religious and industrial practices. Examples range from white Methodist L. L. Wren’s “Ten Commandments of Banking,” discussed in the next chapter, to the morning prayer rituals practiced by black Baptist businessman C. C. Spaulding at the North Carolina Mutual.\textsuperscript{83} Access to the tools of upward mobility, however, was separate but

\textsuperscript{81} In this way, New South churches incorporated national trends. Take for example the First Baptist Church Oakland, built in 1912. Design by New York architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, the church featured the baptistery at the center of its Gothic design, featured prominently “behind the altar and under the great organ case,” according to Walter C. Kidney, \textit{Oakland} (Arcadia Publishing, 2005), 76.

\textsuperscript{82} Comer, \textit{First Baptist Church Sanford}.

\textsuperscript{83} Historian Walter Weare describes how Spaulding liked to think that he presided over a church as well as a business, how he thought “the gospel of God sanctified the gospel of work,” and how every morning he closed his office door and read Psalm 91. Walter B. Weare, \textit{Black business in the New South: a social}
not equal in the New South. Even though industry did “elevate” some African-American
Protestants, such as Spaulding in Durham or Todd Edwards in Siler City, men who were
able to “move up” into the middle class during the twentieth century, collective ascension
fell far below the bar of prosperity promised during Reconstruction.84 White Protestants
were able to use hybrid religious and industrial rites to their benefit, claiming industry in
the name of religion and harnessing its democratic potential for their own economic
ascension. The industrialization of South was hailed by white preachers like Atticus
Haygood and white mill owners like Julian Carr as good for southerners black and
white.85 On the whole, though, the greater share of industrial profit went to whites. Over
the course of the twentieth century, southern whites were able to limit access to the fruits
of industry.

As I demonstrate in the next chapter, religious practices played an important role
in the rise of a white middle-class in Siler City. White Protestants were able to create
social hierarchies and claim public spaces, literally occupying the industrial promised
land of Palestine, the town’s most prestigious neighborhood in the early twentieth century.
Architectural displays of social status were also evident in New South Protestant
churches. In early twentieth century constructions, southern evangelicals forsook their
love for aesthetic simplicity in favor of elaborate accoutrements made available through
mass-production and distribution. For example, in the nineteenth century, the Southern

__________________

84 Eric Foner, Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 (New York: Harper & Row,
1988).

85 Harold W. Mann, Atticus Greene Haygood, Methodist Bishop, Editor, and Educator (Athens: University
of Georgia Press, 1965); C. Sylvester Green ed. General Julian S. Carr, Greahearted Citizen: Addresses
and Addenda of Centennial Observance of His Birth (Durham: Seeman Printery, 1946).
Baptist minister Jeremiah Jeter discussed above, associated religious displays of wealth, including “the carved pulpit, the cushioned pews, the crimson curtains, the tones of the solemn, high-sound-ing organ, [and] the well-drilled artistic choir, performing operatic style,” with the “Romanism” of the Catholic Church, which he derogatorily referred to, on more than one occasion, as the “Mother of all Harlots.” Yet, in the early twentieth century, rural Southern Baptists moved to industrial towns and constructed new church buildings using Gothic and Romanesque architecture. Accelerating reproduction and distribution, industry made nineteenth century Protestant urban styles, those that historian Ryan Smith has associated with anti-Catholicism, what he calls the “seed of Protestant adaptation,” more accessible to New South Protestants.

Evangelical Protestants in American Religious History

Like other Protestants throughout American religious history, Baptists, more so than Methodists, have defined themselves against Roman Catholicism. Anti-Catholic sentiment has endured in Siler City into the twenty-first century and was particularly visible following the arrival of Latino Catholics in the 1990s. During David Duke’s visit in 2000, white supremacists targeted St. Julia Catholic Church, rearranged the letters on the church marquee to spell “White Power.” In January 2006, I heard a student from Southeastern Theological Seminary deliver an angry sermon on “What does a real

---


Christian look like?” for the 11am service at Loves Creek Baptist Church. This guest pastor, a younger looking white man dressed in a dark suit with contrasting tie and yellow shirt, and flashing an eye-catching watch, excluded Catholics from the category of “real Christian.” In his schema, Christians included “Bible believing conservatives” and “evangelicals,” while “so-called Christians” ranged from “Roman Catholics” to “Jehovah’s Witness.” Other evidence, however, suggests that both of these examples were not representative of all Siler City Baptists. For example, in 2003, First Baptist Church borrowed costumes from St. Julia Catholic Church for its Christmas cantata. According to one FBC member, “we knew that our Catholic Church had the soldiers’ uniforms.” This member was referring to the uniforms used by Latino Catholics at St. Julia in their performance of Roman soldiers in their Good Friday processions. Having seen or heard that those costumes were “very realistic,” First Baptist approached their Catholic neighbor in a spirit of religious community.90

There have also been a few well-intentioned Protestant attempts at ecumenical dialog with Catholics in Siler City, although these efforts have been overshadowed by proselytizing concerns. For example, some members of a Baptist ministerial organization expressed interest in learning more about Catholicism, for the purpose of evangelizing new Latino residents. A more moderate Baptist minister responded to this request by offering to invite a Franciscan priest, a personal friend of his, to come from St. Julia to speak to the group. But the other members objected. One pastor complained that the priest from St. Julia “actually believes in it.” Another remarked that, “I have studied

89 Fieldnotes, 15 January 2006.
90 Interview, 30 January 2004.
Catholicism and Catholicism is a cult.” In the end, the organization opted for a representative from the Southern Baptist State Convention who was trained about Catholicism solely for the purpose of evangelizing Catholics.  

Despite their professed theological opposition to Catholicism, Protestants in Siler City have demonstrated an affinity for architectural displays of indoor baptisteries and elaborate church buildings, as well as the public rites of suffering and sacrifice in Fourth of July festivities that I discuss in later chapters. Using prevailing models of American religious history, it is difficult to makes sense of the enduring ritual performances of bodily sacrifice by white Baptists and Methodists in the New South. At this point, historians of American Catholicism offer the most useful approaches for interpreting persistent Protestant uses of public ritual to claim space as sacred place. Some historians, like Jon Butler, have proposed replacing the long-standing model of Puritanism with Catholicism, a model he considers much better suited for interpreting American religious history.

With exception, historians of religion in the United States have assumed that American nationalism is rooted in Puritan experience and as such is antagonistic with the racialized nationalism of the Lost Cause. In those Puritan-based interpretations, industry is depicted as the vehicle of northern national expansion. The implicit logic is as follows. If American nationalism was opposed to the Lost Cause and industry was the engine of that American nationalism, then the arrival of industry to the South must be antagonistic.

---

91 Interview, 6 October 2006.

to the region’s religious traditions. But as the history of indoor baptisteries suggests, religious innovations in the South were not necessarily determined by industrial arrival. Some Lost Cause ministers such as Jeremiah Jeter, who oversaw the construction of the indoor baptistery at FBC Richmond discussed above, were able to balance disdain for the North with a love for industry. At least in Jeter’s case, there was little if any sense of irony or tension between the two positions. For example, according to historian Charles Reagan Wilson, the Southern Baptist minister was so distrustful of the North that he “even believed that Northern prejudices affected [denominational] Sunday school materials.” Yet, as I noted earlier, Jeter trumpets industrial innovations in his autobiography, marveling at the “Age of Inventions” and “how many centuries of thought and toil were needed to bring these common conveniences [golden pens, furniture, matches, the telegraph, phonographs, electric lights…] to their present perfection!”

If one looks at the South from the point of view of the New England, then it appears as if southerners are conceding ground to the ever expanding U.S. nation-state, whose political expansion, as Miller and historians of his ilk have argued, is rooted in the religious errands of northern Puritans. But again, this totalizing perspective is a cataract on the historical eye, blinding it to the kaleidoscope of religious diversity in America, including the various political and religious “errands” of southerners. As David Wills has argued, “our [American religious historian’s] notions of American reality are still too much defined by the history of nineteenth-century nation-building.”

---


exactly right, in the sense that he is referring directly to the historical obsession with nation building from the expansion of the North outward; however, it is obvious that in the context of the New South, nation building is still salient. It is just a different kind of nation building than that imagined by Miller. So as with discourses of race, scholars need not replace one totalizing perspective with another. Themes of Puritanism and nationalism are still important; they just are not always one and the same. Just as there are multiple discourses of race, there are multiple discourses of nationalism in American religious history. Religious nationalism has been a theme throughout American religious history and beyond, from Mormons to the Nation of Islam to the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa to African American Protestants. In other words, New Englander Puritans were not the only ones concerned with religious and political territory. The point is to not be blinded by one perspective. Here, I am trying to assert that the revitalization of Fourth of July parades in New South towns like Siler City should not be interpreted as the assimilation of the South into the North. Viewed that way, it can only appear antagonistic to the ideals of Confederate nationalism.

While southern theologians of the antebellum period, like James Henley Thornwell, vehemently opposed liberal capitalism, as I note in later chapters, those southern ministers were not all together dismissive of commerce. They were not entirely disinclined to wealth. They did not despise innovation.\footnote{For example, historian Beth Barton Schweiger notes that religion flourished in the 19th century South and the rest of the US "for reasons far more complex than a simple distaste for modernity and industrial capitalism. She writes, “Indeed, Protestant belief bloomed most furiously in the New South, creating the Bible Belt in a place and time when the region was most deeply affected by industrialization and urbanization.” And it important to note that Schweiger credits Don Mathews with this insight. Beth Barton Schweiger, The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).} After all, they built indoor baptisteries before there were pipes to pump water into them. Instead, after the Civil War,
Lost Cause ministers feared that the expansion of industry would erode the paternalistic protections of the Old South. They wanted to control commerce and regulate wealth. In both those tasks – controlling commerce and regulating wealth – white Protestants in Siler City proved very adept.

To understand religion in the twentieth century American South, including the return of Fourth of July parades, scholars should be as attentive to religious practices as they are to religious ideas. It is for this reason that I have found Catholic models of American Religious history much more useful than Protestant narratives of southern religion. Historian Jon Butler contends that as a trope, Catholicism can better represent the ethnic and spiritual heterogeneity, persistent belief in supernatural activity, varying sources of moral behavior, importance of place, and institutional authority that has characterized religion in the United States. Although I do not advocate replacing any one model with another – I would prefer to maintain a perspectival approach that uses multiple models to interpret historical events – I do find much value in Butler’s turn to Catholicism. Surveying the field, one can see each of those themes present in the history of southern Protestantism.

In particular, I have found the theme of place, which is also tied to the production of segregated spaces in the New South, the most useful for interpreting white Baptist and Methodist ritual practices in Siler City. For example, Butler describes how “Catholicism has always attached considerable importance to place,” noting that “the miracle that occurs at each Mass sacralizes the site of the Mass.” Through the miracle of Mass, “a

---

place thereby becomes the place and its existence, in turn, increases the expectation of miracles." Butler also notes that because Protestantism "centers itself on grace, not place," scholars have devoted less attention to Protestant aesthetic concerns than to textual professions. But as Butler contends, "iconoclasm also bespeaks the importance of place." This reminder resonates with patterns in the New South. In their church architecture and sacramental rites of baptism, and in other ways, southern Protestants demonstrate a concern for place. A Catholic model may help scholars better understand these Protestant ritual constructions of place inside the domain of the church; however, congregational architecture and sacramental rites are only half of the equation. The religious labor of white Baptists and Methodists performed in Siler City streets, along with the industrial theology of George Heaton preached at the Southern Industrial Relations Conference, suggests that the other half is located outside the church, beyond the baptistery and the communion table. Heaton’s description of industry as infused with miraculous power is an indication of southern Protestant enchantment with material presence and physical place.  

Throughout American religious history, Protestants have defined miracles and interpreted modern life in a variety of ways. But with few exceptions, almost all have

---


99 In Heaton’s description, industrial conversion sounds very much like a Protestant version of a Catholic science of transubstantiation. There also Protestant equivalents of Catholic transubstantiation in American mass-produced cultures. For example, historian Leigh Schmidt has proposed that "climbing onto the lap of a flesh-and-blood Santa Clause in a department store was something of a sacrament for modern children, and merchants had the priestly responsibility of helping effect this transubstantiation of childhood fantasy." Leigh Eric Schmidt, Consumer Rites: The Buying and Selling of American Holidays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 141.

denied the miracle of transubstantiation in Roman Catholic Mass. From evangelical Lutherans to separatist Baptists, numerous Protestants in America have distinguished themselves as “not Catholic” through their theological rejection of “real presence.”

George Heaton was no exception. In communion with his Baptist brethren, he was theologically opposed to the idea of priestly transformation of bread and wine into the physical body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. Despite this opposition, Heaton invoked what appears an economic version of the Roman Catholic science of transubstantiation to explain the miracle of modern industrial production. In his address to the SIRC, Heaton referred to the raw materials of industry, from chemical fluids to cotton, as the “elements” that the supervisor, like Jesus with the water, transformed into a new substance. He instructed his audience that it “takes a supervisor to step into a situation, and to bring together a group of men, some materials and some machinery, and so put these things together that a chemical fluid comes out as rayon, or a piece of cloth comes out sanforized, or crude bales of cotton come out as sheeting.”

When Heaton delivered his “Miracles of Supervision” speech in 1949, he was serving as pastor of Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. Inside that congregation, he never claimed the power to transform communion elements into the body and blood of Christ. Embracing a Protestant principle of “priesthood of the believer,” Heaton dismissed such “office charisma,” the institutional authority of the priest, given through apostolic succession, to consecrate the sacraments. But in a

---


conference hall named after the South’s most famous Civil War veteran, Heaton imbued the supervisor with a modern power to transform one substance into another. Jesus used his divine power to turn water into wine. Supervisors use the miracle of industrial science to transform chemical fluid into rayon. Even though Heaton denied the religious miracle of transubstantiation in Mass, he believed in the modern miracle of mass-production.103

Heaton in effect “disenchanted” the Eucharist while “enchanting” industry.104

The early Reformer Martin Luther had initiated such sacramental disenchantment in sixteenth century Europe, prompting the Roman Catholic Church to convene at the Council of Trent and systematize its sacramental theology. As part of its rebuttal to Protestant criticism, the Council cited the first miracle of Jesus, turning water into wine, as an example of the science of transubstantiation.105 It also declared that only wine could be used in communion. In the nineteenth century, though, evangelical Protestants

103 Heaton’s distinction between Protestant and Catholic understandings of the miraculous hinged on his dispensational understanding of the modern. In his interpretation of the first miracle of industry, he made an important qualification that Jesus perceived a need “of the people for the occasion.” In other sermons, it is clear that Heaton considered that historical occasion different from the present moment of the modern South. Jesus did not have modern industry at his disposal, so he used his divine power to change water into wine. The miracle of industry, however, rendered that kind of priestly power obsolete. As a good evangelical Protestant, Heaton believed that the sacramental power of Jesus ascended with him into Heaven. Thus, Heaton’s contention with Catholic Eucharist was one of possibility. He did not believe that the sacramental presence of Christ after resurrection possible and therefore considered Roman Catholic claims of transubstantiation “false science,” akin to pagan magic. At the same time, though, Heaton was no Enlightenment Deist. He did not strip Christianity of the miraculous, as Thomas Jefferson did when he took a pair of scissors to the New Testament text. For Heaton, industrial science did not dismiss the miracles of Jesus, but reproduced them on a grander scale. Jesus fed the hungry multitude with a few loaves and fishes. Industrial technology feeds the South by increasing yield and accelerating distribution. For a basic historical description of Protestant replacement of the miracle of Catholic Mass with the miraculous experience of grace through prayer, see Jon Butler, Grant Wacker and Randall Balmer, Religion in American Life: A Short History Oxford University Press, 2003), 13.

104 For a discussion of Protestant “enchantment” and “disenchantment” in early twentieth century consumer practices, see Schmidt, Consumer Rites, 169-174.

in America moved farther away from this Catholic position, employing scientific method to turn fermented wine into sweet water, a symbolic reversal of the miracle at Cana. In 1869, Dr. Charles Welch, a dentist in New Jersey, used the method of pasteurization to create unfermented grape juice. Historian of material religion, Daniel Sack, notes that Welch, who was a temperance advocate and Methodist communion steward, explained his motivation as “…a passion to serve God by helping His Church to give at its communion ‘the fruit of the vine’ instead of the ‘cup of devils.’”

Although there was early resistance to the substitution of grape juice for wine, a few decades into the twentieth century, Welch’s Grape Juice was the communion element of choice in most Protestant churches in America. This was especially true in the New South, where the evangelical temperance movement was strong. Like Welch, Heaton also favored grape juice over wine in communion practice. As a champion of righteous industrialization, he too considered alcohol the major source of social problems. Drying out communion went hand in hand with cleaning, industrializing, and modernizing society. Welch used science in evangelical Christian service. Heaton employed the miracle of modern industry to construct a place, the “New South,” that was

---


107 George D. Heaton. 1942 Untitled speech to Southern Industrial Relations Conference. In *George D. Heaton Collection*. Auburn University, Auburn, AL.

108 Industry demanded sobriety and clear judgment. In his study of evangelical revivals during early nineteenth century industrialization in Rochester, historian Paul Johnson argued that, “The drinking problem of the late 1820s stemmed directly from the new relationship between master and wage earner. Alcohol had been a builder of morale in household workshops, a subtle and pleasant bond between men. But in the 1820s proprietors turned their workshops into little factories, moved their families away from their places of business, and devised standards of discipline, self-control, and domesticity that banned liquor. By default, drinking became part of an autonomous working-class social life, and its meaning changed.” Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*, 60.
defined in opposition to Catholic social and liturgical practices, from the “fetish of collective bargaining” to the “real presence” of Christ in the Eucharist.

Conclusion

In the twentieth century American South, religious practices were important markers of social status in urban centers and industrial towns. The enduring importance of religious practices in the New South suggests that industrialization was not a disenchanting force in the region. The arrival of industry to the South did not repress antebellum practices; rather it distributed them in new forms. These mixtures of industrial constructions and ritual productions only make sense if scholars of religion in the American South include both textual idea and material practice in their interpretive gaze. For the most part, scholars have taken southern Protestants at their word. They have focused on what these Protestants describe as symbolic representations of sacramental grace in baptism and communion. In doing so, they miss what these same Protestants do outside the church building; particularly the ritual practices that take place in factories or streets. In the next chapter, I detail how white Protestants in Siler City combined religious and industrial innovations to construct local economic communities of southern moral order. And in the chapters that follow, I describe how those white Protestants sacralized that moral order through the annual rite of Fourth of July parades.
CHAPTER 3

INCORPORATION:
MANUFACTURING NEW SOUTH BODIES, 1885-1932

Describing Siler City in the 1920s, Wade Hampton Hadley recalled that, “The town was proud of its number of industrial smokestacks. The sounds of steam mill whistles were heard morning, noon, and evening. On Sunday the bells of four local churches were heard.” These sights and sounds of economic and religious life – the rising smokestacks and steeples, the reassuring repetition of mill whistles and church bells – were typical of New South towns. In the early twentieth century, the industrialization of the American South was filled with the spirit of religious promise. Methodist minister Atticus Haygood proclaimed in his Thanksgiving sermon delivered to Emory College in 1880, entitled, “The New South,” that southern Protestants should “cultivate industry and economy, observe law and order, practice virtue and justice, walk in truth and righteousness, and press on with strong hearts and good hopes [because] the true golden day of the South is yet to dawn.” Like other New South towns, Siler City was born out of the hope that the arrival of industry would resurrect the South, transforming rural fields into prosperous factory towns.


If the South was crucified in the Civil War and buried by Reconstruction, as many southern white Protestants believed, then industrialization was the hand that raised it to walk in newness of life. Like the waters of baptism, industry washed away the old plantation parochialism, revealing a new economic landscape “cultivated” by a class of upwardly mobile white Protestants. As Haygood put it, “I am grateful that slavery no longer exists, because it is better for the white people of the South. It is better for our industries and our business, as proved by the crops that free labor makes.”

Indeed, as I suggest in this chapter, the industrial incorporation of the New South helped reinstitutionalize white hegemony in the region. In the case of Siler City, plantation legacies lingered in family histories. For example, Wade Hampton Hadley, Jr., the local historian who described mill whistles and church steeples in early Siler City, was the grandson of a plantation owner. After the Civil War disrupted plantation production,

111 Ibid., 12.

112 Although African-Americans forged their own institutions during this period, especially those around the “Black Wall Street” of Durham, North Carolina, it was often under the “new” paternalistic gaze of white industrialists like Washington Duke, the tobacco tycoon constantly looking over the shoulder of C. C. Spaulding, founder of the North Carolina Mutual, the largest African-American insurance company in the country. The history of the North Carolina Mutual reveals a dynamic relationship between black Protestant religious and economic habits, forged within the paternalistic capitalism of the New South. (I discuss the rituals of “paternalistic capitalism” further in “Patriotic Bodies.”) Walter Weare describes how C. C. Spaulding, who helped found the North Carolina Mutual in 1898, “liked to think that he presided over a church as well as a business, and of course the history of Negro life insurance reveals that black preachers often presided over a business as well as a church. For Spaulding the Company and the church coincided historically and spiritually…(Spaulding) thought the gospel of God sanctified the gospel of work.” Walter B. Weare, Black Business in the New South: A Social History of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 185.

113 Wade Hadley wrote the only local history of Siler City, and his work was an extremely helpful reference for this chapter, especially his own personal reflections on town life. It is important to note, however, that Hadley chronicles names and events in the town’s history without a historical narrative. In this chapter, I try to organize a laundry list of births and deaths of residents, churches, and businesses into a coherent narrative structure. Such is the challenge of local history. Further, Hadley omitted matters of race entirely. This should be no surprise. Wade Hampton Hadley, Jr. was a southern gentleman and southern gentlemen did not speak of such things, at least in public. For example, Hadley includes a description of the 1911 Fourth of July festivities, taken directly from the Siler City Grit. However, that description does not mention the racialized performances that were part of the annual events. Hadley of course knew of
his grandfather moved to Siler City and was able to reinvest surviving capital into a New South factory. In 1895, he and three other investors incorporated Hadley-Peoples Manufacturing Company in Siler City, which produced yarn and textiles. \(^{114}\) Wade Hadley’s father, who was named after Wade Hampton III, the Confederate Colonel who served with Robert E. Lee, inherited part of this industrial wealth, managed its growth, and passed it down to the next generation. Thus, Wade Hadley, born 1909, two generations removed from the plantation, was given a distinct financial advantage in life. Looking historically, it was the money first made on the backs of slaves in the field and later by the hands of blue-collar workers in the factory that helped fund Hadley’s college education at the University of North Carolina and Cornell University, ultimately enabling him to pursue a career as a petroleum geologist, even working a stint in Venezuela. Hadley’s family, while elite compared to most working class families in Siler City, illustrates the economic mechanisms of the New South that perpetuated white class privilege. And, as I hope to illustrate, southern religious habits were intricately interwoven into these economic mechanisms.

Drawing on corporeal metaphors to focus the narrative, I describe how Siler City was “incorporated” as a New South town from 1884 to 1932. I employ the term incorporation in two senses: it refers to the “union in or into one body” and the “action of

---

\(^{114}\) F. M. Hadley also helped organize the Chatham Bank and served as president for 20 years. From video prepared for funeral services of Wade Hampton Hadley, Jr., “A Photographic Journey of a Chatham Native Son: Wade Hampton Hadley, Jr., December 23, 1909-April 7, 2002.”
forming into a community or corporation.”115 In the first sense: persons, congregations, and corporations located in a specific geographic area (within the “city limits”) were “united into one body,” the town of Siler City. In the second sense, these social actors were made in the “action of forming a community or corporation.” In this chapter, I emphasize the first meaning of the term and describe the historical formation of Siler City as a New South town. In later chapters, I give more attention to the latter use of the term, focusing on the “action of forming” place and community through ritual performance. Here, it is necessary to situate the primary sites of ritual production, congregations and corporations, in their multi-tiered historical context. On one level, I treat these organizational forms as bodies, tracing their development from birth through adolescence into adulthood. But on another level, I also consider them part of a local division of religious and economic labor, itself evolving and becoming highly differentiated over time.116

During the formative years of industrialization in Siler City, congregational and corporate bodies were differentiated and integrated within local divisions of labor. At the local level, religious congregations played a key role in the formation and maintenance of social differences, especially in terms of race and class, imposed by the arriving industrial order. Congregations, however, also helped integrate individuals into local economies by


116 But of course, each local level is shaped by external forces and factors. This is why I consider it important to spend time in this chapter working through the historical particularities of organizational growth before moving on to the ritual production of place. Without this context, there is a danger of comparing the micro level (individuals, beliefs, practices) to the macro level of structural forces (capitalism, ideology, nationalism) with complete disregard for the meso or middle level institutions that mediate between the two. Siler City is more than a collection of individuals just as local history is more than a chronicle of narrative accounts.
providing theological explanations of the social order while cultivating virtuous Christian citizens. In turn, the financial fruits of industry, especially the capital produced by mills and poultry plants, given to churches through direct contributions, tithes, and offerings, helped supplement congregations in their religious work.  

117 Focusing on the early period of incorporation in Siler City, I argue that white Protestants championed industrialization, blessing it with theological language and infusing it with soteriological expectation. Looking locally, one can get a clearer picture of how industrialization “democratized” a racialized class movement, transferring the economic privilege of the plantation master into the public power of the factory owner, while creating an upwardly mobile white Protestant middle-class.

Making New South Bodies

The community that would become Siler City began as a rural collection of family farms. In the 1750s, the town’s namesake, the Siler family, settled a western area of Chatham County so sparsely populated that it was referred to as “the desolate meadows.”

118 This white Protestant family built their home at the intersection of two North Carolina roads – one running north and south between Greensboro and Fayetteville and the other running east and west between Raleigh and Salisbury. Later, the family managed a store and post office at the crossroads. Though the Siler house would change

---


118 M.M. Fox, “Historical Sketch of Methodist Church Siler City, N.C.”
ownership over the years, it would remain the symbolic center of the town. The current Siler City post office occupies the same lot where the Siler family house once stood. And if you walk in, you will see a mural, commissioned by the Public Works Administration project in 1940, which depicts the Siler house surrounded by early crossroads settlers chopping logs, driving horses, and constructing buildings (Figure 2). In the late nineteenth century, the town grew around those crossroads, first as a stopover for travelers and later as an outpost for goods and services.

Religious Arrivals

The Siler family came to Chatham County through Virginia, like many other North Carolina settlers. They attended Rocky River Baptist Church, one of the area’s oldest congregations, founded in 1756 out of the revival work of Shubael Stearns, a separate Baptist. Stearns was a product of the Great Awakening revivals, embracing the outlook of New-Light evangelicals after hearing George Whitefield in 1745. The Rocky River congregation is important for the story of Siler City because it was the mother church of the two oldest white Baptist congregations in Siler City, Loves Creek Baptist Church (1825), which sits just outside of town, and First Baptist Church (1889), located directly in the heart of downtown. In addition to starting congregations across

---

119 Prior to incorporation, the town was known as Matthews Crossroads, named after William W. Matthews, the man who bought the Siler house and 140 acres of land in 1842. Hadley, *The Town of Siler City*, 1.


121 Members of the Siler family would later join the Springfield Methodist Church towards the end of the nineteenth century.
Virginia and North Carolina, Stearns also helped organize the Sandy Creek Baptist Association in 1758, the oldest Baptist association in America. Today, all three of these Baptist congregations remain members of the association. All of this is significant because it was the separate Baptist who paved the way for the incorporation of Siler City. The Baptists who settled the Siler City area later would provide the bulk of the town’s manufacturing labor force. Baptists might not have brought industry to Siler City, but they were the engines that made it work.

Methodists arrived later and often proved adept at business and industrial management. M. M. Fox, one of the early members of the First Methodist Episcopal Church South, recalled that, “prior to the coming of the railroad this [Siler City area] was not a Methodist Community.”122 While a number of Methodists, mostly those arriving after the turn of the century, did work in the factories, these early industrial settlers comprised the majority of the managerial class in Siler City. The leading business leaders, bankers, and industrialists that emerged during the period of incorporation were more often than not members of Corinth African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, First Methodist Episcopal Church South, or the Methodist Protestant Church.

The result of northern African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) missionary efforts in the South after the Civil War, Corinth was the first church to incorporate as a congregational body near downtown (1884), the same year the railroad arrived to Siler City. When Hadley remembered hearing the sounds of four church bells, it is possible that Corinth was one of these churches; however, it is more likely that he would have been referring to four white Protestant congregations: the First Baptist Church, the First

122 M. M. Fox, “Historical Sketch of Siler City Methodist Church.”
Methodist Episcopal Church South (1886), the Methodist Protestant Church (1894), and the West End Methodist Church (1913). As I will discuss later in this chapter, racial segregation was the primary marker of social differentiation and town growth. That said, denominational and class differences did exist within racial categories.\textsuperscript{123} While disadvantaged by unequal opportunity, black Protestants still managed businesses and made money. Further, in Siler City, most of the leading black business leaders were members of Corinth, just as most of the majority of white business leaders were members of First Methodist Episcopal Church South or the Methodist Protestant Church.\textsuperscript{124} While Baptists have the oldest roots in the area, Methodists moved in to Siler City, and some established themselves rather quickly as the dominant business class.\textsuperscript{125}

In the early years of the town, though, from about 1884 to 1920, denominational lines were blurred. As in frontier cities, this period of Siler City’s development was

\textsuperscript{123} As Laurie Maffly-Kipp and other scholars of African-American religious history have argued, the same patterns of denominational distinction, congregational growth and/or schism, religious competition, and the formation of multiple publics – all traits celebrated in American Religious History – do not pertain solely to white Protestants, but are also found in African-American Protestantism. This reading, however, has not been the predominate scholarly view. For an example of such a misreading, see William E. Montgomery, Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African-American Church in the South, 1865-1900 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993). Montgomery interprets AME and AMEZ competition for members in the South as organizational redundancy, because it distracts from ecumenical cooperation in service of black freedom. By focusing on the Black Church singular as opposed to black denominational growth in the plural, Montgomery recasts the positive traits of American religious history as negatives in relation to African American religious history.

\textsuperscript{124} West End Methodist was a mill church – located near a mill and intended for its workers – organized with help from First Methodist Episcopal Church members.

\textsuperscript{125} I am not trying to argue, however, that Methodists on the whole make better business leaders than Baptists, or for that matter, Presbyterians or Episcopalians in the New South. Any of these Protestant denominations might provide the bulk of leadership in their respective towns, or they might join together to form a local Protestant establishment. Which is the point really: class differences crossed denominational lines. At the same time though, it appears that in Siler City, at least, particular Methodist theological characteristics – the optimism of self-perfection through disciplined method, combined with a relatively structured polity, one that institutionalized authority more efficiently than its Baptist counterparts – were better suited for business and financial management.
marked by limited and temporary cooperation and egalitarianism among its new
citizens. Before constructing separate church buildings, Baptists and Methodists
would often gather together on Sundays in a nearby brush arbor or tobacco warehouse.
Because of a shortage of educated ministers, they often would share preaching duties.
Local Baptist historian Andrew Murray commented that in these Sunday School
gatherings, which began in 1885, “it seemed that there was no class structure and
everyone met in the same group.” Ecumenical worships patterns, however, were short
lived. Social hierarchy and congregational distinctions quickly took form, when the three
largest white Protestant congregations, First Methodist Episcopal Church South, First
Baptist Church, and the Methodist Protestant Church, began to break away from the
ecumenical bible study and worship group the following year. And even though these
churches would continue to exchange Sunday School teachers, they would seldom –
except for revivals – ever meet together again as a unified evangelical body.

There is evidence, though, that an evangelical egalitarian spirit of cooperation
pervaded institutional life in early Siler City, even after congregational differentiation. In

126 For an account of frontier liminality followed by the emergence of a local Protestant Establishment, see
Thomas A. Tweed, “An Emerging Protestant Establishment: Religious Affiliation and Public Power on the

127 Sunday School at FBC-Siler City was called the Philathea for women and Baraca class for men at least
during early 1900’s. Murray M. Andrew, First Baptist Church, 1889-1989 (Winston-Salem, North Carolina:

128 According to Murray, “The church voted to organize a Sabbath School on January 18, 1890. This was
an outgrowth of a local interdenominational Sunday School formed as many families were moving in after
the completion of the railroad through Matthews Crossroads in 1884. This Sunday School was begun early
in 1885 with J. B. Guthrie as superintendent. This group met at a brush arbor next to Mr. Guthrie’s house,
or, in cold weather, the group met in a tobacco warehouse…Often, visiting ministers from various
denominations would preach for the Sunday School—at other time, lay people would teach a Sunday
School lesson. The Methodist left in 1886, to establish their own church. As the First Baptist Church
began, the numbers were small, and it appeared that D. L. Webster took the lead, directed and taught the
Sunday School.” Andrew, First Baptist Church, 11.
an autobiographical statement entitled “My Church,” L. L. Wren traces the history of the Methodist Protestant Church in Siler City back to the Springfield Methodist Protestant Church (organized 1873). Many of the members of Siler City Methodist Protestant Church, including members of the city’s founding family, R. C. Siler and Henry Siler, were former members of Springfield, located a few miles west of Siler City. When Springfield members moved to Siler City in the 1890s (Wren moved with his family in 1893), the church faded away. By 1917, it was no longer a Methodist appointment. Reflecting many years later Wren wrote, “It made no difference to me that in the membership there were no PHD’s no DD’s or LLD’s as I saw then and as I see it now genuine religion is not dependent upon these things but upon true repentance and forgiveness from our sins.”129 Wren’s measure of true religion based on right disposition rather than education or social status suggests that some white Protestants in early Siler City imagined themselves as bound together as a common body, even if class differentiated religious gatherings.

In early Siler City, there were also some moments of limited religious cooperation across racial lines, though this was often complicated. For example, in 1919, African-American Baptists used materials from the old First Methodist Episcopal Church South, which was torn down to make way for a newer construction, to build their own First Baptist Church.130 It is unclear, though, whether the building materials were sold or


130 The original name of the congregation was First Baptist Church. I find this a curious assertion given that there was already a white Baptist congregation in Siler City by the same name. Also interesting, the name was later changed to North Sixth Ave First Baptist Church but then changed back to First Baptist Church, after North Sixth Avenue was renamed Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard in 1991. At the same time though, the church marquee, at least in 2005, reads, First Missionary Baptist Church.
donated. According to the local Methodist records, the old church building was “sold to a Negro Baptist congregation and moved from the lot.”¹³¹ But according to African-American Baptist memories, “Mr. L. L. Wrenn had the idea and foresight of donating the materials from the torn down church to get the church started.”¹³² Part of the discrepancy may be attributed to the fact that, like a number of the other local documents lost over the years, early First Baptist church records were “destroyed in a house fire” of the church clerk. But the overall spirit of the congregation’s birth – that the church “was built on a vision of two people, Mr. L. L. Wrenn and Sister Mary Siler…to (see) a Black Baptist Church in the city limits of Siler City” – “never left the memory of Mrs. Annie Foxx,” the First Baptist Church historian.¹³³ Thus, according to the surviving historical accounts, the first black Baptist congregation in Siler City resulted from the work of a black Baptist woman, Sister Mary Siler, who first held meetings in her home and then donated land for the church, and a white Methodist man, L. L. Wren, who secured the building materials.

Economic Arrivals

Although there were a few small-scale mills, such as the gristmill operated by Samuel Siler from 1870 through the 1890s, Siler City really took form with the arrival of the railroad. In 1884, the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railway constructed a track from


¹³² Despite the difference in spelling, Annie Foxx is referring to the same L. L. Wren mentioned above. This is confusing because there were, and still are, two families in Siler City, one named Wren and the other named Wrenn. And both were influential Methodist families.

¹³³ “First Baptist Church, 75th Anniversary, 1919-1994.”
Sanford to Greensboro, North Carolina, and designated Siler Station a stop along the way. Immediately, three stores opened up and others soon followed. According to Hadley, by April of 1887, there were seven stores, “a tobacco warehouse, three livery stables, three hotels, a planing mill, a saw mill, and a cotton gin” in town.\textsuperscript{134} Local regulation followed close behind this upstart growth. In 1887, the community was incorporated as the town of Siler City. With an officially recognized governmental body, the town now had the power to manage and plan economic growth; however, it shared this power with newly organized industrial businesses like the Farmers Roller Mill Manufacturing Company, incorporated 1893. Stockholders and partners of factories and manufacturing companies often would serve in local government. For example, L. L. Wren, the same white Methodist man who helped organize the African-American Baptist congregation, was a partner of the Siler City Milling Company, organized in 1910, and served as Siler City Mayor from 1913 to 1915.\textsuperscript{135} Wren is one of a few dozen examples of white Protestant men who regularly crossed the boundaries among religious, economic, and political life during this period of incorporation.

Siler City continued to grow throughout the busiest years of the railroad, as folks moved to town looking for work. From 1890 to 1930, the population increased from 254 to 1,730 persons, nearly 15 percent a year.\textsuperscript{136} People set up residence closer to town and often employers, mills mostly, would provide housing for them – at a cost, of course. Wooden structures gave way to brick industrial buildings around the railroad depot and

\textsuperscript{134} Hadley, The Town of Siler City, 2.

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 6, 39.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
working class neighborhoods outlined a bustling downtown. This period was the first and most crucial phase of industrial development in the town, when nearly seventy percent of the downtown business structures, approximately 37 new commercial buildings, were built. While Siler City prospered, the total number of residents in Chatham County declined. This change is significant because it means that folks in the county, both black and white, were leaving their family farms and migrating to industrializing towns like Greensboro, Sanford, or Siler City. Old South agrarian patterns of plantations and family farms were giving way to New South factory towns with denser populations.137

Although agrarian patterns did not die out in the New South, they were transformed by industrialization. Southern historian C. Vann Woodward has argued that the lasting impact of industrialization in the New South was the creation of urban areas, pockets of cities and towns connected primarily by the railroad.138 Industrialization was extremely uneven. It was not as if the entire South stopped growing cotton and tobacco overnight, moved to the nearest town or city, and started working the assembly line. A number of folks moved from the field to the factory, but not everyone. Rather, in addition to becoming sites of industrial production, cities like Durham, Birmingham, and Atlanta

137 Although many towns like Siler City would never become large-scale cities, the division of religious and economic labor that developed in such places would resemble, on a smaller scale, their more metropolitan counterparts. The divisions of labor that developed on the local level as a result of urbanization, even on the smallest scale, distinguished New South towns like Siler City from the preceding social orders of rural antebellum communities. For example, Pittsboro, one of North Carolina’s oldest towns, founded in 1787, is also in Chatham County. After 1887, though, Siler City quickly grew to overtake Pittsboro in size. Another century later, Siler City remains the largest town in one of the fastest growing counties in North Carolina (2000 Census).

also became market hubs for rural farmers. Larger towns and cities connected rural areas to wider economies of consumption. Along the way, agrarian production was increasingly commodified. Further, as these towns grew, distinct religious and economic classes emerged, with race overshadowing both. While not as large as Greensboro or Atlanta, Siler City exhibited similar patterns of economic growth and social differentiation. Like many other New South towns, Siler City was a mix of rural and urban elements; it was a space where the farm met the factory and the railroad connected both to the outside world.

While farms lived on in New South towns, most of them were domesticated – their production supplemented a family income that was increasingly dependent on factory work. For example, Hadley wrote that, “The home place of some early residents (of Siler City in the early 1900s) resembled, on a reduced scale, the family farm from which they had recently migrated. A horse, cow, pigs, and chickens were kept on the premises. There was a barn, hogpen, and chicken house on the backside of the lot to accommodate them. Many homesteads had a kitchen vegetable garden.” These agrarian roots have persisted to the present. In a quick drive around Siler City today, you may see a few chickens running around dusty yards, but these are more often poorer family homes on the outskirts of town; you will not find any chickens running around the country club neighborhood. I will say more about these class differences later. What is important to point out now is that the farm has existed side-by-side with the factory in

139 Although, in terms of massive urbanization, I would argue that the South would not see the rise of major cities until the second half of the 20th century.

140 Hadley, The Town of Siler City, 50.
Siler City. Over time, however, factory life came to dominate the town. For example, free ranging homestead chickens soon gave way to the mass production of single-comb white Leghorns.\(^{141}\) By 1911, a hatchery for poultry yard chickens was open near town. Customers outside Siler City could now order baby chicks from this hatchery by parcel post. And they did – from ten different states.\(^{142}\)

None of these industrial changes would have been possible without the arrival of the railroad. Trains linked Siler City not only to Sanford and Greensboro, but also to cities like Baltimore and New York, as well as the Eastern Carolina coastal resorts that attracted northern vacationers. Connected to larger networks of economic exchange, Siler City quickly became a dispatch for both agrarian and industrial production. In the early 1900s, the town shipped chickens, eggs, onions, wool, rabbits, and quail from the county not only to other parts of North Carolina but also to destinations throughout the northeast. Rabbits were the most notable Siler City export during this period and were even a popular dining option in northern restaurants.\(^{143}\) For example, Charles E. Johnson, a banker from Raleigh, reported after his return from a journey to Norfolk, Baltimore, and New York City that he found the “Chatham Rabbit” featured on fine dining establishment menus in each city.\(^{144}\) The dish sold enough in the northeast that buyers,

\(^{141}\) Such changes are still causing concern at health markets like WholeFoods grocery in Chapel Hill, North Carolina where they have posters warning of the extinction of certain breeds of farm animals (January 2005).

\(^{142}\) Hadley, *The Town of Siler City*, 44.

\(^{143}\) From 1908 to 1916, Siler City shipped more than 150,000 rabbits not only to other parts of North Carolina but also to destinations throughout the northeast. This number does not include the over 40,000 rabbits shipped from 1904 to 1905. Ibid., 23.

\(^{144}\) The buying and selling of rabbits from Chatham County was regulated like other agricultural markets, much to the surprise of northerners. According to The Grit, “The Raleigh man, full of pride, told his New
some as far away as Boston, placed ads in the local Siler City newspaper, *The Grit*, requesting large shipments.\textsuperscript{145}

Poultry production, however, was the livestock industry that endured and defined Siler City. East coast resorts, such as those at Wrightsville Beach, were the first major buyers of Siler City poultry. In 1911, chickens were shipped whole, feathers and all. But the resorts complained that they were not able to clean them fast enough. So the next year, John Aiken set up a guillotine with cauldrons and cleaning tables behind a house in Siler City. He was not the only one. Other poultry dealers got involved. As *The Grit* described it, “…the dealers are killing and dressing them (chickens) before shipment and shipping them daily in barrels thoroughly packed with ice, so that when they get to their destination they are ready for the cooks and in excellent condition.”\textsuperscript{146} From this backyard slaughter, the poultry industry developed into the town’s leading employer, one that would eventually recruit laborers from Latin America in the late twentieth century.

Today, many locals still refer to these poultry plants as farms. An interesting description, I think, but an apt one. The mechanized production of livestock in the early

---

\textsuperscript{145} The term “Grit,” taken from the popular southern dish, grits, also called “Georgia ice cream” around Atlanta, was a racial reference to the general white population in the South. As Joel Williamson describes, conservative elites placed blame for resistance to social change on white masses, referred to as “The Grits.” According to this Grit thesis, democracy in the South ran counter to freedom of thought and speech and that if masses would listen to elites then the south would be a happier racial place. Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black/White Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 292. On the shipment of rabbits, take for example an ad from Boston posted by a restaurateur: “I want 3,000 rabbit shipped in lots of not less than one hundred at each shipment and want them shipped open so they will not spoil. I will pay eight dollars per hundred as is usually prepared for shipment. Cash at your nearest express office as fast as shipped. I want them all by December 1st. Can send any number over one hundred in same shipment. The quicker you ship the quicker you get your money. Address, G. O. Sanders, 89 Gainsboro St., Boston, Mass.” *Siler City Grit*, 6 October 1909.

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., July 24, 1912.
twenty-first century, of chickens stuffed into crates and shoved onto trucks instead of trains, seems far removed from the family farms of the early twentieth century. But this description just illustrates how industry transformed Siler City from a collection of family farms into a New South town, where livestock has been raised for an efficient slaughter, reliably packaged and shipped for easy sale. During the period of incorporation, much of the town and many of its residents were routinized; they, like livestock, were made to fit an economy of production and consumption. As I discuss later, some welcomed the changes brought by industrialization, even encouraging them, while others adapted the best they could.

Segregated Arrivals

Ever since the arrival of the railroad and its incorporation as a New South town, Siler City has been a racially segregated place. Settlers were divided first by race and then by class. One could argue that industrialization and segregation have been the distinguishing characteristics between the New South and the Old South. In his study of Greensboro, North Carolina, William Chafe found that patterns of racism and segregation were directly related to the industrialization of the town as a New South city. For example, he observed that, “In 1880, on seven of nineteen streets, black and white households existed side by side… Yet by 1900, Greensboro had rejected these potentially egalitarian patterns and had moved sharply toward a system of rigid racial and economic discrimination.”

Even though Greensboro, organized in 1808, is older than Siler City, it was also transformed by industrialization in a brief amount of time.

---

147 Greensboro’s growth as a New South city was almost identical to Siler City’s. Chafe notes that, “… Between 1880 and 1900 Greensboro’s population increased fivefold, from 2000 to 10,000. The three decades after the turn of the century witnessed an even more spectacular population boom, with the city growing to 53,000 residents by 1930, almost a third of them black.” William H. Chafe, Civilities and Civil
This transformation was even more accelerated in Siler City, where family farms constituted the only preexisting residential pattern. While blacks and whites often worshiped together in the same churches and lived in close proximity in the Old South, they were separated both religiously and economically in the New South. For example, a marker erected in the Rocky River Baptist church cemetery in honor of former African-American members whose burial sites had gone unmarked indicates that the congregation was at one time bi-racial, most likely from sometime in the 1830s up until the Civil War. These patterns were reversed in the New South, however, when blacks and whites formed their own independent congregations, often joining preexisting denominational bodies. Racially segregated congregations and neighborhoods are still part of the Siler City landscape today, although these racialized patterns have been challenged by Latino migration in the 1990s.

In addition to being racially segregated, early Siler City neighborhoods were also differentiated by class. These economic divisions were tied to congregational participation and were often described with religious language. For example, by at least 1914, locals labeled one area of town “Palestine” because it conjured the image of the Holy Land to some. Members and pastors of two white Methodist churches, the

---


149 Ibid., 48.
Methodist Protestant Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South, occupied Palestine. In contrast, an area of warehouses and industrial buildings to the east just across the railroad tracks was called “Hell’s Half Acre.” This distinction even made the newspaper. With perhaps a bit of sarcasm, Isaac London, editor of The Grit, commented, “Angel food and deviled ham – what a mixture; as bad as the names of two sections of Siler City. One section the eastern, is known as Hell’s Half Acre, and the western part is known as Palestine.”

The religious and residential patterns that developed during the New South period reflect the rise of a specific class of white Protestants that would persist in Siler City to the present day, framing the more recent arrival of migrants from Latin America, who would later move into this neighborhood.

Almost one hundred years after Isaac London’s commentary, the contrast between Palestine and Hell's Half Acre remains visible. Nice older homes with green yards and large trees line the streets in Palestine. Across the tracks, a dilapidated warehouse and poultry plant mark the area formerly known as Hell's Half Acre. The memory of these place names has since faded, but indelible marks upon the physical and cultural landscape remain. A long-term resident of Siler City who has lived there since the late 1920s, does not remember the terms Palestine and Hell’s Half Acre ever being used. He does recall, however, that the preachers all “lived on the hill,” the same area once known as Palestine.

This former member of the Methodist Protestant Church described how his neighbors on “The Hill” would walk down the street to the Methodist church on Sunday mornings.

---


151 It is interesting to note that no one I have talked with or interviewed remembers hearing of the terms Palestine and Hell’s Half Acre.
And he also remembers that years later some of the Hill’s first residents moved to other parts of town to avoid the encroaching working class who were buying into Palestine.152

With this long-time resident as my guide, I traced the movement of residents from Palestine to two other neighborhoods in Siler City over the years. When working class folks earned enough money to buy into the higher-class neighborhood after WWII, some residents of Palestine, mostly doctors and lawyers according to my local guide, built homes in another part of town and relocated there. Eventually, the next wave of working class could afford one of those homes. So in the late 1950s into the 1960s, the ‘displaced’ Protestant Palestinians would build another subdivision. This time, the class segregated neighborhood was built around The Siler City Country Club, constructed in 1957. Over the years, this neighborhood has remained exclusively white.153

Descriptions of early Siler City streets and neighborhoods, framed with religious rhetoric, reflect economic and political advantage as well as social status held by established congregations and their members. Reading segregated residential patterns as material records, the status accrued during the early-twentieth century has persisted across the twentieth century. For example, the First United Methodist Church of Siler City (FUMC), which emerged from the merger of the Methodist Protestant Church and the First Methodist Episcopal Church South in 1940, the two churches that populated Palestine, still wields a large amount of social and cultural capital. Based on a recent study commissioned by FUMC-Siler City, the educational level of the congregation is well above the national average and the average annual household income is just slightly

---

152 Interview, 13 September 2004.

153 According to the 1990 Census, it was one hundred percent white.
below the U.S. average. In comparison, both the education level and average annual household income of the general Siler City community, which even includes the data of FUMC members, is well below the national average (Table 1 and Table 2). On education and income, the contrast between FUMC congregants and the rest of the community is striking. These differences evidence continued economic and political advantage maintained through congregational participation, further suggesting that the residential patterns of early Siler City still impact the town’s cultural cartography today. In a New South town like Siler City, a class of white Protestants has historically held an economic and educational advantage. Religion, as performed in the congregational setting, played a critical role in the formation and perpetuation of these advantages. Social and economic advantages forged in congregational spaces spill over into civic life and public spaces. Over the course of the twentieth century white middle-class Protestants in Siler City sanctified a segregated landscape through their ritual constructions of place.

In the context of segregated residential and congregational patterns, many white Protestants in early Siler City worked hard to clean up what they considered the filth and grime of their town. Hadley remembered that each home had “the notorious privy or

---


155 Sydney Verba et al. argue that education, which is tied to socio-economic status, is the limiting factor in public political participation. They further argue that this process privileges those with Anglo-white civic skills, measured primarily in organizational habits and the ability to speak English and that “only religious institutions provide a counterbalance to this cumulative resource process.” Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995). While I disagree with the authors’ use of the term “Anglo-white civic skills,” I do agree that religious congregations can both perpetuate and challenge the material and educational advantage of Anglo-white accumulation. For a partial critique of the notion of Anglo-white civic skills, see Frederick C. Harris, Something Within: Religion in African-American Political Activism. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 38.
backhouse” and that, at least at his homeplace, “wash women came one day a week [and]
built a fire under an iron pot to wash the clothes with homemade lye soap and scrub them
on a washboard.”\textsuperscript{156} Public places in Siler City also required great effort to keep them
clean. Hadley recalled that “dead horses and cows were dragged behind a wagon through
the streets, such as Chatham Avenue (Figure 3), to the local boneyard,” and the stench
“from all the privies and pigpens” was so strong that the town passed an ordinance in
1914 that designated an official person, known as the “Public Scavenger,” responsible for
carrying the excrement outside the city limits.\textsuperscript{157} The Scavenger was paid fifteen cents
per privy or pigpen, and he was encouraged to clean them out more frequently during the
hot summer months.\textsuperscript{158}

Once in the early 1900s, when Hadley was sitting on his porch during the
summer, he heard a family member comment that, “Our neighbor’s pigpen certainly is
smelling high tonight.”\textsuperscript{159} As I describe later, white Protestants worked diligently in the
1920s and ‘30s to clean up the town, including their neighbor’s yard. Eventually, their
efforts paid off. By the mid-twentieth century, their public places and homes were
sanitized and, as they saw it, made fit for Christian folks. Still, they could not protect
themselves entirely against the unpleasant smells that drifted into town from the
industrial farms. Depending on the winds, a resident might come face to face with the

\textsuperscript{156} Hadley, \textit{The Town of Siler City}, 50.

\textsuperscript{157} Figure 2 printed in Hadley, \textit{The Town of Siler City}.

\textsuperscript{158} Siler City officials also took extra effort to make the town presentable for public events, such as fairs
and Fourth of July Parades. For example, “town authorities…built a commodious calaboose or lockup…to
confine drunk or disorderly person arrested on the streets” in 1887. Ibid., 16, 49.

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 50-51.
olfactory waves drifting in from the poultry plants, as I discovered while attending the
downtown Christmas parade in 2005. For all the work that white Protestants in Siler City
put into cleaning up themselves, their homes, their congregations, and their streets, they
were still unable to keep factory filth entirely outside city limits.

Differentiating New South Bodies

Out of the arbor shade of the late nineteenth century emerged a racialized
Protestant establishment whose influence extended beyond congregational boundaries
and into town life. Black and white Protestant congregations held significant sway both in
their respective communities and the town body of Siler City broadly construed. In a
context of political disadvantage, where white Protestants worked as diligently to
maintain segregation as they did to tidy up the town, black Protestants forged their own
institutions, demonstrating religious and economic habits well adapted to the demands of
industrial life. While the exact definition of “being clean” may have differed across racial
lines it was still a trait, along with being sober, prompt, frugal, hard working and having
good manners that distinguished a person as a good Christian, regardless of race. Even
though cleanliness for whites often meant an absence of blacks in certain public spaces,
Siler City congregations, both black and white, helped define the habits that enabled
members to survive and even get ahead in a changing industrial economy.

Clean Bodies

In early 1900s, Protestant evangelicals in Siler City embodied the adage,
‘Cleanliness is next to Godliness.’ Cleaning up souls went hand in hand with cleaning up
the town. Revivals were a catalyst for spiritual and bodily purity and, to early town folk, the shout of preachers were as familiar as the sounds of mill whistles.160 In 1894, First Baptist Church hosted “a great revival…and many were converted.”161 On September 8, 1915, the Reverend J. W. Ham preached to over 1,500 people at a tent revival in Siler City, securing an estimated 500 converts, “including iceberg church members as well as sinners.”162 The year before, approximately 400 people converted at a tent revival led by traveling evangelist Raymond Browning. From this revival, a “clean-up” movement started, “looking to improved conditions in the moral, religious and civic life of the town.” Following the revival, clean-up meetings were held on Sundays and rotated among white congregations, first at the Methodist Episcopal Church South, then the Methodist Protestant Church, to the First Baptist Church, and ending at the West End Methodist Church. The goal of the movement was to stop the sale of cigarettes and ensure complete observance of the Sabbath, including no business on Sundays.163

Local evangelical Protestant efforts to sanitize self and city, including the banishment of social vices like cigarettes and alcohol, were part of a larger social movement that encompassed towns across North Carolina and other parts of the

---


161 Wren, *My Church*, 7. In 1912, E. B. Craven, pastor of the First Methodist Episcopal Church South, noted in his quarterly conference report that, “Our church in Siler City has just passed through one of the greatest revivals in the history of the church. Its influence was felt in all the churches. Finally 75 backsliders were reclaimed and possibly more than 75 decided for Christ for the first time.” E. B. Craven. 22 June 1912. Quarterly Conference Records. In *First United Methodist Chruch*. Siler City, North Carolina.


163 *Siler City Grit*, 14 October 1914.
American South. At the state level, evangelicals were influential enough to push Prohibition through the North Carolina legislature in 1908, eleven years before it became a national law. New South towns like Siler City were well made for regulation, and Protestants were highly effective in their public enforcement of evangelical propriety.

**Disciplined Bodies**

L. L. Wren, the same white man who was a member of the Methodist Protestant Church and author of “My Church,” was also influential in the organization of the Chatham Bank of Siler City in 1901. Wren served the bank for over fifty years, acting as President for much of that time. In 1953, he compiled a history of the Chatham Bank. In it he praised the hard work of board members, employees, and thanked the community for their support. And in the last chapter entitled, “Finis,” Wren left some advice for his successors in the form of a ‘ten commandments’ of banking, where he advocated “cautious” financial growth, warned against “unholy ambition,” promoted kindness, cleanliness, and a passion for service. Two commandments are worth quoting in full. In the sixth commandment, Wren advocates an enduring kindness to the customer:

> Never let it be said that The Chatham Bank has become a braggart or a bigot. Only fools are in this class. Remember: “A fool and his money are soon parted.” Treat every customer with courtesy. Kindness costs so little and is worth so much. Practice these virtues. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”

And in his ninth commandment, Wren admonishes the unclean:

> Never permit dust or “cobwebs” to accumulate in your bank. It would show careless neglect and leave a bad impression. “Cleanliness is next to Godliness.” Make your bank the most interesting, attractive and inviting place in your town, and make your customers feel that they have a big stake in The Chatham Bank.

---

Wren’s suggestions for proper banking are filled with religious rhetoric and tropes all connected by a disciplinary impulse. In the tenth commandment, Wren goes as far as to say that “money sticks closer than a brother,” a reworking of the verse in Proverbs where Solomon admits that “there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”¹-six In these rules of banking, control of money and control of self are intricately linked. For Wren, right disposition, combined with cleanliness and control, leads both self and community down the path of true progress, what he calls a “progress that will endure.”

Wren is an excellent example of the reciprocal relationship between religious rituals and public performances in this New South town. Leading Protestants in Siler City carried their practices out the doors of the church and into the bank, or the post office, or city hall; they also carried their daily practices of industrial work and play into the congregation. Wren moved to Siler City during a time of relative egalitarianism and social openness. With hard work, he helped build town institutions, including his bank and his church. With spiritual and fiscal discipline, he resisted the lure of quick success, overcoming obstacles with perseverance and helping build an enduring progress with faith in his method. The Chatham Bank survived the Great Depression without any loss to its customers, and the Methodist Protestant Church lives on in its most recent organizational form, the First United Methodist Church of Siler City. Wren’s spiritual and fiscal discipline facilitated the organizational endurance of two of the community’s key institutions, the church and the bank.

Civil Bodies

While African-Americans did not own or manage industrial corporate bodies such as mills, poultry plants, or banks in Siler City, they were no less industrious. Blacks had their own bustling businesses, albeit segregated from the white district, if only by a block. At least one African-American businessman, however, crossed these segregated racial lines in Siler City. Beginning in 1905, Todd Edwards operated the only African-American owned business in the white downtown district, a family jewelry store. According to Hadley, “The family was well respected in Siler City by whites and blacks alike.”166 A similar observation was reported in a local paper in 1961: “For the past 66 years the Edwards Jewelry Store in Siler City was proof that whites and Negro people can live side by side without hatred and violence and with respect for each other.”167 Edwards lived and worked with both blacks and whites, and was portrayed as an important symbol of racial cooperation.

This perception of Edwards and the Siler City community was also noted at the State level. In a 1950 *North Carolina State Magazine* article, Edwards was described as a “Negro operating a fine jewelry store right in the heart of the down-town business section of the community. Few folks in that section have any more friends than he and his family.”168 Known as a friend to everyone, Edwards was also described in *The State* article as a hard worker who lived in one of the most attractive homes in town, was active at Corinth AME Zion church, and paid for everything up front. When the magazine


reporter asked if Mr. Edwards had to borrow money for his store, he replied: “No, sir. I waited until I had the money before I started building. I’ve always stuck to that policy as long as I’ve earned my own living.” The reporter then asked, “How about your home here? Wasn’t there a mortgage on that?” Edwards “smiled and shook his head,” and said, “I waited until I had the money in the bank,” he said, “I never have had a mortgage on anything, and I’ve always paid in full for everything I bought. I don’t like to worry about anything. When you owe money, you usually have to worry, and that’s something I don’t ever want to do. And if you don’t worry about it, then the man to whom you owe it usually does.”169 As portrayed by those around him, Edwards worked hard in order to worry little. And, based on appearances, town life had few worries at all.

The relationship between Edwards and his neighbors in Siler City was always described as civil. When asked if “any of the white merchants objected in any way to his business location,” Edwards replied, “I never heard of any objections. As a matter of fact, I don’t think anybody thinks about anything of that nature. But probably that is due to the fact that the people here in Siler City are the finest in the world, and I have always known I could count upon them as my friends. They’ve been mighty nice to me and my family ever since we’ve lived here.”170 This rosy portrait of racial harmony parallels the kind of civility that William Chafe argued was the cornerstone of Greensboro’s “progressive mystique.” Chafe describes how, “civility was what white progressivism was all about—a way of dealing with people and problems that made good manners more

169 Ibid., 22.

170 Ibid., 4, 22.
important than substantial action.”

Like its New South neighbor to the west, Siler City manufactured its own “progressive mystique” which smoothed over any racial tensions that flowed below the surface of public civility. As Chafe argues, though, there was another side of civility that blacks knew very well, “the deferential poses they had to strike in order to keep jobs, the chilling power of consensus to crush efforts to raise issues of racial justice.”

Like Greensboro, civility was part of the “etiquette of race relations” in Siler City. A form of proper public conduct helped maintain racial difference, even as it masked it.

A tragic story concerning Todd Edwards and his son Rufus, however, illustrates the limits of the progressive mystique. According to Elizabeth Edwards, Todd’s daughter-in-law, Mr. Edwards would often arrive at the jewelry store and discover that it “had been broken into and many things taken out you know, jewelry and that sort of thing.” In addition to the store robberies, the Edwards family home, which was only a

---

171 Chafe, Civilities and Civil Rights, 8.

172 Ibid.

173 When conducting archival research on this period of incorporation or conducting interviews and fieldwork for later periods, it is often difficult to pierce the veil of civility that, while acknowledging the color line, blurs it just enough to make the strange familiar. For example, isn’t it strange that Mr. Edwards operated the only black business and lived in the white part of town and yet never encountered any trouble or difficulties? Isn’t it strange that there are hardly any surviving historical documents for African-American congregations in Siler City, many of them suffering the same fate as the black gym, destroyed by fire? Isn’t it strange that Saunders Hall, my departmental building at the University of North Carolina, is named after a man with ties to the Ku Klux Klan and, like the black church documents, all evidence linking him to the KKK was mysteriously destroyed by fire? See Thomas Tweed, “On Moving Across: Translocative Religion and the Interpreter’s Position.” Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 70.2 (2002), 253-77. Isn’t it strange that the Siler City planning department keeps a file on the black Baptist church but not other congregations? (Fieldnotes February 2004). Isn’t it strange that prominent white leaders in Siler City paraded downtown streets masked in blackface for Halloween and other events through the 1950s? Isn’t it strange that in 1998 the Siler City police staged a drug sting in Lincoln Heights and 40 of the 44 persons arrested were black males? See Todd Nelson, “Critic Says Siler City Sting Targeted Blacks.” The News and Observer 30 April 1998, B3. Isn’t all of this strange? Yet, as a white male historian and ethnographer, it is difficult to find direct answers to these questions. It is a challenge to pierce through the veil of civility, especially when I carry it with me, and try to make the familiar strange, surfacing the tacit knowledge so embedded in southern cultures.
block away from downtown on Chatham Avenue, its primary street, was often burglarsized. The break-ins were frequent enough that Mr. Edwards kept a loaded pistol at the top of the staircase, to protect his family from intruders. On one evening, Todd and his wife, who most long-time residents, both black and white, describe as one of the best dressed women in town, were entertaining family members from the nearby town of Bynum. After dinner and conversation, all the guests retired upstairs for the evening, except the youngest son. Rufus, who was about seven years old at the time, had fallen asleep on the couch downstairs. In the bustle of bedtime arrangements, the family had not noticed him.

Sometime after midnight, Rufus woke up and realized that he was still downstairs. As he climbed up the stairs, he woke his father. Elizabeth recalled that according to the family account, “The boy just kept going on upstairs. And the father thought that somebody had broken in and was coming up. And instead of turning on a light, he just grabbed his pistol or something and shot and then he shot the son. Because he didn’t answer. He just kept going up the stairs when he awakened.” The death of Rufus lingered with the family for many years. Distraught, Todd removed all of his guns from inside the house. Elizabeth remembered that later her husband, Todd, Jr., the older brother of Rufus, would never allow firearms inside his home either. Although he did hunt, he left all of his guns in the garage with his fishing tackle. But “eventually somebody took all of his hunting and fishing things anyway.”¹⁷⁴ Unlike the jewelry, guns, and fishing tackle, though, the memory of Rufus could not be stolen. His name, at least, lives on with Rufus Todd, one of Elizabeth’s twin sons.

¹⁷⁴ Interview, 4 January 2006.
While they did not pull the trigger, and probably most, if not all, mourned his loss, progressive whites were unable to protect Mr. Edward’s property, his business and his home, from the illegal work that led to the death of Rufus Todd. While there is no direct evidence linking the break-ins to organized crime or racial intimidation, one can reasonably assert that the persistence of burglaries in a white section of town implies an oversight in law enforcement. The fact was that Mr. Edwards, a black man living in a white neighborhood, felt unsafe enough in the town that considered him a friend to keep a loaded gun at the top of his stairs. The progressive mystique was by no means the same as white supremacy. Indeed, paternalistic whites publicly offered protection against a more radical racist minority. This was their civil duty. But this offer did not protect black residents from the public gaze of racial supremacy or its nighttime activities, including the larceny of Mr. Edward’s property.

Consuming Bodies

During the period of incorporation, Siler City, in addition to poultry and lumber production, manufactured a variety of products – furniture, shuttle blocks, oak washboards, plow handles, hardware, sashes, doors, and blinds – and shipped them by rail to larger cities in the region and beyond. But Siler City businesses also imported their own mass-produced goods for sale in downtown shops. The Farmers’ Alliance Store, first located at Loves Creek Baptist Church, moved to downtown in 1888. Evolving from a barter system into a stockholding cooperative (limited to farmers of the “Anglo-Saxon

175 It is highly unlikely that the criminals were black, since they would have stood the greatest risk of incarceration.
race”), the store carried farming supplies, clothing, groceries, and hardware.\textsuperscript{176} That same year, Miss E. Callie Smith opened the first millinery store, selling “hose, buttons, dress trimmings, lace, collars, ruching, etc.” Mrs. J. J. Crutchfield started her own millinery shop in 1892, followed two years later by Miss Kate Vestal. In 1916, Miss Bessye Caviness moved “The Caviness Shop” to the downtown business district and advertised it as “Chatham County’s Shopping Center For the Discriminating and Conservative Buyers of the Authentic and Exclusive In Millinery and Ladies Ready-to-Wear.”\textsuperscript{177}

In addition to outlets for authentic and exclusive clothing, downtown streets were lined with hardware stores, a jewelry store, barber shops, drug stores, and hotels. Shopping and downtown business was both a public and social activity. If you wanted to do business at the bank, shop at the millenary stores, buy groceries, farm equipment, or hardware, get your hair cut, pick up your medicine, or try a cold (non-alcoholic) drink, you went downtown. Products were displayed in storefronts and market styles increasingly defined Siler City folks. Each year, advertisements filled more space in \textit{The Grit}. Window displays and newspaper ads were highly successful for many stores, so much so that the Farmer’s Alliance, which had relied on a steady clientele, adapted to both marketing techniques. For example, in 1921, the directors “ordered the Manager to

\textsuperscript{176} The Siler City Farmer’s Alliance Store is the oldest “surviving member of a large group of mercantile businesses started throughout the nation during the 1880’s by Farmers’ Alliance groups.” Ruth R. Smith, \textit{History of the Farmer's Alliance Store, Inc.} (Siler City, North Carolina: Caviness Printing Service, Inc., 1988); See also Bruce Baker, \textit{The Farmers Alliance Store of Siler City, North Carolina, 1888-1999} (1999); \textit{The Farmers Alliance Store of Siler City, NC 1888-1999} (Pittsboro, NC: Chatham County Historical Association, 1996).

\textsuperscript{177} Hadley, \textit{The Town of Siler City}, 20; \textit{Siler City Grit}, December 1924.
secure space in the Grit for advertising” and, in 1927, they instructed him to construct a front window display.\textsuperscript{178}

By the 1920s, downtown Siler City was the place to meet and greet while shopping for ready-made goods and services. In a few decades, Siler City residents had gone from making their products at home, such as soap, to purchasing manufactured products, including name-brand soaps and perfumes, from a handful of thriving stores.\textsuperscript{179} With the prosperity of the factories, there was money to spend. Individual shoppers were distinguished by their fashion consciousness and ability to discern between “authentic” and “inauthentic” products, as “The Caviness Shop” advertisement suggests.\textsuperscript{180} During the period of incorporation, downtown became the town’s primary public site of economic ritual consumption.

\textsuperscript{178} Leigh Schmidt has proposed that the neo-Gothic architecture of Catholic and Episcopal churches in New York City influenced the development of holiday window displays in fashionable stores. He writes, “The elaborate decoration that these splendid urban churches created for ecclesiastical festivals such as Christmas and Easter are crucial for fathoming the emergence of a fashionable Easter in the second half of the nineteenth century. The newly cultivated art of church decoration, in turn, helped inspire inventive window trimmers and interior designers in their creation of holiday spectacles for merchandising purposes.” Leigh Eric Schmidt, Consumer Rites: The Buying and Selling of American Holidays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 195. In Siler City, despite the absence of any Catholic or Episcopal presence, window displays also became prominent features in downtown shops during the early twentieth century. And, although there were no Easter parades in this New South town, millenary shops did advertise Easter clothing, including hats and dresses. For example, R. G. Edwards of “The Ladies Emporium” advertised “Easter slippers and pumps at prices to suit” and advised shoppers that, “With only four more days before Easter it will be wise for you to make your selection early for an Easter dress. You will find at The Emporium a variety that will make your Easter shopping easier, and, with the girls’ assistance, really a pleasure.” Siler City Grit, 8 April 1914. These advertisements, combined with window displays, suggest that buyers and sellers in Siler City shared similar economic habits, the “consumer rites” that Schmidt described, with other Americans, further illustrating the integration of the town of Siler City into a modern economy of consumption and production.


\textsuperscript{180} For a historical and theoretical interpretation of the phenomena of mass-produced authenticity, see Miles Orvell, The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940 (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1989).
Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the incorporation of Siler City as a New South town. Following the arrival of the railroad in 1884, southern white and black Protestants migrated from surrounding farms to this manufacturing community and were transformed by industry. An evangelical egalitarian impulse characterized religious life in the first few years of the town. Baptists and Methodists worshipped together and shared resources. Ecumenical worship, however, was divided by the color line, even if there were moments of interracial cooperation. Segregation went hand in hand with industrialization, and race was the strongest distinguishing feature of New South bodies. While race divided congregational bodies at the birth of the town, class quickly differentiated churches within racial categories. Congregational participation played a key role in class differentiation, at least on the local level, as Methodists provided the bulk of the town’s managerial class. Adapting to the demands of industrialization, upwardly mobile Protestants, regardless of race, displayed similar religious and economic habits. During this relatively dirty period of industrialization, cleanliness was highly valued. Cleaning up souls went hand in hand with cleaning up the town. Revivals made new Christians and reclaimed old ones, while spawning town clean-up efforts. For whites, cleanliness also meant the absence of blacks in defined public spaces. Within this racial hegemony, however, black Protestants, many of them members of Methodist congregations, distinguished themselves as good Christians and good workers by their sanitary habits. Through economic discipline, religious cleanliness was integrated into business practices, as evidenced in the example of L. L. Wren. African-American
business leaders, like Todd Edwards, also demonstrated fiscal responsibility, though their disciplined efforts were doubled by the racial weight of progressive white civility.

The downtown streets, lined with churches and businesses, became the primary site of religious and economic consumption. While religious consumption, in the form of communion practices, happened inside the church, economic consumption, in the form of monetary purchases, occurred in public. But the downtown streets were also the site of the town’s most enduring public ritual, the Fourth of July parade. As I discuss in the next chapter, this annual ritual performance blurred the lines between religious and economic consumption, making visible the domestic life of congregations and community.
CHAPTER 4

PATRIOTIC BODIES:
CONFEDERATE SACRIFICE IN DOWNTOWN FOURTH OF JULY PARADES,
1901-1954

In 1901, Chatham County’s highest ranking Confederate officer, Colonel John Randolph Lane, dressed in his gray uniform and riding on his horse, led the first official Fourth of July parade, a “procession of mounted ladies and gentlemen, costumed in the national colors,” through the streets of Siler City. At first glance, the sight of a Confederate officer leading a cavalry clad in red, white, and blue may appear an odd contrast for a southern town. In historical context, though, the juxtaposition of this Lost Cause icon with the living colors of the American flag emerges as a fitting image for this New South town, where many of the ideals of a regional confederacy were fused with an effervescent national patriotism. For over two decades after the Civil War, southern whites did not celebrate the Fourth of July, many still mourning the Union victory. But at the turn of the century, a few decades removed from Reconstruction, they dusted off their confederate clothing, paraded the American flag with pride, and sang the national anthem with a southern accent, which in this case proved their central North Carolinian descent.

Focusing on the bodily presence of the confederate soldier, I examine the elements of sacrament and sacrifice evident in Fourth of July parades in early twentieth century Siler City. In “Incorporation,” I described the historical formation of Siler City as a New South town, emphasizing the incorporation of congregational and corporate bodies. There I used the term incorporation to refer to the “union in or into one body.” Here, I emphasize the second meaning of that term, focusing on the “action of forming” place and community through the ritual of Fourth of July parades. Continuing to use corporeal metaphors, I argue that Fourth of July parades functioned as a type of sacramental performance in the New South. As the liturgical sacrament of Baptism “incorporated” a believer into the church, the industrial sacrament of Fourth of July parades ritually incorporated white southern Protestants into an imagined nation-state, one where industry was often lauded as savior. But this was a complicated process. In no way were southerners completely swept up by industrialization into a “shared” American culture. While the Fourth of July parades were indeed local displays of civil religious practices, they did not mirror a coherent “American” civil religion. Rather, they projected competing visions of the United States nation-state. In the New South

---


183 For a classic account of American Civil Religion, see Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 96, no. 1:1-21 (1967). While Bellah’s description of Civil Religion is foundational for the study of public religious practices and American nationalism, it has limitations. For example, as David Morgan and Sally Promey argue, theories of civil religion often assume that ritual frames public objects. While I examine “civil religious” practices in Fourth of July parades, I agree with Morgan and Promey that meaning is not embedded “in” the artifacts of display; rather meanings are “inscribed” in artifacts by viewers and users who imagine meaning. Thus, I consider the Fourth of July parades in Siler City as contested constructions of religious nationalism. See David Morgan and Sally Promey eds., *The Visual Culture of American Religions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
version of Fourth of July parades, white southern Protestants imagined a nation in their own image, fusing Lost Cause symbols with an effusive nationalism. Through industry, white Protestants in Siler City were able to express, create, and revise their religious and social values while raising them to public prominence, particularly their understanding of a divinely sanctioned social order. On the Fourth of July in 1901, white Protestants gathered in Siler City to celebrate this public expression, sanctifying it with the blood of southern sacrifice.

*Onward Christian Soldiers*

The triumphant return of Colonel John Randolph Lane in the Siler City Fourth of July parade was a Christ-like resurrection for the Confederate soldier. Lane was renowned throughout Chatham County for his heroism displayed in the Civil War. Locals told stories about the wounds he endured in battle and his courage to persevere through pain. At Gettysburg, after picking up the regiment flag from a fallen comrade, he was shot through the neck, jaw, and mouth. Though left for dead, Lane survived, having lost part of his tongue but not his spirit. As the events are remembered, he lived to fight another day. Lane rebounded from numerous other battle wounds but was finally forced off the battlefield after a violent injury sustained at Reame's Station on August 25, 1864. According to an account printed in the *Randolph Tribune* in Asheboro, North Carolina, Lane “was wounded in the left breast, by a shell fracturing two, and breaking one rib and tearing open the flesh to the bone just over the heart.” Once again, Lane was “thought mortally wounded.” But as before at Gettysburg, he defied death by “his superb vitality”

---

and “returned to duty, November 1864.” Although he tried to remain with his regiment, he was eventually “broken down by exposure and suffering.” When his comrades “surrendered at Appomattox,” he was recovering in “a hospital at Greensboro, N.C.”

Similar to the New Testament accounts of the crucifixion of Jesus, this retelling of Lane’s battle injury is filled with graphic detail of flesh and bone. When Colonel Lane rode into Siler City on Independence Day in 1901, he carried his battles scars, not as one beaten down by war, but as one, like the gospel Christ, who had seen the grave and emerged victorious.

As the procession leader of the Fourth of July parade, Lane was acting as a living memorial to the sacrifice and suffering white Protestants endured during the Civil War. But his presence was also a reminder that the martyrdom of his southern Protestant brethren was not in vain. Lane’s second coming announced the public return of the religious and social values that many white southern Protestants had fought to protect. For example, in a photograph taken on July 4, 1901, the day of the parade and also, coincidently, Lane’s birthday, the Confederate soldier struck the same pose as the one captured in a photograph taken during the war. The first image (Figure 4) shows a younger Lane on his 29th birthday, when he was a member of the 26th Regiment. In the second image (Figure 5), Colonel Lane is dressed in his old uniform, though a bit worn, and is wearing United Confederate Veterans medals and Reunion Ribbons.

---

185 “Colonel Lane of the Famous 26th North Carolina Regiment, C.S.A., Operated Mill and Store in County,” in Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

186 Descriptions are posted on the 26th Regiment North Carolina Troops (NCT) Web Site (http://www.26nc.org).
The return of Colonel Lane to public prominence signaled a continuing resolve on his part to preserve Confederate ideals in the New South. As Lane announced in a speech to the North Carolina Society of Baltimore delivered at Gettysburg in 1903, “We lost our cause, but we have won back our place in the American Union.”\(^{187}\) But how did southerners like Lane think they were winning back their place? After all, they did lose the war and, at the turn of the century, industry, that bastion of capitalism that helped the North emerge victorious, was transforming southern fields into factories. Well, if Lane’s case is any indication, many white southerners felt that they had won the battle, even if they lost the war, because they were better Christians and better soldiers than their northern brothers and sisters.\(^{188}\) In their view, the North was known for its godless capitalism and the South would be known for its industrial righteousness.

Although Lane ran a successful mill and store near Siler City, and his economic ventures were often noted, it was his well-renowned Christian qualities that distinguished him from the average businessman.\(^{189}\) For example, in her graduating speech at the closing exercise of Ore Hill grade school, also near Siler City, Lillian White remembered that “in his religious life [Lane] was unassuming and deeply spiritual.” In White’s account, Lane’s external characteristics, his “frankness and sincerity,” were reflections of an inward life, what she referred to as “a certain openness of soul.”

---

\(^{187}\) John Randolph Lane, “Address at Gettysburg,” 5 July 1903, in Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

\(^{188}\) Lloyd Hunter argues that proponents of the Lost Cause, in terms of protecting their way of life, never really conceded defeat. He proposes that “the cultural faith was the Confederates’ belief that the Lost Cause was never genuinely lost.” Lloyd A. Hunter, “The Immortal Confederacy: Another Look at Lost Cause Religion,” in *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History*, eds. Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan (2000), 208.

\(^{189}\) “Colonel Lane of the Famous 26th North Carolina Regiment.”
she is referred to in the published address, Colonel Lane had typified the Christian life described by the Apostle Paul: “How appropriately the words of Paul ‘I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness’ describes such a life!” While this biblical passage has been used to describe a number of good southern Christians, admirers like Lillian White elevated these public perceptions of Lane’s righteousness to messianic heights. In her closing remarks on the life of Colonel John Randolph Lane, she asked, “Where can we find one so worthy of emulation?” This rhetorical question, presented on soil saturated with the name of Jesus, as well as the redemptive blood of Confederate sacrifice, came close to equating the Colonel with the Christ.

Many residents in Chatham County shared Lillian White’s sentiments, considering Lane a model of the righteous Christian soldier. They found him worthy because he had fought to the edge of death for his family and state. More important for understanding the rise of the New South in the early twentieth century, Lane demonstrated one of the highest of Christian virtues, he forgave his enemies. For example, some years after the war, at a reunion of Blues and Grays, Lane met the man who had shot him at Gettysburg. He responded to the Chicago barber by shaking his hand, a gesture that symbolized his resolve to let go of the “temper of war” and embrace

---

190 Lillian White, “An Essay on a Distinguished Countyman,” in Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

191 Lillian White is one example of the influence of white women on public spaces and collective memory in the New South. As historian Fitzhugh Brundage has pointed out, white women played an important role in shaping the memory of a Confederate past in the New South. According to Brundage, “The historical memory promulgated by white women…shaped the civic spaces of the cities and towns of the New South, now increasingly important to southern life, as well as the lessons that those space taught.” W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “White Women and the Politics of Historical Memory in the New South, 1880-1920,” in Jumpin’ Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights, eds. Jane Dailey, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore and Bryant Simon (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 131.
the “gentle tones of brotherhood and peace.” In the eyes of local admirers, Lane took the moral high ground, and to locals like Lillian White, Lane was imitating Jesus, who forgave his enemies, even in the face of death. Sanctified through suffering, Lane was, in his own southern Christian way, killing his former enemies with kindness. The Colonel, though, wanted to do more than just carve out a space for southern Christians within the nation-state. He wanted to bring the nation closer to him. In his attempts to reconcile with the enemy, Lane was modeling the valor and heroism of the Confederate soldier that he hoped would soon “be regarded as the common heritage of the American nation.”

Colonel Lane and many other white Protestants living in the New South felt that their “heritage” should be regarded as the nation’s “common heritage” because, to them, the Confederate defenders had upheld America’s core values at a time when their northern counterparts had forsaken them. In their view, Confederate soldiers were patriots, comparable to the Revolutionary heroes that fought for the independence of the American nation. For example, in an earlier part of her speech, Lillian White described the heart of Lane as filled with the “same love of country that led the immortal heroes of 1776 to sacrifice their lives for our independence.” Colonel Lane would not have disagreed with this assessment. After referring to the “boys” of his own 26th regiment as “good, honest, American stock” who “loved their country and loved liberty,” Lane recalled that they “had grown up to love and cherish [the] noble deeds [of] their forefathers [who] had fought the British at King's Mountain and Guildford Court House.”

192 Lane, “Address at Gettysburg,” 5 July 1903.
193 Ibid.
194 White, “An Essay on a Distinguished Countyman.”
In Lane’s historical retelling, the nobility of the Confederate soldier was measured by his loyalty to local family, protecting them from all enemies, even when the reasons for war were unclear. While Lane admitted that “not every man of them was convinced that the cause for which he was fighting was just,” he also made it clear that each of his soldiers “believed he owed allegiance first to his home and state.” It was this sense of duty – an obligation to defend family and state from an “unjust invader” – that Colonel Lane identified as the distinguishing trait of the model Confederate solider, placing him through his blood sacrifice in a lineage of American patriots.\(^\text{195}\)

The qualities of Colonel Lane that distinguished him as a patriot also made him a model for Christian manhood for many hardworking white southern Protestants. In addition to his “love of country,” Lillian White also admired Colonel Lane’s chivalry, kindness of heart, and sense of “grand manhood that never failed to make itself felt.”\(^\text{196}\) Lane, himself, marveled at the youthful masculinity of the soldiers under his command. He recalled that, “these boys had grown up on the farm and were of magnificent physique. Their life between the plow handles and wielding the axe had made them strong.”\(^\text{197}\) By Lane’s account, these soldiers were working men. In terms of the Confederate Colonel’s presence in the Fourth of July parades, this status was important because it meant that the boys of the 26\(^\text{th}\) regiment were perceived as members of the same stock as the industrial class of Baptists and Methodists in early Siler City. As Lane put it, “…the soldiers came of good blood. I do not mean that their parents were aristocrats...far from it; many of

\(^\text{195}\) Lane, “Address at Gettysburg,” 5 July 1903.

\(^\text{196}\) White, “An Essay on a Distinguished Countyman.”

\(^\text{197}\) Lane, “Address at Gettysburg,” 5 July 1903.
them never owned a slave. They were the great middle class that owned small farms in central and western North Carolina; who earned their living with honest sweat and owed not any man.”198 On a hot July 4th in 1901, Colonel Lane was the real presence of that “honest sweat” and “good blood.”

In Chatham County, as elsewhere throughout the South, the standard of “grand manhood” set by the Confederate soldier has been memorialized in monuments, speeches, and battle reenactments. Soon after Lane “passed over the river” in 1908, a monument was erected at Brush Creek Baptist Church cemetery, near Siler City, “to honor his bravery and service to the Confederacy.”199 Today, this memorial is maintained by the “Colonel John Randolph Lane Society of Chatham County.”200 Living several decades after the War Between the States, Lane witnessed the memorials that preceded his. Buoyed by this support, Lane let his deceased brothers know that their sacrifice was not in vain. For example, when Lane gave his speech at Gettysburg in 1903, he cried out to his fellow soldiers buried there, “O, my noble comrades! you poured your life blood for a cause you loved. But you are not reckoned among the dead. In the affectionate remembrance of your comrades you still live!” Remembering the past in the light of the present, Lane let the dead know that the living southerners now moving in their “old haunts” were “baptized in the same baptism as you.” 201

198 Ibid.

199 “Passed over the river” is the phrase used by Lillian White to describe Lane’s death. White, “An Essay on a Distinguished Countyman.”

200 (http://www.lanesociety.org)

201 Lane, “Address at Gettysburg,” 5 July 1903.
Historian Charles Reagan Wilson has argued that the key period of reconciliation between the North and South after the Civil War was between 1900 and 1920. The rise of the Fourth of July parade in the early 1900s in Siler City supports Wilson’s assessment that “after 1900 the American civil religion began fully functioning in the South for the first time since the Civil War. At the same time, the Southern civil religion continued as the dominant value system of the region.” In his analysis, though, Wilson struggled to understand the commingling of Confederate and American symbols, what he called “the peculiar situation in the South--the interaction of two well-developed civil religions.” Wilson wondered about how early twentieth century southern ministers, those men long entrenched in the symbolic haze of the Lost Cause, could sing the national anthem while still whistling Dixie. Providing one solution to this historical dilemma, Wilson cites the ministers’ theological decision to consider “southern values [as] really original American values, consecrated by Revolutionary and Confederate blood.” Again, this attempt to reconcile southern tradition with national tradition resonates with the local examples discussed above. Along these same lines, Wilson notes at the close of *Baptized in Blood*, national memorials, particularly the 1917 Confederate Reunion in Washington D.C. and

---


204 Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 164.
the presence of a Confederate monument in Arlington Cemetery, gave southern ministers like Methodist Bishop Collins Denny reason to believe, as Colonel John Randolph Lane had hoped in 1903, that the heroism of Confederate soldiers was “now the common heritage of all Americans.”

At the same time, though, Wilson also proposes that ministerial attempts to reconcile national and regional values in the early 1900s “transformed” the religion of the Lost Cause, resulting in preachers viewing it as “precariously triumphant.” But in his analysis, Wilson strains to make sense of the social and cultural changes that accompanied this theological shift. He considers it “ironic” that “the plans for a New South were popularized in the same period that saw the triumph of the myths of the Old South and the Lost Cause.” I would not disagree that from the perspective of what some ministers have written and said about the Lost Cause, the rise of the factory in the New South alongside memorials and monuments to the Old South must look a bit odd. For that matter, there has to be some irony in a Confederate soldier leading a Fourth of July parade. But this incongruity was often lost on most white southerners. In a town like Siler City, I have found that lay Protestants have not been as reticent as Lost Cause

205 Ibid., 181.

206 Ibid., 164.

207 Ibid., 85.

208 Part of the limitation of Wilson’s groundbreaking analysis, I would argue, is that he only looks at what ministers are writing and saying. This does not mean that the work is no longer helpful. Rather, it just means that the analysis has limits, and it is necessary to acknowledge those limits. Part of Wilson’s struggle to make sense of social change is also due to the totalizing scope of his theoretical interlocutors. For example, Wilson relies heavily on the seamless definitions of civil religion given by Robert Bellah and Will Herberg. He also gravitates too often toward the category of anomie as an explanatory factor. This problem is related to his understanding of ritual as informed by the theories of Clifford Geertz and Anthony F. C. Wallace. In turn, this leads to a linear understanding of the relationship between ritual and the production of myth as well as the reification of such categories, abstracting them from historical context, as evidenced in his invocation of Mircea Eliade. Ibid., 12-13, 24-25, 36.
ministers to dismiss what they perceived were the fruits of industrialization. And their
embrace of industry was not because they had forsaken southern virtue or patriotism, as
the ministerial Jeremiads proposed. No, it was not despite these values; rather, it was
because of them. As I discussed in “Incorporation,” in early Siler City, many white
Protestants infused their daily habits, those of work and play, with the religious values
that Wilson so wonderfully connects to the historic rituals of the Lost Cause.

In Siler City, just as in Richmond, the Confederate “sacraments” and
“ceremonies” were a basis for a renewed “southern way of life.”\textsuperscript{209} The two largest
public gatherings in early Siler City were the annual Confederate Reunion and Fourth of
July parades. As far as I can tell, the 1901 Fourth of July parade was the earliest public
recognition of Confederate soldiers in town. A few years later, town officials observed
their first Confederate Memorial Day, holding a service on May 10, 1909 at Oakwood
Cemetery. Early on, both events would attract roughly the same number of people;
however, the parades would surpass the reunions in size and significance by the end of
the 1920s. Approximately 2,500 people attended the 1913 Confederate Reunion in Siler
City, where Mayor L. L. Wren (the Methodist banker described in “Incorporation”)
presented the Confederate Veterans with a key to the city, while 2,000 were at the Fourth
of July parade that year. The next year, though, the July parade had grown to 3,000, and
attendance was up to 4,000 another two years later.\textsuperscript{210} This trend continued. Over time,

\textsuperscript{209} Wilson gives a historical description of the creation of Monument Boulevard in Richmond, Virginia.
This row of memorials to Lost Cause heroes was crucial to the reconstruction of local southern cultures in
the former Confederate capital and beyond. Ibid., 137; For a discussion of the contemporary dynamics of
Monument Boulevard in Richmond and the persistence of Lost Cause ideology, see Matthew Mace Barbee,
“When Memories Come Home: Arthur Ashe and Global Richmond,” paper presented at the Navigating the
Global American South Conference, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, March 2006.

the reunions declined considerably, but the parades continued to boom. By 1918, the Fourth of July celebration attracted close to 6,000 persons, nearly five times the town’s population.\textsuperscript{211} While displacing the Confederate Reunion as the town’s dominant public ritual, the Fourth of July celebrations retained much of the Lost Cause social vision that Wilson describes as “paternalistic, moralistic, well ordered, and hierarchical,” parading these “southern values” through the downtown streets.\textsuperscript{212}

In *The Way of the Cross Leads Home*, a skillful historical survey of American Methodist cultural practices in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Gregory Schneider describes how white evangelical Protestants procured domestic spaces for familial religious practices within the pervasive patriarchal establishment of the Old South. Schneider argues that by the mid-nineteenth century white Methodists had domesticated the Old South “culture of honor,” moving its public sacrifices of “place and station,” as Catherine Albanese refers to the antebellum order, into the family home and individual hearts of Protestant believers. In effect, white evangelical Protestant homes replicated the plantation principle of hierarchical order in smaller, more compartmentalized, religious and social institutions. Over time, as Rhys Issac has argued, the spread of evangelical Protestant domestic space through individual conversion slowly helped transform the totalizing institutions of the Old South, particularly that peculiar institution that resembled a medieval-like feudal order.\textsuperscript{213} Despite this transformation (or perhaps because of it), a fundamental component of patriarchal order, what Schneider

\textsuperscript{211} According to Census data, town population was 895 persons in 1910 and 1,253 persons in 1920.

\textsuperscript{212} Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, 100.

describes as the “image of a sacred feminine space to be protected from encroaching, polluting forces,” persisted in Anglo-American Protestant practices in the South. And in an interesting argumentative twist, Schneider contends that a desire to protect the propriety of private domestic space is what drove white Methodists back out into the streets and other public spaces of their communities. As he puts it, “The Methodist rituals of social religion, in their separation from the world and their familial patterns of communion echoed this image [of sacred feminine space].”

Engaging public spaces through congregational activities, white evangelical Protestants in the New South carried the order of their homes into their streets. Over the course of the nineteenth century, they grew bolder in their attempts, domesticating even the unruliest of festivals, Fourth of July parades. For example, Schneider points out that by the 1840s and ‘50s, white Methodists had changed their tune concerning the Independence Day festivities. At one point, just participating in the intoxicating displays of patriotism on July 4th could get a member expelled from church; but once the parades were “no longer beset by drunkenness and revelry, Independence Day celebrations [became] times for great Sabbath school jubilees, family gatherings, and pious sociability.” Citing numerous examples from the mid-nineteenth century, Schneider shows how, “using the Sunday school as their chief instrument, the evangelical churches

---


215 Schneider also notes, “As a man considered his estate, on which he founded his very self, he felt the most precious and most vulnerable part of it to be this secluded space that was identified first with wife and children, then with hearth and home, then with community and nation.” Ibid.

216 Ibid.
turned July 4 into the cult day of the Protestant God, American flag, and middle-class domestic circle.”

The Civil War halted the forward march of white evangelical Protestants in the South, but only for a few decades. After Reconstruction, they reemerged with a renewed public vigor, staking claim to a southern landscape scarred by war under a triumvirate of Christian, Confederate, and American banners. With their renewed embrace of the American flag in Fourth of July celebrations, white evangelical Protestants in the New South publicly announced that they had not forsaken their mission to domesticate public space, transforming it in the likeness of their Christian homes and congregations. Like the nineteenth century Fourth of July parades that preceded them, the parades in Siler City were a public ritual display of the domestic habits of the town. With increasingly more public power at their disposal, white Protestants in Siler City could regulate Fourth of July activities. And they did just that, molding the parade in the “image of feminine sacred space.”

The ritual performances of Fourth of July parades in Siler City reveal a moral order founded on the perceived purity of the white southern woman. The parade activities reveal a white Protestant “domus,” a term historian Robert Orsi has used to describe the “chief unit of social relationships and cultural transmission” among Italian

217 Ibid., 155.

218 As I noted in the “Introduction,” my interpretation of this ritual performance is informed by the historical work of Susan Davis on Fourth of July Parades in nineteenth century Philadelphia. Davis argues that parades are political actions; they are “rhetorical means by which performers attempted to accomplish practical and symbolic goals.” In short, parades are public drama of communal life. Susan G. Davis, Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-century Philadelphia (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 5; For another interpretation of parades as sites of social disputes, see Dominic Bryan, Orange Parades: The Politics of Ritual, Tradition, and Control (London: Pluto Press, 2000); see also T. G. Fraser ed. The Irish Parading Tradition: Following the Drum (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).
Catholics living in Harlem during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In Orsi’s interpretation, the Virgin Mary, present as patroness, was the foundation of family and social order in Italian Harlem. In turn, the domestic “moral world” that she symbolized was publicly displayed in the annual festa, or street parade, in honor of her, the Madonna of 115th Street. Southern white Protestants also have recognized their sacrificial mothers, the “Daughters of the Confederacy.” But in contrast to Italian Catholics, who “marched through the streets of New York behind the Madonna,” white Protestants in Siler City processed into town for the 1901 Fourth of July parade behind a Confederate Soldier, the symbolic masculine sacrifice for white women and southern homes. Attributing purity to white women and holding it up as moral ideal, Fourth of July parades domesticated public space while calling on Christian men to protect it.

For example, Colonel Lane felt that the martyrdom of his soldiers was the proper foundation upon which to build a redeemed South in the new century. When he addressed his buried brethren at Gettysburg, Lane told them that their “deeds” were the “pride and inspiration” of southerners living in the early twentieth century. And he assured his Confederate brothers that the women they had fought so diligently to protect

219 Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), xix-xx; My understanding of embodied practices and the construction of locality is also influenced by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. In addition to the historical category of the “domus,” one could also use the category “habitus” to describe the moral world of southern white Protestants, yielding similar theoretical effect. Bourdieu described the habitus as characterized by the “permanent teleological character” of its tools and institutions. For Bourdieu, the habitus is a product of history and produces individual and collective practices - more history - in accordance with the schemes of history; it is a “present past.” The habitus equals embodied history: “the active presence of a whole past of which it is a product.” Pierre Bourdieu, “Structures, Habitus, Practices,” in *The Logic of Practice*: Stanford University Press, 1990, 54, 56.

220 A number of historians and interpreters of the South have noted that the protection of white women from all threats, including black men, has been one of the great racial preoccupations of southern white men. For one example of this argument, see Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black/white Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).
had not forgotten their sacrifice. Standing on the sacred ground of a Civil War battlefield, Lane described how “the tenderest hearts and fairest hands of our Southland,” the Daughters of the Confederacy, “water your graves with tears that rise from hearts full of grateful and loving remembrance of you who suffered death as champions of Southern homes.” In his words of comfort for fallen comrades, Lane steadfastly proclaimed that the sacrifice of Confederate soldiers should be remembered, not just in the South, but throughout the entire nation, because they were defenders of Christian homes.

In the moral world of Colonel Lane and his cavalry of patriotic riders, a southern home was synonymous with a Christian home, and in a proper Christian home the man was the spiritual head of the household. When Colonel John Randolph Lane, the protector of white women and southern homes, marched in for the first Fourth of July celebration in Siler City, he was acting as symbolic head of the town household. His performance would not soon be forgotten. Although the public presence of the Confederate sacrifice embodied by Colonel Lane would eventually fade into a steely American patriotism, it would become the basis of a southern way of life celebrated in

221 Lane, “Address at Gettysburg,” 5 July 1903.

222 Charles Reagan Wilson notes that “Southern ministers also viewed woman as virtuous because she was the symbol of home and family.” Wilson, Baptized in Blood, 46; Christine Heyrman considers the rise of “Promise Keepers, an organization [in the late twentieth century] that encourages husbands and fathers to reassert moral authority and spiritual leadership in their families,” as the “latest in a long series of evangelical efforts since the early nineteenth century to position their churches as mainstays of patriarchal authority.” I would add that Fourth of July parades in the New South are related to what Heyrman has called “ministerial efforts to meld the South's regional mores of masculinity and martial honor with the evangelical ethos.” Christine Leigh Heyrman, Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1998), 205, 259.

Siler City Fourth of July parades throughout the twentieth century, a legacy that I will discuss in later chapters.224

The southern public defense of domestic space, ritually displayed in the Fourth of July parades, was gendered, paternalistic, racialized, and hierarchical in terms of class and social status.225 A typical parade in early Siler City would include floats, with at least one carrying a white beauty queen and another with a number of “lovely [white] girls dressed in red, white, and blue.”226 Brass and string bands would accompany them, along with “decorated buggies and carriages and horse back riders.” After parading through downtown, they would end at the town park, where, in 1911, “the exercises opened with the singing of ‘My Country ‘Tis of Thee,’ after which Rev. A. H. Perry offered a fitting prayer.”227 The mayor welcomed the crowd, which responded by singing “Carolina,” and was followed by a series of public officials, culminating in the speaker of the day, which that year was Honorable E. J. Justice of Greensboro. Speeches gave way to food, and after dinner, as they referred to lunch in the South, there were a series of contests that usually included sack races and a greased pole challenge. According to Isaac London, after those events, “The crowd then repaired to the ball ground, where the

---


226 *Siler City Grit*, July 1911.

227 Ibid.
potato race was held...then the greased pig was turned loose.”

A baseball game between Siler City and another town would culminate the daytime events.

The Fourth of July festivities in Siler City were so popular that railroad companies added additional trips from neighboring towns to accommodate the increasing numbers of passengers. Even then, it was difficult to find room on the train. According to The Grit, “the coaches and baggage cars were completely overflowed, with scores of passengers finding room on the top of boxcars.”

As far as I can tell, the festivities were pretty much a white-only affair during the period of incorporation. For example, surviving photographs from early parades show almost all white crowds (Figure 6), and newspaper accounts seldom mention the opinions or participation of African Americans in the Fourth of July parades, or any contestation or protest that may have occurred. The infrequent inclusions are usually condescendingly congratulatory, such as the mention of Milton Foushee, “a good colored citizen who knows well his business,” who prepared barbecue pork and mutton for the Fourth of July festivities in 1918. The annual parade and festivities were a prominent part of early Siler City and continued unabated from 1901 to 1932, halted by the onset of the Great Depression. During the period of incorporation, the rise of the Fourth of July parade as the town’s foremost public ritual, with Colonel Lane as the sacramental presence of Confederate sacrifice leading the way, demonstrated the ability of white

---

228 Ibid.

229 Ibid.

230 Printed in Hadley, The Town of Siler City.

231 Isaac London, Siler City Grit, 10 July 1918.

232 The parade was interrupted briefly for a two-year period of downtown road improvements from 1925 to 1926. Hadley, The Town of Siler City, 26-27.
southern Protestants to claim national patriotism in their own interests. The public
performance of Fourth of July parades and social activities ritually produced town space
and sacralized white control of those public spaces, particularly downtown streets.

Manna, Mammies, and Minstrels

From the late eighteenth and into the early nineteenth century, “native” Anglo-
Americans considered Irish Catholic immigrants living in northern cities members of the
same racial category as freed slaves. As Noel Ignatiev describes in his wonderful
monograph, How the Irish Became White, Irish Catholic immigrants, most of whom were
abolitionists in their home country, quickly learned that on American soil, “to enter the
white race was a strategy to secure an advantage in a competitive society.”233 Defining
themselves as “not black,” Irish Catholics were able to collectively compete for jobs as
an upwardly mobile class of ethnic white Americans. In an effort to elevate their status
in an imagined white America, they strategically associated themselves with a pan-
European identity. For example, Irish-American Labor Unions, such as the
Longshoremen’s Benevolent Society in Philadelphia, would often attach the flags of
European countries to their union banners. According to Ignatiev, the 1852
Longshoremen’s banner, for instance, was “decorated with flags from France, Germany,
Sweden, Ireland, Denmark, Hungary, and Italy.” But, as Ignatiev point out, there was a

233 As Ignatiev notes, the Irish have a long history of opposition to slavery. In terms of race relations in
America, for example, Ignatiev describes how “In 1841, sixty thousand Irish issued an Address to their
compatriots in America calling upon them to join with the abolitionist in the struggle against slavery.”
They were led by the “Liberator” Daniel O’Connell. Noel Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White (New
York: Routledge, 1995).
catch. There were no French, German, Swedish, Danish, Hungarian, or Italian members. The labor union was exclusively Irish.\textsuperscript{234}

Almost all of the white Baptists and Methodists living in early Siler City arrived to their North Carolina town through Virginia, not New England. So why would they suddenly become hyper-patriotic at the beginning of twentieth century, linking themselves to the mythic patriots of the American Revolution? Even though Chatham county settlers may have aided in the Revolutionary cause by fighting off the British in North Carolina, as Colonel Lane pointed out, they had always, as he also noted, been loyal to family and state above all other calls of duty, including those to the nation. So why the American flags? Why were white southerners so eager to wrap themselves in red, white, and blue? Why, as John Wilson wondered, were “the plans for a New South popularized in the same period that saw the triumph of the myths of the Old South and the Lost Cause”? I propose one possible answer to these questions. I think that white Baptists and Methodists in twentieth century Siler City took up the American flag in one hand while still clinging to the Confederate flag in the other for the same reasons that Irish Catholics in nineteenth century Philadelphia sewed European flags on their labor union banners. The renewed patriotism was a strategic attempt to “enter the white race” and “secure an advantage in a competitive market.”

But weren’t those Baptists and Methodists already white? Well, yes and no. “Whiteness” is a historical and social construct. It should not be treated as a given. In Siler City, it should not be assumed that “white” southern Protestants have always been and will always be “white.” Those are socially constructed categories that have a

\textsuperscript{234} Ibid.
particular history in the American South, one that is important for understanding the rise of Fourth of July parades in early Siler City.235

As southern historians have pointed out, in the late-eighteenth century and early-nineteenth century, white evangelical Protestants in the South were radical anti-establishment upstarts, some even abolitionists. There was revolutionary potential. But white southern evangelicals gave into the racial hierarchy of elites, keeping the power of their class-like movement to themselves. Like Irish Catholics in the North, white southern evangelicals moved up in terms of class by pushing down in reference to caste.236 As Don Mathews puts it, “Rather than distribute the democratic vision of Evangelical worship and recognize all believers, including blacks, as equal under God, Evangelicals recreated the hierarchical world of the elites in Southern fashion.” In Mathew’s interpretation, “slavery was the basis of this hierarchy” and “standing on the backs of their enslaved brethren, white Evangelicals built their own institutions.” The Civil War, however, abolished the foundation of southern hierarchy. Absent slavery, white evangelicals in the early twentieth century had to rebuild the institutions which “created and maintained Southern white esteem and respectability.”237

Raising high the American flag was a critical strategy employed by white southern evangelical Protestants to once again “become white.” It is no coincidence that the memories of the Old South returned to white southerners at the same time they

235 For a historical survey of the social construction of whiteness and a culture of segregation in the South, with commentary on its influence beyond the region, see Grace Elizabeth Hale, Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998).


brought back Fourth of July parades. In a speech to a northern abolitionist group in 1852, Frederick Douglass gave his thoughts on white celebrations of the Fourth of July: He asked, “What to the American slave is your 4\textsuperscript{th} of July?” And he answered:

\ldots a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your denunciation of tyrants, brass-fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to Him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy - a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages.\textsuperscript{238}

In his prophetic judgment, Douglas pulls back the “veil” of American patriotism to uncover the incongruities between the ideals of liberty championed by whites in their “religious parade” and the material realities of American slaves. Echoing Douglas’ assessment of Fourth of July celebrations before the Civil War, I argue that the renewal of the “religious parade” and the “shouts of liberty” in the New South, were attempts by southern whites, like Jim Crow laws, to reclaim their position of public power.

As W. E. B. Du Bois and later historians have noted, the period of Reconstruction (1865-1877) was one of the most democratically representative moments for African-Americans in United States history.\textsuperscript{239} During this period, former slaves celebrated Emancipation Day with their own parades, a tradition that has continued to the present in

\textsuperscript{238} Frederick Douglas, “What to the Slave is the 4th of July?” speech delivered 5 July 1852 at a “Meeting Sponsored by the Rochester Ladies Anti-slavery Society, Rochester Hall, Rochester, N.Y.” (http://douglassarchives.org).

many southern towns, though not in Siler City. While the patriotism of southern whites was buried under the blanket of dismay for a decade after the Civil War, African-Americans asserted themselves into public life in the South, even in some places celebrating American Independence on the Fourth of July. This all changed in 1877, however, when the United States government removed troops from the South as part of a political compromise with Democrats that gave Republican candidate Rutherford B. Hayes the White House. Without U.S. military protection, African-Americans were subject to the new order of the Jim Crow South. Ignatiev describes the changes after Reconstruction:

If the abolition of slavery called into question the meaning of whiteness, the overthrow of Reconstruction marked the restoration of the color line on a new

240 After the Civil War, when whites had forsaken their public Independence Day celebrations, blacks in the South annually celebrated Emancipation Day, the day that the news of freedom reached their town. For example, the U.S. government officially announced the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863 but in a place like Hickman, Kentucky, Emancipation Day is celebrated on August 8. In Siler City, though, I could not find any evidence of an Emancipation Day, perhaps because there were very few slaves in the area (most were in the eastern part of the county). Wade Hampton Hadley, Doris Horton and Nell Strowd, *Chatham County, 1771-1971* (Durham, NC: Moore Publishing Co., 1976), 319.

241 For example, historian Richard Gowers describes how, “In Atlanta [between 1880 and 1900], in the uncertainty over the social meaning of “white” and “black” after Reconstruction, different Fourth emerged whereby white Atlantans fled from the city into the surrounding resorts and the black community was drawn into the city. As Jim Crow descended, however, the “black” Fourth was removed from the city so that the urban center could mark the “white” Fourth and demonstrate which race would prosper in the industrial and urban future of the New South.” Richard James Gowers, “Contested Celebrations: The Fourth of July and Changing National Identity in the United States,” (Ph.D. Thesis, The University of New South Wales, School of History, 2004), 360. For additional examples, see Brian D. Page, “‘Stand By the Flag’: Nationalism and African-American Celebrations of the Fourth of July in Memphis, 1866-1887,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (1999): 284-301; Philip S. Foner, “Black Participation in the Centennial of 1876,” *Phylon* 39, no. 4 (1978): 283-96; There is a long tradition of American patriotism, of proclaiming the ideals of human rights and liberty in hope of improving present material realities, among African-Americans. For a few examples, see the writings of Martin Delany, John Chavis, and Anna J. Cooper. Martin Robinson Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (New York: Arno Press, 1968); Helen Chavis Othow, *John Chavis: African American Patriot, Preacher, Teacher, and Mentor*, 1763-1838 (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Company, 2001); Anna J. Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (Xenia, O.: Aldine Printing House, 1892); See also Benjamin Quarles, “Antebellum Free Blacks and the ‘Spirit of ’76,” *Journal of Negro History* 61 (no. 3) (1976): 229-42.

basis. No longer did it coincide with the distinction between freedom and slavery; it now came to correspond to the distinction between free, wage labor and unfree, semi-feudal labor, and between those who had access to political power and those who did not.\textsuperscript{243}

The definition of freedom as a distinction between free wage labor and unfree semi-feudal labor that Ignatiev describes in the post-Reconstruction South is critical to understanding the renewal of Fourth of July parades in a New South town like Siler City. Again, it is not a coincidence that after Reconstruction, white southern Protestants suddenly found their lost patriotism. Similar to the Independence Day celebrations before the Civil War, those events that Douglas considered festivals of hypocrisy, the Fourth of July celebrations in the New South signaled a return of what many white southern Protestants considered the foundation of social and economic institutions, a divinely sanctioned racial and class order.

In the nineteenth century, southern theologians like James Henley Thornwell and Robert L. Dabney argued that the institution of slavery was predicated on divine law. As James Farmer points out, for Thornwell and most other white southerners, “The defense of slavery was just an extended footnote in the defense of Christian orthodoxy.”\textsuperscript{244} In Farmer’s interpretation, Thornwell was not arguing as much in defense of slavery as in fear of the radical individualism of northern capitalism. Reworking Calvinist doctrines in light of Scottish Common Sense philosophy, Thornwell tried to intellectually secure the natural rights and rank of individuals in God’s social order. Fearing that unrestrained market capitalism would make slaves of all southerners, black and white, Thornwell fought what he considered its dominant ideology, radical individualism. The liberty

\textsuperscript{243} Ignatiev, \textit{How the Irish Became White}, 173.

\textsuperscript{244} James Oscar Farmer, Jr., \textit{The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values} (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), viii.
promised in the capitalist market was not liberty at all for Thornwell. He considered it a slippery slide into indentured servitude. For Thornwell, freedom was secured only through God’s providence. The creator had ordained a few to be slaves so the rest could be free.\footnote{As Professor of Didactic and Polemical Theology at Presbyterian Seminary, Thornwell incorporated aspects of Enlightenment thought, such as Scottish Common Sense Philosophy, into his defense of Protestant Christian orthodoxy and biblical revelation. In addition to Farmer, see also E. Brooks Holifield, \textit{Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860} (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1978). For a discussion of the influence of the Enlightenment on American religion, see Henry May, \textit{The Enlightenment in America} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976). On a side note, I am fascinated by how Thornwell and other southern theologians incorporated certain aspects of modernity in an effort to combat others. Historian John Boles has argued that one of the great ironies of southern religion is that the radical dissent of evangelicalism (anti-slavery) that made its way to the South via revivalism was transformed into an orthodox defense of southern society and the institution of slavery. But I also find it ironic that the modernist philosophical system adopted by many southern evangelical intellectuals like Thornwell to defend divine order, slavery included, against external enemies, such as capitalism, was eventually adopted by fundamentalist evangelicals in the twentieth century to combat the perceived enemies of Christianity, liberalism and science. Lost though in this philosophical lineage was an implicit critique of capitalism. That was the irony: the same Scottish Common Sense philosophy that Thornwell used to fight capitalism was now, in the hands of fundamentalists like Charles Hodge at Princeton, reconciled with the economic individualism of the market. John B. Boles, \textit{The Irony of Southern Religion} (New York: P. Lang, 1994); George Marsden, \textit{Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).}

In the twentieth century industrial South, this sentiment resurfaced in the public power of white evangelical Protestants to reconstruct the divine order of caste and class.\footnote{For example, John Dollard has argued that in the New South, “Caste has replaced slavery as a means of maintaining the essence of the old status order in the South.” See John Dollard, \textit{Caste and Class in a Southern Town} (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), 62; Donald Mathews has proposed that white Protestants in the New South viewed segregation as a “sacred order.” See Donald G. Mathews, Samuel S. Hill, Beth Barton Schweiger, John B. Boles, "Forum: Southern Religion,” \textit{Religion and American Culture} Vol. 8 (No. 2) (Summer 1998), 144-177.}

While Irish Catholics in nineteenth century Philadelphia associated themselves with a pan-European identity to garner social and economic advantage, white southern Protestants, like those in early Siler City, imagined themselves as decedents of what they considered the purest of European stock, the Anglo-Saxons. As Wilson notes, when southern ministers adapted their theology to fit the cultural and social changes of the early twentieth century, they “stressed that the Lost Cause had been concerned, in
essence, with liberty.”

A number of southern Protestant ministers proclaimed the southern white race champions of liberty, such as Baptist minister Victor I. Master, who argued that “In America the love for freedom of this [Anglo-Saxon] race found its fullest expression, and in the South their blood has remained freest from mixture with other strains.”

When white Protestants embraced the American flag in Siler City Fourth of July parades, literally wrapping themselves in its colors, they were not conceding ground. Rather, they were ritually constructing sacred ground.

On the streets of Siler City, in full public view, they sanctified the United States flag with the blood sacrifice of their highest ranking Christian soldier, Colonel John Randolph Lane.

While sacralizing the landscape, the Fourth of July parades in early Siler City symbolized the triumph of paternalistic capitalism in this southern town. As Ignatiev noted, after Reconstruction, economic freedom was limited to a racial class of southern whites. Many white southern Protestants in Siler City proclaimed liberty in the same way their forbearers had proclaimed it in the Old South, with reference only to themselves. In the wage labor economy of the New South, whites banned together to deny blacks equal access to the market. A class of upwardly mobile white ethnic Protestants pulled themselves up by pulling down on the bootstraps of their African-American brothers and sisters who had made a great deal of political progress during the period of

---


248 Ibid., 167.


Reconstruction. The promises of industry were trumpeted for all southerners, but they were realized most often by whites. As I noted in earlier, businesses like the Farmer’s Alliance Store, first organized at a local Baptist church, were limited to “members of the Anglo-Saxon race.”

In the Fourth of July parades, white Protestants blessed this marriage between religion and business. For example, the Reverend A. H. Perry, who offered a “fitting prayer” at the Fourth of July festivities in 1911, was a white Baptist minister and president of the “Siler City Agricultural Society,” organized in 1887, a predecessor of the Farmer’s Alliance store.\(^{251}\) Such practices were a common characteristic of the post-Reconstruction South. But through the sacramental rite of Fourth of July parades, southern white Protestants sanctified their industrial habits, trumpeting liberty in the name of a divine racial order.

In addition to the displays of Confederate sacrifice and national patriotism, the Fourth of July parade festivities in Siler City were distinguished by their racialized performances.\(^{252}\) According to The Grit, the 1912 parade included two clowns, one dressed as a woman and both in “false face.” The newspaper editor Isaac London and a member of his staff, “The Grit’s devil Brooks Harris,” played the clowns. An estimated 2,000 or more residents were on hand to view the spectacle. In the evening, London led a minstrel show with local talent. Later, he reported in his paper that “the ‘coons’ did their parts splendidly, and the continuous laughter that greeted them indicated the enjoyment


\(^{252}\) For a textual reading on the production of whiteness for performance in staged plays, see Mary Brewer, *Staging Whiteness* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2005).
of the audience.” London also noted that in the 1918 parade festivities, “all the specials, consisting of quartets, solos, and songs by black face comedians were decided hits with the pleased audience.”

These racialized performances in the Fourth of July activities demonstrate how the claim of “whiteness” in Siler City was dependent upon the performance of “blackness.” Blackface performances would become a defining characteristic of public life in early Siler City, enduring into the mid twentieth century. In an interview, a long-time white Protestant resident recalled “prominent” Siler City residents walking the streets in blackface during Halloween as late as the early 1950s. A photograph from the 1954 Siler City High School annual picturing two male students dressed in blackface with the caption “Oh, Halloween” confirms this account (Figure 7). And according to other residents, white Protestants also performed blackface minstrel shows in the High School Gym into the 1950s.

253 Isaac London, ed. Siler City Grit, 10 July 1912.

254 Historical interpretations of the social meaning of blackface performances vary. I do not claim to understand the complexities of these performances or the underlying reasons why such practices have persisted so long among white Americans, particularly working class white Americans. For the purposes of my argument here, I assume that blackface performances illustrate how the construction of whiteness is bound up in the production of blackness. The history of this relationship in Siler City, in turn, is rooted in the racial worlds of antebellum institutions. For a ranging survey of the cultural expressions of blackface minstrelsy, see Dale Cockrell, Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); For a revisionist reading of the history of blackface minstrelsy as potentially subervise and liberating, see W. T. Lhamon, Jr., Raising Cain: blackface performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998); For a historical interpretation of blackface minstrel performances among working-class whites in nineteenth century urban areas in the North, see Eric Lott, Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American working class (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); For a study of the musical performances of blackface minstrels in the mid-nineteenth century, see William J. Mahar, Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

255 Interview, June 30, 2005.

256 Interview, June 23, 2005.
The organizational participation of congregations and corporations in the racialized activities of Fourth of July celebrations in early Siler City further illustrates the fusion of religious, patriotic, and industrial spirit. While the blackface clowns continued to make appearances in later parades, corporations also would sponsor racially themed floats. For example, in 1913, the Oak Washboard Company, one of Siler City’s first manufacturing companies, sponsored a float with a “colored mammy.”\(^{257}\) In addition, local white churches would sponsor minstrel shows as part of the evening Fourth of July activities. For example, in 1920, *The Grit* advertised a “Minstrel at town hall tonight by young ladies of the Methodist Church for the benefit of the Church Building Fund.”\(^{258}\) Such sponsorship illustrates how white businesses and churches defined themselves against the black “other” while performing the racial order of their industrial town.

**Conclusion**

Siler City’s downtown streets, lined with houses of worship and places of business, were sanctified through the sacramental performance of Fourth of July parades, which fused Confederate myths and symbols with an American nationalism. The parade activities demarcated white controlled public spaces and the racialized performances of the day, sponsored by congregations and corporations, illustrated strategic attempts by white southern Protestants to legitimate racial caste and social class through their invocations of national patriotism. While industry wiped clean the slate of plantation parochialism, it did not completely erase the religious values that legitimated the “divinely sanctioned social order” of the Old South. Rather, industry helped restructure


\(^{258}\) Isaac London, ed. *Siler City Grit*, 1 April 1920.
both religion and society, clearing a path for hardworking Protestants, particularly Baptists and Methodists, to stake claim to the southern landscape. In the New South, antebellum mores, specifically those related to the role of the man as the head of the household, persisted in industrial habits, producing a paternalistic capitalism, a southern synthesis of religious and economic practices.
CHAPTER 5
A BODY OF BELIEVERS:
DESEGREGATION AND FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATIONS, 1976-2006

The Fourth of July 1976 was a grand day for American patriotism. In the wake of a divisive Vietnam War, the bicentennial provided an opportunity to rekindle national sentiment. Representing official efforts, Gerald Ford rang the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia at 2pm Eastern Standard Time to commemorate the approval of the Declaration of Independence. Across the country, citizens joined their President, ringing town and church bells at the same hour. In other events, they waved flags, watched fireworks, and listened to anthems – often at the same time. And they did so in record numbers. For example, the Boston Pops orchestra drew 400,000 for its Fourth of July concert, the largest crowd ever assembled for a classical music concert in the United States. The year was filled with special programs. The National Park Service


sponsored two traveling shows in 1976, “People of ’76” and “Little Look Around.” In place of its popular “Main Street Electric Light Parade,” Disneyland and Walt Disney World displayed “America on Parade” for summers 1975 and 1976. But the festivities of that Independence Day were the penultimate moments for patriotic Americans, who, like Diana Hartman of Wichita, Kansas, remember them as part of “the best Fourth of July ever experienced.”

While other Americans celebrated a day to remember, residents of Siler City experienced a Fourth of July they would rather forget. Thousands of spectators lined downtown streets in anticipation for the local parade; however, the festivities failed to evoke the collective effervescence of the historical moment, and many left disappointed. According to local reporter Roy Key, downtown was as “drab as a mid-winter day,” which lacked American flags or red, white, and blue bunting. Parade participation was low. Three marching bands cancelled at the last minute. Even the few members of the Jordan-Matthews High School band that did show were not dressed in uniform. Don Tarkenton, vice-president of the local Jaycee chapter that organized the event, confessed that “the parade was embarrassing.” Citing the lack of community involvement, he concluded that “it is obvious that people are just not interested in participating in parades anymore, therefore, I am hoping the Siler City Jaycees will go along with my suggestion


and discontinue having a parade." Tarkenton would not immediately get his wish, but it was clear that the grandeur of downtown Fourth of July parades in Siler City had passed. Although there would be attempts to revitalize the event, these efforts never regained the glory of earlier days, when attendance reached up to 15,000 persons, three times the town’s population. Parades did not end with the debacle of 1976. But the following year was no better. In 1978, the parade was cancelled for the first time since World War II.

In this chapter, I describe the public death of patriotic bodies in downtown Siler City and how a family of white Protestants responded to that loss. I ask why patriotic displays declined and ultimately disappeared in downtown Siler City at a time when civil religious practices flourished in larger cities across the nation. Were Siler City residents less patriotic than their fellow American citizens? Given the history of the Fourth of July parade described in the last chapter, probably not. In fact, it turns out that the opposite was the case. Patriotic sentiment, combined with nostalgia for a 1950s small town southern lifestyle, increased among middle-class white Protestants following the desegregation of Siler City schools in 1969 and the local economic changes caused by a rapidly shifting global economy.

In the first section, I recount the economic decline of the downtown business district in Siler City and the perceived loss of a southern white way of life in the mid-1970s. In the second section, I detail how a prominent white leader, who was a member of First Baptist Church and a local county commissioner, responded to these changes by hosting private Fourth of July celebrations. In the third section, I provide a descriptive

264 Roy Key, “July 4th Parade May Be Last One,” The Chatham Record, 8 July 1976, 2.

account of the 2006 private celebration. Drawing on participant observation from that event, I detail how white Protestants reconstructed the moral order performed in 1950s downtown Fourth of July parades. In the fourth section, I argue that the private Fourth of July celebration functioned as a sacramental rite. Like the downtown Fourth of July parade in early Siler City, it incorporated individuals into a larger moral community through the bodily performance of Christian sacrifice.

Economic Decline of Downtown and Public Loss of a Southern Way of Life

On 8 July 1971, The Chatham Record published “Scenes of Chatham County’s Fading Past…,” which included photographs of an old car, old well, a hay rake, a pair of chickens atop an old wagon, and a beagle with two cats sunning. In accompanying commentary, reporter Bob Wachs wrote, “…none of these things are ‘ancient’ but just try to find many of them in use in this day and time. Doesn’t that make you stop and think just a little something about life and what it really is?” This last question was the bookend to his opening interrogative, “But what is progress?” In between, Wachs pondered if industrialization, with factory “smokestacks belching smog and smoke 24 hours a day” contributed to the loss of a slower way of life, symbolized in “the time it takes Mr. Wade Culberson of Rt. 1, Siler City to pour up a bucket of water from his well.” Wachs complained that now, in 1971, most people consider such time spent time “wasted.” He mused that Chatham County residents were bound by the proverbial struggle to “keep up with the Joneses.” In this culture of productivity, Wachs wondered if progress left room for anything else “expect more progress.” He worried that the
farmer may have traded a rural way of life, what he considered “an essential part of life,” for the “labor saving device” of a “tractor or other piece of mechanized equipment.”\textsuperscript{266}

Wachs was right about economic change. In the 1970s and ‘80s, the downtown business district declined when mini-mall shopping centers were constructed outside of town. The town also experienced a heavy loss of cultural capital during that period. Given increased access to education, a number of residents left for college and did not return, seeking better job opportunities in larger urban areas. Numerous residents recounted a similar story of changing economic conditions and a declining downtown business district. Take for example the life history of Nelly Cole, a long-time member of First Baptist Church. Born in 1919, Nelly moved with her family to Hope County, North Carolina, when she was fourteen. She finished school there and married in 1939. Her husband, like her father, was a farmer. In the first few years, they grew tobacco and corn. But by 1944, they were in the turkey and chicken business. They were the first big poultry farmers in that area. In 1950, though, they had a bad year and decided to bail out. When I asked what made the year so bad, whether it was a bad market that year, Nelly said no. She explained that a big storm, a northeaster, came through the area. On the day of the storm, they had just taken the turkeys out of the brooder houses. When the wind and rain blew, all the turkeys pilled up on one side of the fenced area. Her husband and his father, who had a dog to drive turkeys, could not keep them from piling up. Practically all of them died. As Nelly put it, “Turkeys are stupid animals.”

With a failing turkey business, Nelly and her husband moved to Aberdeen, North Carolina, and found work in a textile plant. The next year, her husband “got a chance to come up here [Siler City] with one of the guys…one of his bosses.” And she has been

\textsuperscript{266} Bob Wachs, "Scenes of Chatham County's Fading Past..." \textit{The Chatham Record}, 8 July 1971, 3.
here ever since. Nelly also worked at the textile plant, starting in 1952 at the Collins and Aikman, which had just opened. I asked Nelly what it was like to work there:

Oh, it was good working there. I enjoyed it. I mended, which is a very tedious job, but I liked it. We made basically automotive upholstery. At one time, it was all automotive. Well, every time the automobile company had a strike or for any reason they had to cut their car production, we would have a bad time – a lay off or a short work period.

Although work may have been slow at times and the type of production changed from automotive to furniture upholstery, it was consistent over the years, as Nelly remembers it. Although her husband worked at Collins and Aikman only five or six years, finding other employment outside of town in textiles and farm insurance, Nelly worked there for thirty years, retiring in 1981 at the age of 62. She still collects a company pension.

When I asked Nelly about her fondest memories of Siler City, she cited her time at Collins and Aikman. At first she said, “I was grown up when we moved here and I was workin’ and raisin’ a family, so I really don’t know.” But after a pause, she said:

Oh, I do too. I bowled for about twenty some years on a league at night. Now that was my fun time. On Tuesday nights. Every Tuesday night. And we would go to tournaments.

The mill, Collins and Aikman, sponsored two teams, one for men and one for women, although they would have a mixed league every so often. Nelly participated in that league one summer. But she loved her time on the women’s team the most. She told me that there was a tournament in Williamsburg, Virginia, in the fall every year – “And we loved that tournament.”

---

267 Interview, 4 January 2006.
The other fond memories that Nelly has of her earlier days in Siler City involve the downtown business district. When I asked her to describe Siler City to someone who doesn’t live here, she said:

Well, basically it’s a small town. But the main part of town, which used to be the business [district] where all the stores are located, none of those stores are down there anymore. Either they have gone out of business or moved out.

While Nelly noted that in 2006 none of those businesses were empty, she said the new stores are not “your typical department stores and little grocery stores and drug stores and things like that that used to be down there.” Nelly remembers how “you used to go to, if you wanted to go to town for anything, you just went down there and parked on the street and you walked up and down the street to the different stores.” But now she says, “It’s not that way anymore.”

Nelly also noted that downtown was the site of “the biggest Fourth of July celebration around,” adding with emphasis, “I mean all day long July Fourth.” She remembered that the day started with a parade and all kinds of games – “a greasy pig and some kind of watermelon thing” - and culminated with a Rodeo or ballgame.268 Her children loved the Fourth of July in Siler City. Nelly said that you “needn’t say anything to my kids [to get them to attend celebration].” Even though the Fourth of July week was typically the Cole family vacation week, they never left town before the parade festivities “unless we were going to get back home before the Fourth of July.” Attending the event was an important family tradition. Nelly’s children “wanted to take in all of that.” Such descriptions indicate the importance of downtown streets as a site of ritual practice for white Protestants, including the annual rite of Fourth of July parades. The economic

---

268 The “watermelon thing” was a game played in the streets of Siler City. A watermelon was placed in the middle of the street and men would spray anyone who tried to get that prize with high-pressured water from a firehouse.
vitality of the downtown business district reflected the religious health of white
Protestants life at Siler City’s mainline churches, such as First Baptist and First United
Methodist.

Like other residents, Nelly cited the construction of “little shopping centers”
along the Highway 64 bypass in the 1970s as the moment downtown began to decline.
Grocery stores and department stores moved away. During the same period that long-
time residents lost their ritual sites of consumption downtown, they also saw their
children leave Siler City for better employment opportunities. Nelly’s children now live
in Louisville, Kentucky; Boca Raton, Florida; Greenville, South Carolina; Columbus,
Ohio; and Alberta, Canada. This pattern characterizes middle-class families in Siler City.
For example, Elizabeth Edwards, the daughter-in-law of the African American jeweler
Todd Edwards, discussed in “Incorporation,” had three children. All of these children
went to college and none of them returned. They now live in Greensboro, Chicago, and
New Jersey. Local residents who remember the booming years of the downtown in the
1950s lament the changes. Along with downtown, they cite the loss of a middle-class as
another sign of local decline. As local County Commission Tommy Emerson, the
organizer of the private Fourth of July party, observed, “The middle-class in Siler City
have dissipated; people have left town.”

*We Are Like We Used to Be*

Having grown up in Siler City during the 1950s, Tommy Emerson fondly
remembered Fourth of July parades as some of the best moments of his childhood. He
told me that as a kid, he rode his pony in the parade and would get as excited for the
Fourth of July as he did for Christmas. Each year, he waited in anticipation for the
parade and all the activities and events that went along with it. There were contests of all kinds. Children and adults participated in sack races. They competed to see who could eat the most watermelon in a certain amount of time. They let loose a greased pig on the ball field and tried to catch it. They put a watch or bag of money on the top of greased pole and challenged onlookers to climb it. They put a watermelon in the middle of the street and used a firehouse to blast anyone who tried to retrieve it. There was semi-pro baseball between the Siler City Millers and a visiting opponent. Veterans marched in the parades, as did marching bands and beauty queens, which included on occasion the Fort Bragg military band and Miss North Carolina. Churches entered floats in the parade. There was a barbeque dinner in the Paul Braxton gym. There often was Rodeo in the evening. And all of these activities were preceded by a prayer from the local pastor, a patriotic message from a featured speaker, and a time of honor for veterans present.

Sometime in the mid-1970s, Tommy and his wife Anna hosted a private Fourth of July party where they recreated the atmosphere and games of the downtown parade. It is unclear, though, exactly what year the party began. When I asked them about the origin of the event, Anna said 1977 was the first year they held the celebration at their home on Emerson Hill, a short drive south of downtown Siler City. But later in the interview, Anna showed me newspaper clippings of the downtown Fourth of July parades. One of the clippings was from 1977. It included a photograph of both white and black children participating together in a downtown Fourth of July activity. After seeing that clip,

269 It is important to note that there is a large gap in the newspaper records on microfilm in the Siler City public library as well as the North Carolina Collection at UNC. Microfilm records of the Chatham News include issues from the early twentieth century and from the end of the twentieth century, but the only issues in-between the late 1930s and 1988 are 1971, 1972, and 1976. I have visited the Chatham News to inquire about these missing issues. But I was only allowed to look at one issue from the 1960s. The Chatham County History Society has also requested that these missing issues be transferred to microfilm, but the Chatham News has to this point not done so.
Anna decided that they must have hosted their first party in 1978, since there was a downtown celebration in 1977. All of this is important because it is also unclear exactly when downtown parade participation was racially integrated. As I noted earlier, Siler City public schools were desegregated in 1969. That does not mean, however, that African Americans did not participate in downtown parades before that date. It just indicates that their participation was racially segregated.

The shift from segregated to integrated participation is most visible in the inclusion of High School marching bands in the parades. For example, Rob Edwards, the son of Todd Edwards, participated in the downtown parades as a member of the Chatham High School marching band from 1965 to 1969. Chatham High School was the historically African American public school in Siler City. While African Americans participated in the parades, their participation was racially segregated. Parade participation then was most likely desegregated in the mid-1970s. As I noted earlier, one of the mishaps of the downtown Bicentennial celebration cited in the Chatham News was the fact that only a few members of Jordan-Matthews High School marching band that participated in the parade arrived late and were not in uniform. Was this event chaos related to the racial integration of the Jordan-Matthews band? The residents I have talked with are not sure when parade participation was desegregated and more research is needed to determine exactly when the Jordan-Matthews band was racially integrated. For sure it was sometime after the desegregation of public schools in 1969. According to the Chatham News, the Jordan-Matthews band did not participate in the 1972 parade. The only entry was from Northwood High School in neighboring Pittsboro. Was that band
racially integrated? It is difficult to tell from the newspaper photo and the other surviving evidence.

What is clear is that local desegregation in 1969 preceded the decline of downtown Fourth of July parades in Siler City. Local economic changes also contributed to this decline. Taken together, the net result was that Siler City and the downtown Fourth of July parade was no longer the way it had always been. In the midst of these changes, Tommy Emerson, a long-time County Commissioner, organized a private Fourth of July party that recreated the ritual practices of the 1950s downtown parades before these changes. Whether it was 1977 or 1978, the first year that the downtown Siler City parade was cancelled since World War II, Tommy and Anna decided to invite family and friends over to their house because “people didn’t have anything to do on the Fourth of July.” About fifty to eighty came for the first Emerson party. The following year they invited fellow members of First Baptist, because, as Anna put it, “church is family too.” Soon others in the community wanted to attend. So the Emersons began sending out invitations, and their guest list expanded since. Many came looking for the familiar. According to Tommy, the party replicates what he calls the “old time” Fourth of July celebrations in Siler City during the 1950s. Describing the annual Fourth of July party, Tommy told me, “We are like we used to be.”

According to Tommy, the downtown Fourth of July celebration in the 1950s was an “all day into the night affair.” This memory was shared by other white residents who, like Tommy, also felt that the festivities of the 1970s and 80s lost much of the earlier festival spirit. Those later parades were smaller and not as well attended. Tommy told

270 Interview, 9 February 2006.
me that those parades were “not old time.” In the private Emerson party, he wanted to recreate the all-day activities that were familiar to residents who remember the prosperous years of Siler City. For example, the climbing wall in 2006 was the latest version of the greasy pole contest. In previous years at the Emerson house, they actually built a greasy pole and placed dollar bills in bags at the top. The Hula Hoop and Men’s Pantyhose contests were also long-standing traditions that date back to the 1950s parade festivities. In addition, the order of events followed closely the ritual order of the 1950s parades. Those parades, in turn, reproduced the festival patterns of the early 1900s. Take, for example, the duties of recognizing veterans, delivering patriotic words, and leading those gathered in prayer. In 2006, these duties were divided between Tommy, the County Commissioner, and Reverend Wall, the local pastor. In 1911, these duties were performed by the Honorable E. J. Justice and the Reverend A. H. Perry in the Siler City Fourth of July celebration discussed in “Patriotic Bodies.”

By performing the ritual order and social roles of “old time” Fourth of July festivities in Siler City, white Protestants reconstructed the moral order of their town. But this is no longer a public display. Removed from downtown space to private field, this is a separatist construction, part nostalgia and part politics. The success of downtown parades in the 1950s was an indication of the vitality of white Protestant life in the town. During this period, membership at First Baptist and First United Methodist was at an all time high. Members of these churches, a cadre of white Protestant men, served as church deacons, business leaders, and government officials in the community. In the annual Fourth of July festivities, white Protestants displayed their religious and political authority, as illustrated in the tandem of pastor and politician.
From 1901, when Colonel John Randolph Lane led the first parade, to the end of the 1950s, when blackface minstrel shows stopped, the social hierarchy of Siler City was publicly displayed in the street performances of downtown Fourth of July parades. Elite white Protestant men stood at the top of this hierarchy. In the Fourth of July festivities, white male leaders literally stood above their constituents as they delivered speeches and prayers on an elevated stage. Relegated to the periphery of the festival events, blacks were positioned at the bottom of publicly displayed social hierarchy. Poor whites fell somewhere in-between. Festival activities reinforced racial status. Take, for example, the keep away game of placing a watermelon in the street. According to Mitch Simpson, a progressive white Baptist pastor in Chapel Hill who grew up in Siler City during the 1950s and ‘60s, the kids who tried to get the watermelon were most often African American. Mitch explained that since they already didn’t have status, they had nothing to lose. He remembered seeing black kids slide across the street from the pressure of the fire-hoses and he admitted that this sight made him feel uncomfortable. At the same time, though, white kids, including Tommy Emerson, also participated. Such participation complicates the racial dynamics of the game. Loss of control, more so than a clear racial division, best describes those who chase the prize. But, at least in this case, white men regulate the degree of public humiliation. As described by those who remember the event, they held the fire hose.

Allegiance to the Flag: The 2006 Emerson-Marsh Fourth of July Party

Although I did see persons who appeared to be African American at the 2006 private Fourth of July party, none of them, based on my observations, participated in the
party management. White men prepared the pork, white women oversaw the desserts, and I never saw an African American take the stage. In fact, the few African Americans present seemed to linger on the edges of the gathering. Although this was not a racially exclusive party, it was an invitation only event. And almost all the invitations were extended to white middle-class Siler City residents. One could argue that the host invited family and friends and these were there family and friends. But the obvious point is that the party was not an integrated affair.\footnote{As they have done across the twentieth century, African Americans in Siler City host their own Fourth of July celebrations, usually held at a Protestant church. The separate events reflect a continued public segregation of black and white communities.} In the integrated downtown Fourth of July parades of the 1970s, these communities came together for a brief moment. But in 1978, a family of white Protestants decided to break away from downtown and renew the ritual practices that they performed in that public space before desegregation.\footnote{In 2006, Tommy Emerson was involved in a controversial political race for County Commissioner. The controversy involved redrawing the lines for Chatham County’s voting districts after Emerson and other commissioners lost their seats. Tommy lost his race to an African American candidate. Those who criticized the move complained that it removed the recently elected officials from office, allowing for those just removed an opportunity to return in a few years time. See Jennifer Strom, “Bunkey & Co. Redraw Chatham’s Voting Lines: Changes to District Boundaries Benefit Morgan, Boot Barnes,” \textit{The Independent}, 23 August 2006. Supporters of the redistricting responded to such criticism by stating that the change was not a new idea, but had been discussed for years. See Randall Riggsbee, “Morgan: Redistricting Not a New Concept,” \textit{The Chatham News}, 28 July 2006.}

At a typical celebration, there is barbeque, sweet tea, and dessert. Tommy recognizes the sacrifice of veterans, a local pastor blesses this sacrifice, and those in attendance participate in games and activities that once took place downtown. When I attended in 2006, the American Flag stood at the spatial center of this ritual reconstruction, elevated on a stage decorated with potted ferns and patriotic bunting. On
the lawn below stood a row of six flags, five for each branch of the United States military plus a Christian flag on the end (Figure 8).\footnote{For an argument that the American flag is a sacred object in United States civil religion, see Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, \textit{Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).}

I heard about the private Fourth of July parade from Barbara Andrew, a member of First Baptist Church Siler City. I met Barbara at a Chatham County Historical Association meeting, where I went to hear her husband, Murray, present a talk on the history of Quakers in Chatham County. During the presentation, Murray told the crowd of about eighty, many of them gray haired, that he is a descendent of Quaker ancestors. Citing a list of names, he described in fastidious detail the genealogical legacy of those Quakers who settled in the area during the eighteenth century.\footnote{They were later forced out of North Carolina because of their abolitionist views, but their influence, if ever subtle remained.} Murray closed with an example of a woman from Cane Creek who rode 200 miles on horseback to start a Quaker meeting. He asked those gathered, “How many of us would go that far to do something for our faith?”\footnote{Fieldnotes, 29 January 2004.}

A retired high school teacher, Murray serves as the church historian for First Baptist Siler City. When I visited Murray and Barbara at their home in June 2005, I was sent away with names, stories, newspaper clippings, and an invite to the Fourth of July party at the Emerson house. I could not make it that year, but I remembered the open invitation. I called back the following June, and Barbara gave me the details. She and Murray would arrive at the Marsh’s around 11am to ensure a good parking spot and a cool seat under a shade tree. Oh, I said, I thought it was at the Emerson house. It was
last year, Barbara informed me, but it rotates between there and the Marsh home. The two families now co-sponsor the event.

We arrived around 12:30pm. Emily, my spouse, came with me. We parked in a field lined with trucks and cars and walked toward a small welcoming tent positioned at the side of a brick home. Emily, who is from a small farming community in Kentucky and accustomed to bringing a dish to these kinds of events, carried an apple crisp. On our way, a young white girl approached. She appeared high school age. She smiled at us, flashing braces. Emily told her that it was our first time here and asked, “How does this work?” Taking the dish from Emily, she kindly told us to register at the table, gesturing to the line of people there. She then walked away, carrying the apple crisp and headed toward a large tent at the back of the yard.

Standing in line, I noticed that the woman in front of us was wearing blue flip-flops. Almost everyone there was dressed in red, white, or blue. It was hot. Temperatures were in the mid-90s. Still many men wore jeans or khaki pants. I wore the latter with a light blue short sleeve shirt. Most women wore shorts or capri pants. At the table in the welcoming tent, there was a photo album of past Fourth of July celebrations at the Emerson and Marsh homes. Some of the pictures looked like they were from the 1980s, with kids in tube socks. Emily signed our names on two slips of paper to enter a drawing for door prizes. She also signed the guest list. One of the women behind the table handed us homemade fans with the schedule of events printed on one side and a picture of the party hosts on the other (Figure 9). At the end of the table was a container with read, white, and blue gumballs. We were informed that the person who guessed closest to the actually number of gumballs would win the container. I guessed 250.
Emily guessed 400. Later, during the intermission, it was announced that there were over six hundred gumballs. I don’t remember the exact number.

I estimated that there were 300 to 400 people present. But if my gumball accuracy was any indication, there may have been more. Most of those in attendance were senior adults, much like the crowd at the Chatham County Historical Association meeting. Kids were present, though, running from place to place, swimming in the pool behind the house, and attempting the climbing wall that was brought in for the day. Most of the adults sat in rows of lawn chairs under two large shade trees. Everyone seated faced the stage, where announcements were made, the pledge performed, a prayer offered, and live music performed. Emily and I placed our folding chairs, which Barbara had suggested we bring, on the edge of the shade, a few rows behind her and Murray.

The festivities followed the order of events printed on the homemade fans. The party began with its hosts, Dalton and Marie Marsh and Tommy and Anna Emerson, walking onto the stage. Dalton was the first to speak into the microphone. He welcomed everyone to Siler City and said that he didn’t have any other words other than “Welcome.” Dalton passed the mic to Tommy, as he stepped forward. Tommy led rounds of honor for “the Vets in the audience.” He began with World War II veterans and proceeded through wars and conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, the first Gulf War, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Each time he would say, “Would the men from…” or “the guys from…” or “the boys from…” please stand up. The men stood and the crowd applauded. Some wore hats that designated where they served. During the recognition, I never heard Tommy ask any women who served to stand, and at no point did I notice any women rise with the men. After the recognition of veterans, Bryce Marsh, a young boy,
led the crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance. Then the live entertainment, Dave and Ellen Holder, directed those gathered to join them in the National Anthem, “O’ say can you see…” The program, however, listed “God Bless America.” Just as we finished the last verse, a man yelled out from the back, “Play ball!”

Next, the Reverend Jim Wall, pastor of First Baptist Church took the stage and offered his “Patriotic Words and Blessing.” He thanked Dalton and Tommy for inviting him to speak for 30 minutes, which drew a few laughs. But then he said that he would keep his comments to five. He was referring, however, to the five points of his talk, not five minutes. In effect, he gave a mini-sermon on the meaning of the Fourth of July that, while shorter than 30 minutes, was much longer than five. The Baptist minister gave “a short list of what to do on the Fourth,” what he described as a day to celebrate freedom and liberty. First, pray for the country and her leaders. Second, visit the library and read about the history of wars that veterans have fought in. Third, go vote. The pastor said that he knew there wasn’t voting today but asked what would happen if we did vote on July 4th – “just something to think about,” he said. Fourth, read the Declaration of Independence, which he considered “still one of the most interesting documents ever written.” And fifth, thank the servicemen for making a sacrifice for freedom.

Reverend Wall elaborated on each point and closed by saying that he loved to eat homemade ice-cream on the Fourth of July and that, “freedom, like homemade ice-cream, is rich and sweet.” He then asked those gathered to bow their heads for prayer and blessing of the food. Calling “our heavenly Father and his son,” Reverend Wall claimed the “resurrection” of Jesus as a visible sign of victory over sin and death. He said that Jesus made a sacrifice on the cross for salvation and freedom from sin. And he related
the sacrifice of Jesus to the sacrifices of soldiers made for the freedom symbolized in the Fourth of July.

After the prayer, Emily and I followed everyone to the barbeque tent, which was surrounded by heavy duty smoker cookers. This was where the pork was prepared. We stood in the back of one of four lines that formed. In each, a different man served barbeque into Styrofoam trays. Emily was ahead of me. Since she is a vegetarian, we decided that she would just hand me her plate, once handed to her. There would be little time to explain what would be considered a strange request in this context. But when she did this, the man serving the food turned to me and said, “That is a ladies plate.” He then handed me another plate with a larger serving of barbeque. I was now holding two plates. So I gave the second plate, the one with more barbeque, to the woman behind me. This decision, however, confused the server even more. He turned to me again and said, “No. That’s a man’s plate. You have a ladies plate.” I tend to avoid confrontation and I didn’t really know what to say, so I decided to just keep moving. Plus, it was hot and there was a line of people behind me. It all happened quickly. At the moment, I felt like there was no need to argue over having a ladies plate, especially since the woman behind me didn’t complain.

As we moved on, Emily’s vegetarian habits again confused those around her. One woman saw that she did not have any barbeque and commented, “Oh, you must want a hot dog,” pointing to an area at the end of the tent for kids. When Emily said, “Thanks, but I don’t eat meat,” the woman responded, “Oh, you must be on a diet.”

The next choices would prove easier. As we exited the food tent, there was a drink table designated by a large “ICED TEA” sign. The options were tea with sugar or
tea with sweet ‘n’ low. We both took the conventionally sweetened tea, which turned out
was raspberry flavored. There was also a concession booth with soft drinks.

The dessert tent was something to behold. Cakes and pies were plentiful, many of
the same kind: blueberry pie, banana pudding, chocolate cake. There was a limited
amount of homemade ice-cream, however, and it disappeared quickly. We were the only
ones who tried the apple crisp that Emily made.

With few exceptions, those present would have been considered “white folks.”
When we first arrived, I did notice a darker skinned girl driving a golf cart, which she
was using to carry items – plates, cups, and things – from tent to tent. I also noticed what
appeared to be a few African American persons present: a single middle-aged man and a
man and woman with two kids. They talked to those around them. I recognized some as
members of First Baptist Church. Overall, there was less mingling than I expected.
People remained seated in their lawns chairs, getting up occasionally for food, drink, and
dessert. They talked to those around them. Most conversation, though, happened on the
edge of the event. I noticed that, for the most part, men talked around the climbing wall
and at the barbeque tent while women talked at the dessert tent (Figures 10 and 11).
Women and men did talk to one another; however, the spatial divisions between the tents
suggested a gendered division of labor.

During the meal, as it was listed on the schedule of events, Emily and I walked
over to Murray and Barbara to say hello. Barbara introduced us to her brother, who was
visiting from out of town. He grew up in Siler City and now lives in New Jersey. He

276 While walking around, I overheard a few conversations. I heard one woman say, “…he goes to our
church…they still go to our church.” I heard another woman say, “I haven’t seen you in a coon’s age.” I
heard a man say, “I plowed my corn today.” And I heard a woman ask, “Who’s that colored boy?”
said that he hadn’t seen many of these people since High School. His wife, who was with him, said that she was from an area near three-mile island.

As people finished their barbeque plates and headed over to the dessert tent, Dave and Ellen Holder, of the entertainment group The Holders, took the stage. Dave wore jeans and a Hawaiian flowered shirt. Ellen sported white Capri pants, Ked tennis shoes, a Carolina blue shirt, and matching white sunglasses. He played keyboard as they sang a range of tunes, from Lee Greenwood’s “I’m Proud to be an American” to Jimmy Buffet’s “Margaritaville.”

During an intermission in the performance, Tim and Grace Terrell announced door prizes. Those with winning tickets received prizes such as a new water-hose, an automated stuffed animal, or other items. Steve and Kathy Marsh organized the afternoon games, which included a Hula Hoop Competition and a Men’s Pantyhose Contest. Throughout the day, kids swam in the pool and played on the climbing wall. At one point, the Siler City Sheriff, who was seated with his family near us, challenged Tommy Emerson, who was a County Commissioner at the time, to a race up the climbing wall. Some people turned and watch. Tommy reached the top first. When they came back down, they talked about how the win had nothing to do with politics.

Present Sacrifice

In “Patriotic Bodies,” I argued that when Colonel John Randolph Lane led the Fourth of July parade in 1901, he was performing the real presence of Confederate sacrifice. He was a living sacrament of that sacrifice. His body, marked with battle scars,

277 In the Men’s Pantyhose Contest, men challenge one another to see who can put on women’s pantyhose in the shortest amount of time.
was physical proof of his patriotic commitment to defend Christian homes and southern women. In the 2006 Fourth of July festivities, the recognition of veterans continues the legacy embodied by Colonel Lane. Although they pledge allegiance to the American flag, these are southern soldiers who trace their lineage through the Confederate heroes to the earliest American patriots. For example, when I asked Tommy Emerson about Colonel Lane, he told me stories about Faust Lane, the Colonel’s grandson, who sat on a saddle and pulled the cord that unveiled the statue of his grandfather in Pittsboro in 1906.  

While Tommy is not a direct descendent of the Colonel, in other parts of the conversation, he traced his genealogy to another southern patriot, James Emerson, who was a member of Reaves Chapel Baptist Church near Siler City (where Wake Forest College was organized during a church meeting), and who fought in the War of Regulation and the American Revolution. Tommy also conveyed his patriotic lineage to a writer for *Our State North Carolina* magazine. Her story on the 2005 Fourth of July celebration at Emerson Hill featured the subtitle, “The Emersons and Marshes of Chatham County count among their kin veterans of every war since the War of Regulation – even before there was an Independence Day.”

As I also noted, protecting white women was part of the code of Christian soldiering modeled by Colonel Lane. Although Tommy, or any of the speakers at the Fourth of July party, never directly stated that the sacrifice of veterans was on behalf of southern women, other evidence suggests such a connection. For example, when I visited

---

278 According to a 1907 newspaper account, 4,000 persons attended that dedication service. As described by the reporter, “Col. John R. Lane, Chief Marshall, aroused the enthusiasm of the multitude, and shout after shout arose as the imposing spectacle was passing in review. Col. Lane was clad in his wartime uniform, bearing evidence of fire and shell.” Account reprinted in “A 1976 Bicentennial Salute,” *Chatham News-Record*, 1976, 5-D.

with Tommy and Anna at their home on Emerson Hill, Tommy showed me a framed picture of their daughter on the wall in the hallway. It hung just a few feet from a gun rack. In the picture, she wore a white wedding dress and stood beside a young man in a soldier’s uniform. Tommy told me that she married a Catholic boy who is in the Marines. Denominational identity is important for Tommy. When I told him that I married a Methodist, he said, jokingly, that I should tell my wife that there was no John the Methodist in the Bible. I told him that I had heard similar comments, which included my parents’ theological concern over infant baptism. If marrying a Methodist, then, is a deviation from southern Baptist marriage patterns, then marrying a Catholic is even more atypical. To this point, Tommy noted that the only time a Catholic priest had ever been inside the First Baptist Church was to officiate, along with the FBC pastor, his daughter’s wedding. At least in this case, however, military soldiering trumped denominational identity. When he was showing me the framed photo, Tommy seemed proud that his son-in-law was both a Christian and a soldier. And in that instance, Tommy linked the institutional ideals of Christian marriage with the protection of a masculine soldier.

In the early twentieth century, Colonel Lane upheld a gendered code of southern conduct. He fought for home and church, a sacrifice both Christian and patriotic. The 1901 parade displayed that sacrifice for all to see. In the early Fourth of July parades, Siler City residents attempted to nationalize the southern white ideals embodied by Lane. Such efforts continued across the twentieth century. In their management and control of the parades, white Protestant men, like Colonel Lane, displayed their masculine sacrifice for white feminine bodies. They were priests of the flag. They oversaw its liturgical displays to her, the feminized national body. And they coordinated a parade of floats,
one of which carried a white beauty queen, the symbol of lady-like perfection. This southern marriage of national patriotism and white femininity was literally performed at the 1991 Fourth of July celebration at the Emerson home. During an interview, Anna and Tommy told me that they hosted the wedding of their son Jack, a soldier in the First Gulf War, on the Fourth of July. The ceremony took place in the gazebo and C. R. Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church, presided. As Tommy recounted to Our State writer, “When Jack got married, we had a five-pig wedding.”

In that example, the rites of a southern wedding, which are based on evangelical scriptural interpretations, were joined with the civil displays of American Independence. And like that wedding, the gender roles displayed at the 2006 Fourth of July party were also biblically based. Although I did not hear anyone quote Ephesians chapter five that day, a commitment to the biblically based idea of head of household was implied throughout the patriotic speeches and festival activities. In the New Testament verses, the Apostle Paul wrote that the “husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.” He instructs wives to “submit to their husband in all things.” But he also tells husbands to “love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” For Paul, this Christ-like sacrifice is intended “to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.” The husband is “to present [his bride] to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”

In the discourse of the Fourth of July celebration, the metaphors of nation-state and patriotic soldier are gendered in ways that parallel those in the Pauline letters. For example, in his “patriotic words,”

---

280 Ibid., 161.

Pastor Wall asked those present to “pray for the country and her leaders.” And in prayer, he called on “our heavenly father” and connected the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross to the sacrifices made for the freedom symbolized in the Fourth of July.

In Fourth of July ritual actions, which include speeches and prayers, white Protestant men perform the role of head of household; much like Tommy did when he showed me his daughter’s wedding picture. These men claimed responsibility for their town, their churches, their homes, and their nation and they associated idealized images of white femininity with those domestic institutions. When southern white Protestant men vowed to protect town, church, home, and nation, they did so in service of their “ladies.” This discourse of gendered protection was evident at the 2006 celebration. As I described above, men and women were expected to act in certain ways. For the most part, Emily and I abided by these expectations. In many ways, we were already familiar with the cultural discourse. Even though we had never attended this exact Fourth of July party, we knew to some degree what to expect. Growing up in southern Baptist churches, I had frequently attended “Dinner on the Ground” at Landmark Missionary Baptist and “Great Day” at First Baptist Pensacola. There was a protocol to these events, one that translated from one context to the next. When we arrived with Emily carrying a dessert, we followed that protocol, even if we were not sure where we were going at times. But we did deviate on at least one occasion. When I stood in line at the barbeque tent and handed a “man’s plate” to the “lady” behind me, I had clearly violated a gender code.

That violation was an indication that a recognizable southern Protestant discourse was performed at the 2006 Fourth of July celebration. In this discourse, one that is rooted biblical and patriotic traditions of southern Protestants, the nation-state is like the bride of
Christ, she is to be made holy and blameless through blood sacrifice. The soldier dies for her just as Christ died for the church. The flag and the cross are both symbolic representations of the sacrifices made for freedom. But spiritual freedom differs from political freedom. For example, Pastor Wall described the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross to free believers from the bondage of sin. Like many other Protestants, though, he believes that this salvation is fully realized in heaven, not on earth. It is made visible in the next life, not the present. For these believers, Christ is present in the heart, which they acknowledge regularly in the hymnal chorus, “You ask me how I know he lives; he lives within my heart.” Although Christ can be present in spirit, this presence is not physical. A Protestant emphasis on a spiritual over physical presence is further demonstrated in the empty crosses that are displayed inside congregations like First Baptist. Absent is the body of a crucified Jesus. Even in the Lord’s Supper, the bread and grape juice are representations of this sacrifice, not the real thing. But unlike spiritual salvation, the political freedom symbolized in the Fourth of July is tangible. According to Pastor Wall, this “freedom is like homemade ice-cream; it is rich and sweet.” It is a freedom that one can taste, one can consume, like barbeque and sweet tea.

In the white Protestant Fourth of July celebration, soldiers are to the flag as Jesus is to the cross. In the recognition of veterans, the soldiers are the bodily presence of Christian sacrifice for political freedom and feminine protection. When the “boys who fought” stand, these white Protestant men make present the sacrifice of Americans who pledged allegiance to the flag. Inside congregations such as First Baptist Church Siler City, the American Flag, with gold eagle perched atop, is displayed on the same level as the Christian flag, with a red cross embroidered on it and gold cross above. Outside the
congregation, at the Fourth of July party, however, the American eagle and flag are elevated above the Christian cross and flag. This gesture is significant, since it suggests that the bodily presence of white Protestant sacrifice also is displayed in patriotic rites, not just the sacramental performances of baptism and communion. In the pastor’s prayer and the recognition of veterans, the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for sin is democratized; it is distributed through the sacrifice of soldiers for the freedom symbolized in the flag. Just as Jesus died for his bride the church, the soldier dies for her, the nation-state. Christian sacrifice is diffused into the bodies of masculine believers through the habits of the feminized heart. The “vets in the audience” are the bodily sacrifice of Christian soldiers; they are the sons of the South.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the twentieth century, white Protestants in Siler City displayed the bodily sacrifice of a Christ-like figure, the Confederate soldier, in Fourth of July parades.282 In early Siler City, white Protestant moral order was predicated on the logic of that Christian sacrifice. In the 1960s and 1970s, that social hierarchy was challenged by local desegregation and economic decline of the downtown business district. In response to those challenges, a group of white Protestants recreated the “old

---

282 In addition to the examples in Siler City, white southerners in other locations have demonstrated an affinity for public sacrifice, including hanging and lynching. For example, in 1890, over 5,000 people witnessed a public hanging in the neighboring town of Pittsboro. That gathering remains the largest crowd ever reported for a public event in the town. The newspaper account, reprinted in a special bicentennial edition (1976), described visitors lining the streets with tents and campfires the night before the hanging. According to the account, after the event, some observers cut pieces off the noose rope to take home, a token akin to a religious relic. “Thousands Witnessed Hanging,” Chatham News and Record, 28 March 1890. For a discussion of lynching as a southern religious rite, see Donald G. Mathews, “Lynching Is Part of the Religion of Our People: Faith in the Christian South,” in Religion in the American South: Protestants and Others in History and Culture, eds. Beth Barton Schweiger and Donald G. Mathews (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 153-194.
time” Fourth of July parades of downtown Siler City in the 1950s. In the separatist space of a private residence, white Protestants in Siler City recaptured what they perceived as a lost way of life. In their nationalist performance, they construct a place with clearly defined social boundaries and “hand-over-your-heart patriotism.”283

283 This latter phrase was used in the article on the 2006 Emerson Fourth of July party in Siler City by Janet Pittard, a writer for the Our State North Carolina. Janet C. Pittard, "Old-Fashioned Family Fourth," Our State North Carolina, July 2006, 161.
CHAPTER 6
THE BODY OF CHRIST:
LATINO ARRIVAL AND PROTESTANT RENEWAL OF DOWNTOWN FOURTH
OF JULY PARADES, 1996-2006

In April 2006, Latino parishioners at St. Julia Roman Catholic Church in Siler City, North Carolina, performed their annual public Good Friday procession, reenacting the way of the cross and the crucifixion of Christ. This was the sixth year that the procession was held at the new St. Julia church, a building specifically constructed for Latino members. The church design, which has won at least one architectural award, combines a rural Mexican style with the geometric lines of a mill warehouse, making it stand out against the grain silos, grazing cattle, and open spaces of the North Carolina countryside.284 As described by Pastor Joseph Madden, the front of the church features a “plaza where people sit in the sun,” which he noted as one design component of a facility that was “welcoming to [the city’s] Spanish population.”285 In 2006, the final Stations of the Cross, from crucifixion to burial, were performed there, in front of the church (Figure 12). Located a short drive east of downtown Siler City, the new St. Julia church is visible to passers-by on Highway 64, the four lane thoroughfare that runs from Raleigh through Siler City and southwest toward Charlotte. For passing motorist, it was difficult to miss three Latino men


hanging from crosses in the plaza of the sun. That day, some drivers even honked their car horns as they zoomed along. Whether or not this gesture was in support or protest, though, I am not sure. But one thing was certain: the religious and cultural landscape of Siler City had changed significantly since the early 1990s.\textsuperscript{286}

In this chapter, I argue that Latino Catholics used the ritual performance of Good Friday processions to position themselves within the Siler City landscape. I also propose that white Protestants, in turn, employed the long-standing ritual tradition of downtown Fourth of July parades to reposition themselves in that rapidly changing landscape. In the first section, I provide a brief overview of the arrival of Latino migrants to Siler City and note white responses to the local changes that accompanied that migration. In the second section, I detail the arrival of Good Friday processions from Mexico to Siler City in the mid-1990s and discuss the significance of that Latin American Catholic tradition for the construction of Latino identities in this southern town. In the third section, I describe how white Protestants renewed downtown Fourth of July parades the year following the first Good Friday procession in Siler City. Those parades remained downtown as long as the processions were performed in city streets. In 2001, when the processions were moved to the new St. Julia Catholic Church, there was no downtown Fourth of July parade. And there has not been one to date. In the final section, I note how in the absence of downtown parades, some long-term residents, including supporters of the revitalized parades, have turned to artifacts to publicly display historical memories of downtown before desegregation and Latino arrival.

\textsuperscript{286} For a discussion of emerging religious diversity in the South, see Thomas A. Tweed, "Our Lady of Guadeloupe Visits the Confederate Memorial." \textit{Southern Cultures} (Summer 2002), 72-93.
**Latino Arrival and White Response**

In 1977, Roberto Vasquez, who is Salvadoran, worked on a tobacco farm in Duplin County, located in the eastern part of state. On July 4th of that year, he was kidnapped by another farmhand with a drug history and forced to drive west. Along the way, he escaped, eventually ending up near Siler City, where Hank Wilson, a complete stranger, took him in, providing food and a place to stay while Roberto sought employment. In about a year, Roberto learned some English, was living on his own, and working at a local grocery store. Today, most long-time residents refer to Roberto as a friendly man who has always worked at Food Lion.

Roberto was one of the first migrants in the Siler City area to transition from itinerancy to residency, but others would soon follow, slowly at first and then at a pace that would transform the town. For over a decade after Roberto’s arrival, there were only a small number of Latinos in Siler City. During the earlier period of rapid migration, most of the new workers were men who, like Roberto, had moved out of the seasonal farm labor circuits to year-round industrial employment. Huddled together in dilapidated homes or abandoned buildings in poorer neighborhoods, groups of Latino men pooled their resources and sent wages back to families in their sending communities, whether in Mexico or Central America. Most long-time residents of Siler City felt that these workers, like the seasonal help on surrounding farms, would eventually move on. Few expected that many of them would eventually relocate their families to Siler City, buy

---


houses and cars, start their own businesses, and enroll their children in public school. And for that matter, few expected that a number of Latinos across the U.S, from New York to Houston to Los Angeles, would join them, drawn to this “Nueva California” by the promise of open space and quiet life. But that is exactly what happened.

The town of Siler City lacked the necessary resources and infrastructure to accommodate the massive influx of Spanish-speaking migrants in the mid-1990s. Housing was scarce, public schools were overwhelmed, and adequate healthcare was an issue. Tensions arose as Latinos disrupted segregated residential patterns, first moving into the historically African American neighborhood of Lincoln Heights and then into other low-income predominately white sections of the city in an effort to find affordable housing. Price gouging was not uncommon and de facto segregation later occurred with the development of numerous trailer parks occupied almost entirely by Latinos. Since 2000, however, with the rise of a Latino business class in the area, including Latino realtors, these patterns have shifted slightly, with some Latinos now purchasing larger homes in historically white neighborhoods.

The integration of Latinos into local institutions elicited a range of responses. Siler City public schools experienced a great deal of “white flight” in the 1990s. As more Latino students enrolled, a number of middle-class white parents, including a former school official, withdrew their children and reenrolled them in private institutions. Hindered by inadequate resources and a lack of bilingual teachers, the public school

---


system struggled to keep up with student body changes.\textsuperscript{291} To their credit, some schools in the county enhanced their curriculum to assist Spanish-speaking students, including the Migrant Summer Program and the Hispanic Initiative, a collaborative effort with the University of North Carolina, at Jordan-Matthews High School.\textsuperscript{292} These programs addressed tensions among racial and ethnic groups, including those that exist within migrant subgroups. According to teachers at the school, not only did students often associate by racial categories, whether black, white, or Hispanic, but some Spanish-speaking students also grouped themselves by country of origin, whether as Mexican, Salvadoran, or Guatemalan, or even their home city or town within those countries.

Like public schools, downtown Siler City experienced dramatic changes as a result of Latino migration. The arrival of Latinos in the early 1990s rejuvenated the local economy, including a declining downtown. Latino stores moved into formerly vacant shops, contrasting older establishments. Ethnic stores, like the Tienda El Centro, or storefront churches, such as the Tabernaculo de Adoración Alfa y Omega helped rejuvenate a once declining business district. But the most powerful sign of local change was the public performance of Good Friday processions.

\textit{Good Friday Processions and Latino Identity}

The Mexican-American Catholic practice of Good Friday processions, also known as the \textit{Via Crucis en Vivo} (The Living Way of the Cross), arrived from Mexico to Siler City in the 1990s. The first public procession in Siler City garnered much attention. It literally


stopped traffic, as drivers pulled over on the side of road and got out of their cars to observe close to one hundred Latino Catholics move through city streets. The procession route began just north of downtown, passed by two symbols of Protestant establishment, First Baptist Church and City Hall, and ended just south of town at what was then the old St. Julia Catholic Church, a converted home in a predominately white neighborhood. Dressed in homemade costumes, Roman soldiers escorted Jesus crowned with thorns, two thieves, and their crosses along Siler City streets to the back of St Julia Roman Catholic church. There, on this new Golgotha, the soldiers raised the crucified.

The visual passion they performed moved many observers. One of the observers on hand, David Kalbacker, a long-time resident of Siler City, a member of the Hispanic Task Force and Saint Julia church parish council, reinterpreted his position as an American after seeing the ritual performance: “The interesting thing is that Americans, as a nation, are very optimistic people, and therefore we focus a lot on the Easter celebration. Many Third World countries realize that there's a lot of sacrifice and suffering. It gives us the opportunity to refocus our thinking.” Through a ritual encounter with the Good Friday processions, some Siler City locals like Kalbacker have become self-conscious of a perceived difference between their own historical experiences and theological practices and those of their Latino neighbors.

Despite a small Catholic presence in Siler City since 1960, the 1996 procession was the first of its kind in the central North Carolina town. Father Daniel Quackenbush,

---


a Franciscan priest and pastor of St. Julia’s parish admits, “I'd been a priest for 10 years and I'd never seen it done before. The first gentleman who did it here was from Mexico, and he had done it at home. It has pulled our congregation together and allowed our (non-Hispanic) population to see what devout Christians our Hispanic members are.”

As the Pastor’s comments suggest, newly arrived Catholics in Siler City initiated and carried out a tradition familiar to them in Latin America. News of the vivid reenactment of the crucifixion of Christ spread beyond Siler City. Attendance grew yearly. Pilgrims traveled from around the area to see the Via Crucis, including a number of non-Latinos. Reports of the procession even made their way into a Presbyterian sermon in Lake Wylie, South Carolina. The Reverend Sam McGregor, Jr., former pastor of Siler City Presbyterian Church, confessed in an Easter homily to his new flock that, “I am reminded of the stations of the cross in Siler City where the Hispanic man had to be hospitalized because he put the crown of thorns on his head to dramatize Jesus and he lost so much blood he passed out. Now that is a culture that understands Good Friday. I almost want to get in my car and drive there in order to experience the pain of Good Friday.”

Public displays of suffering in Good Friday processions gained some Latino Catholics in Siler City recognition and, at times, respect - however limited or exoticized - from other Christians in the American South.

The ritual performance of Latino Catholic Good Friday processions marked a shift in the boundaries of public space in Siler City from established patterns of biracial

---

295 Carol Hall, “Good Friday Observed in Hispanic Tradition,” *The News and Observer*, 3 April 1999, A1. At the same time though that the priest celebrated the procession, he also reminded participants that, "This is a day of fasting, penance and prayer." Joyce Clark, "Headline: Newcomers Re-Create Christ's Passion in Siler City: Holy Drama the Latino Way," *The News and Observer*, 6 April 1996, B1.

Protestant local spaces to fragmented multi-religious and multi-ethnic spaces. Siler City was no longer a town with only African American Protestant and Anglo Protestant sites. It was now layered with overlapping African American, Anglo, and Latino Catholic and Protestant spaces. Further, many of these spaces extended beyond the local. They were connected by travel patterns, communication technology, and monetary flows to communities in Latin America. Though the boundaries of racial and religious public spaces in small southern towns like Siler City have never been static or stable, the speed with which they shift has been accelerated by patterns of globalization across the Americas. The arrival of Good Friday processions, a popular Catholic practice in a southern Protestant town, signaled a historical shift in the ethnic and religious boundaries of the town.

The Death and Resurrection of Downtown Parades

Although the downtown Fourth of July parade returned in 1979, following the first cancellation since World War II, it was not a thriving event. Limping along for the next decade, the town’s most enduring public ritual finally came to a halt in 1988. That year, the front page of the local paper pictured a ten-year-old white girl walking the streets of a deserted downtown with an American flag in hand. The caption read, “Where’s the parade?” (Figure 13). From 1988 to 1997, there were no town sponsored

---

public Fourth of July parades in Siler City.\textsuperscript{298} And it was during this time that new migrants from Latin America, many but not all of them Catholic, made their way to the North Carolina town.\textsuperscript{299}

Some long-time white residents, however, misinterpreted the economic contributions and cultural innovations of Latinos in the 1990s, seeing them as further proof that migrants contributed to the "demise" of their town. Threatened by the arrival of Latino businesses in their downtown district and the public display of Latino Catholic rituals in their neighborhoods, some white Protestants utilized the ritual performance of the Fourth of July parade, forged in the early years of Siler City history, to reclaim public spaces. Led by a contingent of aging white Protestant leaders, the town renewed its most enduring public ritual one year after the first public Good Friday procession by Latino...

\textsuperscript{298} There were three small celebrations in downtown during this time. In 1990, the local National Guard participated in "Operation Patriotism," which involved a handful of people running through downtown with an American flag. In 1991, there was a "Salute to the Troops" parade. And in 1992, the local Shriners Club sponsored a small parade. None of these, however, were officially sponsored by the town of Siler City and did not elicit the response that the Rag Top parades received. "Local National Guard Member... " (Photo caption), \textit{The Chatham News}, 5 July 1990; "Do You See What I See?" (Photo caption), \textit{The Chatham News}, 11 July 1991; "Say Hey!! " (Photo caption), \textit{The Chatham News}, 9 July 1992.

\textsuperscript{299} Despite the fact that Siler City has historically been an overwhelmingly Protestant place and Latino Protestant churches continue to thrive in the area, the town’s only Roman Catholic congregation, St. Julia Church, has had the most significant impact upon the local religious landscape. As evidenced in the organizational ecology of the town (Eiesland 1998), it is clear that the competition for souls between Protestant and Catholic institutions in Latin America is continuing in new migrant destinations like Siler City (Mariz 1994). While Protestant churches may prove better suited, in terms of theological explanations, for the every day struggles of Latino workers in a modern industrial economy (Vasquez 1998), the profound cultural legacy of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America has been displayed in the local religious activities of Latinos at St. Julia. The Catholic Diocese of Raleigh has enjoyed unprecedented growth as a result of Latino migration to North Carolina. No where is this more apparent than in Siler City.
Catholics white neighborhoods near the downtown area. In these ritual actions, white Protestants remembered a time before tiendas and a town without Latinos.

While there were no “Mammy Floats” in the 1997 Fourth of July parade, as there were earlier, the renewal of the public parades represent attempts by white town leaders to reassert their public power in Siler City, which had dwindled since the transnational migration of the 1990s. For example, the theme of the first revitalized Independence Day celebration was the “Rag Top Parade.” Residents and out-of-towners were invited to enter old-timey and classic cars into the parade. The first attempt in 1997 drew 62 vehicles, ranging from a 1922 Ford Model T to a 1975 Granville Pontiac, though most entries were from the 1940s and ‘50s, a time when whites walked the Siler City streets in blackface during Halloween and participated in blackface minstrel shows in the High School Gym. As I noted earlier, one former white resident remembers seeing blackface minstrel shows in the High School gym as late as the early 1950s. And another longtime white resident confirmed this statement. He further recalled wearing blackface, which he referred to as common practice even for prominent Siler City residents, on the streets of Siler City for Halloween, also into the 1950s.


301 The renewal of the Fourth of July parade in 1997 was a ritual performance of “lived history.” For a brief discussion of “lived history” in relation to the work of Alessandro Portelli, see Paula Hamilton, “The Oral Historian as Memorist,” The Oral History Review 32.1 (2005): 11-18. As Portelli argues, history too often “wears a capital H” and becomes “a faraway sphere, distant from the daily lives of its people or a crushing annihilating weight upon them.” When this happens, the burden of history can “frustrate, and annihilate the work of memory or make it seem irrelevant.” Alessandro Portelli, The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 9. See also Freidrich Nietzsche, The Use and Abuse of History Translated by Adrian Collins (Prentice Hall, 1957).

302 Interview, June 23, 2005.

303 Interview, June 30, 2005.
An idea of local commissioners, the parade transported participants to a time when the town was “alive,” when “they didn’t roll up the sidewalks at dark,” and when “the Fourth was an all-day affair.” Former Siler City Mayor Earl Fitts, who was also a deacon at First Baptist Church, declared it “the start of a new day.” In 1999, the local paper asked, “What’s more American than a Fourth of July parade?” That same year, the commissioners brought back Rodeo to the festivities. And in a perhaps unintended, yet symbolic, gesture the winning rider conquered on a bull named “Tijuana Joe.”

Through their sponsorship of the renewed Fourth of July festivities, city leaders staked claim to contemporary space by reenacting the past.

Regardless of whether these leaders intentionally responded to the Latino procession, though based on observations and conversations I believe they did, the public performances of the Good Friday procession garnered much attention, announcing the presence of Latino Catholics in Siler City public life. The parades were, in part, attempts by leading white Protestants to regain control of the town’s public spaces, which they felt they had lost to Spanish-speaking migrants. In the midst of these demographic and religious changes, town officials drew on narratives and practices familiar to long-term residents in order to relocate themselves and their constituents within town space.

---


306 Almost all of these officials were members of white Methodist and Baptist congregations. For example, town mayor at the time, Earl Fitts, has been a long-time member of First Baptist Church, Siler City, acting as deacon at least once in 1960. Murray M. Andrew, First Baptist Church 1889-1989 (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Hunter Publishing Company, 1989).
Remembering Chatham Avenue

In addition to the Fourth of July parades, for example, Pem Hobbs, one of the organizers of the revitalized downtown parade was also the founder of the Siler City Mural Society, and that group also claimed civic space. According to one of its members, “The theme of the Mural Society is to keep the murals historical.” Promoting that theme, the society dedicated a large scale mural on the side of the Farmer’s Alliance Store in downtown Siler City in August 2006 (Figure 14). The mural depicts Chatham Avenue around 1910 and is dedicated to the society’s founder, who did not live to see its dedication. Since the early days of Siler City, Chatham Avenue was the heart of downtown; it was the ritual site of the annual Fourth of July parade. The mural depicts the buildings and structures of that downtown street in the early twentieth century. In addition to the Farmer’s Alliance Store, the First Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the First Baptist Church, and the town well were located on that street. When looking at the mural, one sees Chatham Avenue from the intersection just beyond the Farmer’s Alliance Store. The perspective foregrounds that store and the Methodist Episcopal Church South across the street. And it moves in relief down Chatham Avenue. An onlooker then is presented with a pictorial representation of downtown Siler City with those two buildings as prominent historical markers.

As I noted in the “Incorporation” chapter, the Farmer’s Alliance Store, which was moved from Loves Creek Baptist Church to downtown Siler City in 1888, was limited to farmers of the “Anglo-Saxon” race. While the store no longer maintains its segregationist policies, those legacies have shaped, even if in unconscious ways, the

construction of the mural. The store has made efforts of racial inclusion. For example, photographs of local black soldiers dressed in military uniform were displayed side by side with those of local white soldiers on a wall inside the store dedicated to Siler City history. But like the Fourth of July parade, the mural draws on narratives and practices familiar to white residents, which in some cases excludes an African American historical voice. For example, when I attended the mural dedication ceremony in August 2006, long-time white residents watched old films of Siler City from the 1930s and ‘40s. These films were common to small towns in the South. During this period, companies would travel from town to town and film residents. Later, these films were played in local theatres, where residents could pay to watch themselves on the silver screen. The films captured both black and white residents. Blacks could also pay to watch the film, but they had to sit in the segregated seating of the balcony. As scenes of white students at High School flashed on the screen at the Farmer’s Alliance store the day of the mural dedication, I heard audience members identify many of those persons by name. And this turned into a collective task. Someone would call out a name and another person would confirm or say who they thought it was. In the end, one of the most senior residents present, who was in charge of the film, settled any debates. But when presented with images of black students at a separate school, the crowd was silent and not a word was spoken until white residents appeared again on screen.

Some in the audience did recognize, however, Todd Edwards on screen. As I have noted, Mr. Edwards was the only black businessman who worked in the white business district of Chatham Avenue. He was depicted in the mural, standing down the street in front of his jewelry store. In conversation and while walking around, I heard
many of those in attendance mention his presence in the mural. Todd Edwards and his Chatham Avenue store have long been a symbol of racial harmony in Siler City. While Edwards was included as an example of that racial harmony on this downtown street, there was no indication in the mural that downtown was once a racially segregated space. Segregation was erased from this public display of collective memory. For example, even though the mural depicted the storage building that connected to the back of the Farmer’s Alliance Store, the row of buildings that would have fronted that back street was not included. I knew about the historical existence of those building because in earlier interviews, residents had told me that the black business district was located on that street. In the corner of the mural, one can see an empty space where that street would have been. But as with the white commentary on segregated school children, there was a historical silence in the mural; the street was excluded from that visual memory.

Was this exclusion intentional? Based on interviews and observations, I doubt it. The persons I talked with never directly said something to the effect, ‘When we commissioned the murals, we intended to reconstruct a history that ignored segregation as well as migrant arrival.’ No, self-descriptions of such efforts suggest that these long-time residents were looking for the familiar. In the past two decades, downtown Siler City had changed drastically. It was no longer the same as it had always been. In the midst of these changes, the Farmer’s Alliance Store, which had been in the same place since 1888, was a familiar landmark for white residents. For example, one of the Mural Society members commented, “We really appreciate the Farmer’s Alliance for their presence in the community for all these years. I am glad to have a mural on their
building that depicts our rich history.”308 It is not exactly clear, however, what this
member means when he says “our rich history.” The implication is that “our history” is
Siler City’s history. But if the audience responses to film were any indication, then “our
history” included what is familiar ‘to us.’ It excludes parts of Siler City less familiar to
white residents, such as the black business district. Although they knew it was there, they
did not shop in that part of town. That street, while in Siler City, was not part of white
communal memory. As they watched the film, white residents rhetorically performed the
familiar, citing names of those included in their community.

The construction of the mural, however, was a complicated process, one that
suggests multiple meanings for the historical scene. For example, the muralist, who was
commissioned by the Society, lived in Pittsboro, North Carolina. In the last two decades,
Pittsboro has become home to a number of progressive and liberal minded whites. Its
roughly 2,000 residents include organic farmers, psychotherapists, and counselors, many
of whom promote alternative healing practices. The town also is home to antique shops.
There is a Zen Center nearby and an organic grocery store opened in 2005. The artist
feels at home in that community, one that contrasts drastically with Siler City. She is a
member of the Blue Heron Farm Intentional Living Community, organized in 1982 on 64
acres just outside of Pittsboro. According to their website, those who live there are
“families, couples, and individuals who share some common values: environmentally
sustainable living, celebrating life through the arts and play, closeness and connection
across the generations, and a reverence for nature.”309 That artist brought with her
several of her fellow community members to the mural dedication. One of the members

309 http://www.bhfarm.org/sustainable.htm
told me she was a graduate student in the School of Education at UNC. She told me that
their community consists of artists, school teachers, and others of kindred spirit. Outside
the Farmer’s Alliance Store and in front of the mural, those alternative community
members played folk songs on acoustic guitar and shouted, “Yeah, Siler City.”

It was clear that these out of town visitors were there to celebrate the aesthetic
accomplishments of their fellow community member. When I talked to that artist about
her work, she told me that she wanted to help the residents of Siler City “project who
they remember onto the mural.” The Farmer’s Alliance mural was not her first project in
Siler City. The Mural Society had previously commissioned her work for a mural
dedicated to the Chatham Hospital. On the side of a brick building in another part of
downtown, that mural portrayed the old and new hospitals in Siler City with images of
town leaders and doctors camouflaged in the surrounding shrubbery displayed in the
scene. For the Farmer’s Alliance project, she was asked to construct a mural based on a
photograph of downtown Chatham Avenue from the early 1900s. 310

In addition to the artist, others volunteered to help with the mural construction.
And this is perhaps the most interesting part of that project. When talking with a local
newspaper reporter at the dedication ceremony, I was told that a local non-profit worker
had coordinated the volunteer efforts for the mural construction. Later, I was able to
meet that person. To my surprise, she was an African American woman, the only African

310 There also is another commissioned mural on the side of the Ace Hardware store in downtown Siler
City. It consists of three scenes that move left to right, much like a time line. The first is of a mercantile
store in the early 1900s, with a group of white men standing in front, accompanied by a horse. The second
shows the inside of a hardware store, at what appears a later date. An African American man is included in
that scene. And the third show the hardware store in the contemporary period. In this scene, a Latino
woman and child are depicted in the store, along with white male Ace hardware employees, and African
American woman, and a white girl. This mural appears to assimilate the cultural changes of desegregation
and Latino arrival into a New South narrative of white store ownership of mass-produced products.
American present at the event. (I was told later that those who organized the event did extend an invitation to Elizabeth Edwards, the daughter-in-law of Todd Edwards; however, she was unable to attend.) But it turned out that the volunteer coordinator was not from Siler City. She moved from Connecticut a few years to work in a hosiery mill. She eventually left the mill and took a position at a local non-profit. One of her tasks in this new position was to coordinate activities for at-risk youth in Siler City. In the Farmer’s Alliance mural, she saw an opportunity to connect those kids to an artistic project.

In both of these examples, the artist and the non-profit worker were attracted to the mural project for its aesthetics qualities, more so than its historical vision. That history was unfamiliar to them. They projected their own sense of value – whether as observable nostalgia or therapeutic exercise – onto the efforts of long-time residents to publicly display a “historical” moment in the life of a southern town. So there is no single meaning at the heart of the mural display. There are multiple meanings. At the same time, though, much like the Fourth of July parades, the downtown Farmer’s Alliance mural displayed a consistent theme best interpreted as a southern moral order. Since the last performance of the downtown parades in 2001, the use of downtown murals have replaced the Fourth of July festivities as the prevailing visual representation of southern white social order.

In addition to the downtown parades and Farmer’s Alliance mural, there are other cases where long-time residents express a desire for the familiar in the midst of rapid social change. For example, since 1989, some of the same town officials who supported a renewed downtown Fourth of July parade have also sponsored the annual “Chicken
Festival” every August. The festival celebrates the value of the poultry industry to the town’s economy, recognizing its long presence in Siler City. Like the July 4th parade, the festival includes old cars, a band, and a parade with floats. Additional activities include a “Chicken Legs Contest” for the person with the skinniest legs and a “Chicken Dancing Contest for the person who can dance most like a chicken.”

The dual sponsorship of Fourth of July parades and Chicken Festivals and the types of activities at each reveal a tension between city officials’ drive to rebuild the economy, which requires migrant labor, and their desire to retain the familiar patterns of small town southern life. On the one hand, the town recruits migrant labor, whether directly, by advertising for jobs in Mexican towns, or indirectly through poultry companies. On the other hand, town elites want to control public space in Siler City. Issues of zoning and the regulation of modular home communities are all related to the town’s struggle to retain control of public space. Downtown, where the Fourth of July parades take place, was key symbolic battleground. Further, new residential areas continue to follow de facto segregated patterns, as Latinos fill fields of modular homes thrown up on former farmlands. Just outside of town, modular homes line both sides of exterior roads like rows of corn, each perfectly spaced. Their symmetry conjures the ordered patterns of chicken crates. In older neighborhoods, though, particularly the former area of Palestine, the lines are not as easily drawn. There, Latino families may live side by side with either older long-time residents or upstart families whose lineage dates back to the early days of Siler City. But the predominately white upper-middle

class of Siler City almost all live south of town near the Country Club, which advertises itself as one of the best kept secrets in the area.

Like the downtown murals and annual Chicken Festival, the revival of the Fourth of July parade is one example of local Protestant attempts to maintain social status in the rapidly changing religious, cultural, and economic landscape of Siler City. In this public ritual, white Protestants demonstrate the sentiment expressed by a local minister when asked by the St. Julia priest if Latino Catholics could perform one of the Stations of the Cross at his church, which was on the processional route. That minister, the same Presbyterian minister enamored with the suffering Latino Christ cited above, denied the request, telling the priest that “You can’t crucify Jesus on the Protestant lawn and resurrect him inside the Catholic Church.”

Although that minister conveyed respect for Catholic parishioners, perhaps to the point of admiration, he still wanted to maintain institutional control of his religious property. In other words, he did not want his Protestant congregation to become a plot point in a triumphant Catholic narrative.

In similar fashion, many long-time white residents in Siler City express respect for Latino migrants; they often admire them for their hard work. For example, when Nelly Cole, whom I discussed in the previous chapter, remembered the changes in labor at her textile plant, from racial integration to migrant arrival, she spoke highly of Latino workers. She recalled that “for years and years” all the workers at the mill were white but “they gradually started hiring a few blacks.” But in 2006, she would guess that “there is more Hispanics and blacks than they are white.” After a long pause, she stated, “But that’s all right; I admire ‘em for working.” As noted earlier, Nelly also lamented the

---

312 Interview, 11 January 2006.
economic decline of downtown Siler City and the discontinuation of Fourth of July parades. Like Nelly, many white residents in Siler City are not necessarily opposed to Latino presence on principle. As with the Presbyterian minister, it is nothing personal. Instead, white residents do not want to be displaced by Latino arrival. Their efforts to revitalize the parades are less a direct attack on Latino Catholic practices and more an attempt to reclaim their front yard, which in this case is Chatham Avenue.

**Conclusion**

The arrival of Good Friday processions from Mexico to Siler City, North Carolina in the 1990s elicited a specific ritual response from long-time white Protestant residents. A year after the first public Latino Catholic Good Friday procession occurred in 1996, a cohort of white Protestants, members of an aging establishment, revitalized the town’s Fourth of July parade, an event that had ended in 1988. Such efforts suggest that like Latino Catholics, white Protestants in Siler City have used public ritual to claim city space. These are contested constructions. The revitalized parades remained downtown as long as the processions were there. In 2001, the year construction was finished at the new St. Julia church and the Good Friday procession was moved there (outside of town), there was no downtown Fourth of July parade. And there has not been a downtown parade to date.

The Good Friday performances in Siler City confirm patterns that scholars have already noticed among Latino Catholic migrants in other parts of the United States. Faced with economic hardship, institutional violence, and poor living conditions, Latino Catholics draw on the resources of their religious tradition to both adapt to and assert themselves within their new surroundings. For example, Karen Davalos has argued that

But Siler City is not Chicago or New York City. This is a small rural southern town that grew into a different kind of global city. Catholics did not come to Siler City until 1960, and even then they were a small Anglo-congregation. Yet, despite the absence of Catholicism in Siler City, the history of Fourth of July parades in this manufacturing place illustrates how white evangelicals joined the sacramental rites of southern religion with those of American nationalism. In the early twentieth century, Siler City evangelicals used the Fourth of July parade to publicly display Confederate sacrifice, claiming America as its own. At the end of the twentieth century white evangelicals renewed this ritual tradition to reclaim downtown as American space. Like the Latino Catholic Good Friday processions, these Protestants use the sacramental rite of Fourth of July parades – as well as murals and festivals – to claim bodies and sacralize space.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION:
POLITICAL ECONOMIES OF SOUTHERN SACRIFICE

In response to David Duke’s visit, the Carolina Interfaith Task Force on Central America (CITCA) added Siler City to its Holy Week pilgrimage route, which began in Greensboro on Palm Sunday and ended in Raleigh on Good Friday 2000. At each stop, activists used rhetoric and symbols of Christian sacrifice to protest social and economic injustice. On Tuesday April 18, they were joined by representatives of Siler City congregations, including historically black churches, as well as members of St. Julia Catholic Church. Together, this diverse group returned to the steps of City Hall, where Duke had delivered his hate speech just two months earlier. According to the event organizer, “People felt like it was very important to reclaim that space and give it a positive image again.”

Although an ecumenical event, the Pilgrimage for Peace and Justice drew on Catholic organizational networks and ritual traditions. For example, CITCA is a Catholic led coalition, organized in 1982 by Gail Phares, an ex-Maryknoll nun. Phares worked in Nicaragua in the 1960s. She moved to the United States in the 1970s to advocate on behalf of the poor in Central America. And in the 1980s she became active in religious

protest movements, such as Witness for Peace, which resisted United States military involvement in the region.\textsuperscript{316} As part of her advocacy work, she accompanied progressive Christians from Raleigh on trips to Nicaragua to see first hand the effects of American militarism. Those religious organizational structures, born out of encounters with progressive Catholicism in Latin America, facilitated the anti-Duke rally in Siler City. And while evangelical Protestants participated in the protest that day, ultimately Latin American Catholic processional traditions provided the ritual resources to take back Siler City from David Duke and “reclaim that space.”\textsuperscript{317}

In contrast to that religious display, white Protestants in Siler City used the public ritual of Fourth of July parades to claim space in a different kind of protest. In the early twentieth century, they emerged from political Reconstruction and displayed white control of a racially segregated industrial order through the bodily performances in Fourth of July parades. In Siler City, they marked the return of southern white public power with the Christian sacrifice of a Confederate soldier. In the parades, southern white residents blessed modern industry and performed religious nationalism, using what historians have considered tools of northern expansion to their regional advantage.\textsuperscript{318}


\textsuperscript{317} Evangelical traditions of social activism overlap with Catholic protest movements. In the nineteenth century, some white evangelicals were engaged in social change as educators and abolitionists. They organized colleges and opposed slavery. In the twentieth century, African American evangelical Protestants used speeches and marches to facilitate social change, as illustrated in the Civil Rights movement. For a brief survey of these historical overlaps, see Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, \textit{Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

\textsuperscript{318} Historians of religion in America often have interpreted industrial production as a uniform and universalizing force. For example, in 1978, historian Anthony F. C. Wallace published a study of Rockdale, Pennsylvania. In his descriptions of social life in the nineteenth century mill town, Wallace used the terms “Industrial Christianity,” “Christian Industrialism,” and “Christian Capitalism” to describe connections between Christian ideas and industrial habits. Surveying everyday life, Wallace narrated a local marriage
Following desegregation in 1969, white Protestants in Siler City used those same rites to construct a separatist space in which they constructed the moral order of downtown in the 1950s. And in response to Latino arrival in the 1990s, white Protestants in Siler City renewed downtown Fourth of July parades. Following each significant historical challenge to white public power, those Protestants drew on the parading tradition of Fourth of July, rather than the processing tradition of Good Friday, to claim or reclaim space in Siler City.\footnote{Parading versus processing is not necessarily a Protestant versus Catholic tradition. For example, Irish-Catholics participated in Fourth of July parades in nineteenth century Philadelphia. In fact, their participation was an effective strategy of “becoming white.” Parades then can be distinguished as an Anglo-American tradition with European roots that include Irish parading traditions, whereas Good Friday processions, while born in early Christianity, are ultimately a Spanish Catholic tradition. T. G Fraser, ed. \textit{The Irish Parading Tradition: Following the Drum} (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Richard Trexler, \textit{Reliving Golgotha: the Passion Play of Iztapalapa} (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003).}

\textit{New South to Nuevo South}

The contrast of Latino Catholic Good Friday processions with southern Protestant Fourth of July parades makes Siler City an ideal case study to examine shifts in two key epochs of southern history: from Old South to New South at the beginning of the twentieth century and from New South to Nuevo South at the end of the twentieth century. Southern historian C. Vann Woodward proposed that “one of the most

\textbf{of evangelical message and capitalist enterprise. Religious concerns of stewardship, community, and benevolence tempered economic logics of profit, wages, and competition. It is this attention to the relationship between religion and industry that influences my study of a twentieth century mill town, Siler City. Beyond that, however, my approach differs significantly. Although Wallace presented a detailed account of religion and economy in Rockdale, he ultimately strayed from historical detail by universalizing what he termed the “immutable propositions” of “the theory of Christian capitalism.” Wallace boils the “basic elements” of this “idealistic theory” into a singular theological system, expressed in seven propositions. See Anthony F. C. Wallace, \textit{Rockdale: The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 394-397.}
significant inventions of the New South was the Old South.” Woodward noted that in the early twentieth century, southern white Protestants expressed nostalgia for a “lost” Confederate racial and religious order, one that was modeled in evangelical performances of Christian homes. This nostalgia increased as the South was industrialized, a pattern that historians have struggled to understand. In Siler City, however, it is clear that the relationship between modern industrial production and antebellum religious practices was not as antagonistic as some scholars have assumed. In this manufacturing town, white Protestants constructed an “Industrial Confederacy,” a cultural synthesis of Old South religious regionalism with New South industrial nationalism. This synthesis was most clearly illustrated in 1901, when a Confederate soldier led the first Fourth of July parade in downtown Siler City.

Extending Woodward’s proposal, I suggest that one of the most significant white Protestant inventions in the Nuevo South has been the New South. Before Latino arrival, Siler City was a New South town. It was a small manufacturing community, incorporated and industrialized after the Civil War, marked by racial segregation and Protestant dominance. Since Latino arrival, Siler City has been transformed into a Nuevo South town, one with multi-layered ethnic, religious, and cultural landscapes. While the American South has always been diverse, it has never seen this kind of rapid social change.


321 The theme of ritual production of domestic space is also an influence of J. Z. Smith’s ritual theory. I am particularly persuaded by his interpretation of humanist geographers, particularly his notice that “place as home-place appears to be preeminently a category of nostalgia.” Smith, To Take Place, 29. I think this assertion helps make sense of the ritual formation of a factory town, or “manufacturing place.” The production of domestic spaces and requisite furnishings, themselves potential mass-produced artifacts of nostalgia, are accelerated by modern industry.
The seed of New South invention – a historical memory that white Protestants made public in their response to Latino arrival – was sown in the economic and racial restructuring of southern towns in the 1970s that followed local desegregation. Although racial desegregation did not mark an epochal shift, it did prove a catalyst for white Protestant nostalgia for the moral order of 1950s southern towns. Like its early twentieth century correlate, this historical invention is a territorial imagining. It is a nationalist projection of regional identity. In this southern Protestant remembering, some persons are included; others are excluded. White residents are American. Latino migrants are not. Although the historical complexities betray those simplistic dichotomies, a consistent pattern emerges across twentieth century Siler City. In this southern industrial town, white Protestants used the nationalist rite of Fourth of July parades to reclaim civic space following significant challenges to white public power.

Politics of Place

In Siler City, both Latino Catholics and white Protestants ritually produced competing conceptions of sacred space. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal have

---

322 While racial desegregation was a pivotal moment in southern history, I would not say that it marked a transition from one historical epoch to another. My understanding of a historical epoch is informed by Marxian interpretations of “epoch” as a prevailing mode of economic production. Changes in modes of production signal a shift in historical epoch. While racial desegregation was evidenced in the extension of civil rights to African Americans, it was not accompanied by a radical change in modes of production. In contrast, the industrialization of the New South signaled a shift in the dominant mode of rural agrarian economies in the Old South. While urban industrial economies did exist in pockets in the Old South, they were not as widespread as they would later become in the twentieth century. Susanna Delfino and Michelle Gillespie, Global Perspectives on Industrial Transformation in the American South (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2005). In similar fashion, the transition from New South to Nuevo South is distinguished by a shift from Fordism to post-Fordist modes of production in the 1970s, a change that contributed to transformation of labor itself in southern towns like Siler City. Such economic changes obviously were not peculiar to the American South. But when combined with rapid Latino migration, they mark an epoch shift from New South to Nuevo South in the region. Samir Amin, Capitalism in the Age of Globalization (London: Zed Books, 1997).
identified “sacred space as ritual space, a location for formalized, repeatable symbolic performances.” In Siler City, Good Friday processions are just this type of symbolic performance. Through the performance of religious ritual, participants collaboratively construct sacred spaces. These constructions, however, are contested, both within ritual spaces of the processions and the public spaces of town. In other words, when Latino Catholics in Siler City performed the Good Friday processions, they constructed sacred spaces within the ritual event, for example, the space around the Christ figure and cross. In terms of phenomenological form, these sacred spaces may be similar to those created by ritual performances in other geographic locations, like Mexico. But place matters. The processions create – and are created by – a politics of place; in Siler City, until the construction of a new St Julia church outside of town in 2000, they occurred within historically biracial and Protestant controlled public spaces.

Reinterpreting the comparative work of Gerardus Van der Leeuw and Mircea Eliade in light of cultural models of contestation, Chidester and Linenthal argue that the “positioning of sacred place (is) a political act,” that “every establishment of a sacred place (is) a conquest of space,” and “the sacrality of place…can be directly related to a politics of property.” This approach to the production of sacred space within a politics of place is salient to a study of Siler City, where a history of segregation still impacts the


landscape. In the procession, Latino Catholics constructed sacred space within a racially and religiously charged political context. This context, however, has a history, and, in order to better understand how local strategies of power develop over time, it is important to situate the recent productions of sacred space within this history. As Jonathan Z. Smith has argued, the historical-political context of a ritual is more important than its phenomenological form. When Latino migrants arrived in Siler City, they entered a cultural context with a relatively long racial and religious history, one forged in the segregated factories and churches of the New South.

Layering the Local

In The Transformation of Virginia, Rhys Isaac argued that, “A society necessarily leaves marks of use upon the terrain it occupies. These marks are meaningful signs not only of the particular relations of a people to environment but also of the distribution and

---


327 Emphasizing local history is also important because it helps avoid the mistake of assuming, for example, that a rural town in the American South is the same as a city in the Northeast; or, assuming that modern institutional developments, such as multi-cultural education for example, are evenly distributed across national, regional, and local contexts. By including local history, I am maintaining that macro structural forces are enacted in local contexts, a process akin to what Roland Robertson has described as "glocalization.” Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity and Heterogeneity," Global Modernities, Ed. Mike Featherstone (London: Sage, 1995). For an argument concerning the uneven distribution of modernity, see Manuel A. Vasquez, The Brazilian Popular Church and the Crisis of Modernity (Cambridge, U.K. and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also Bruno Latour, We Have Never Been Modern (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993).

control of access to essential resources.”

Although my methodology differs from Isaac’s more totalizing (and more structural) visions of society, I have found his approach to landscape, when synthesized with specific ethnographic and historical methods (particularly urban cartography and organizational ecology) extremely useful for interpreting religious landscape of this southern town. In the American South – in locations like Siler City – race, along with religion, has played an important role in the “distribution and control of access” to public space. In this context, I have employed a research model that “layers local landscapes,” a model in which the historical ethnographer continually moves between the field and the archive, but does so within the theoretical frames of religion, race, and place.

To account for these multiple layers, I have utilized a cross-disciplinary approach. As I noted in the Introduction, I have synthesized Michael Burawoy’s sociological model of an “extended case” with historically informed interpretations. I want to keep both sociological and historical approaches in conversation because I feel that each needs the other to navigate the tensions between the local and the global, between heterogeneity and homogeneity, and between structure and agency, that have characterized studies of American religious history since the ethnographic turn – a turn to observing religion as lived or practiced in particular places. Cross-contextual comparison has continually been a disciplinary challenge for Religious Studies scholars, especially those who utilize


ethnographic techniques. In her review of R. Stephen Warner’s edited collection, *Gatherings in Diaspora*, Nancy Eiesland described the “dilemmas facing researchers who have turned to ethnographic approaches” as a struggle to determine “exactly how one draws connections without constructing the typical, abstracting from history, or smoothing over contests of meaning.”\(^{331}\) I chose to focus on Fourth of July parades in Siler City because I believe that this ritual practice extends beyond the local. Functioning as a sacramental rite, the parades integrate local bodies into larger communities.

But just as there is power in the blood, there is agency in the local. The local can be as much a site for the projection of global logics as it can be for the inscription of macro forces. Again, in an effort to move back and forth between local agency and structural constraint, I turned to Burawoy, who argued that the dangers of positivism (unwarranted reduction of social sciences to natural science models) and postmodernity (reduction of social sciences to literary analysis) can be circumvented by ethnographic techniques such as participant observation. Participant observation is a vital part of this process for Burawoy because “We advocate neither distance nor immersion but dialogue.” Likewise, Burawoy states, “We are interested not only in learning about a specific social situation, which is the concern of the participant, but also in learning from that social situation.”\(^{332}\) In Siler City, there is much to learn from the social situation of new Latino migrants. Siler City is a case study of the changing racial, ethnic, and religious landscape of the American South. And I am not the only scholar trying to learn

---


from this case. There have been a number of researchers from the University of North Carolina who have traveled to Siler City to study these changes. Although our research methodologies differ, we are connected, in theory at least, by our institutional commitment to promote the common good. Two of the stated goals of UNC are to “serve all the people of the state [and] to improve the condition of human life through service and publication.”333 That is why we – as scholars from UNC – are present in this rural manufacturing town: to learn from this case study how to improve the living conditions of all residents of North Carolina, including Latinos.

But there are dangers in projecting the university’s multicultural perspective onto the local case without qualifying or “extending” the case historically, not just theoretically as many social scientists have done. Take for example the UNC School of Public Health, which has produced a number of projects addressing Latino presence, including a study that conducted health surveys at Latino congregations. These projects are intended to better the lives of North Carolina residents, including Latino workers. Linking health resources to those in need, they are often successful.334 Some of these studies, however, share the same assumption as new paradigm sociologists of religion like R. Stephen Warner – that multicultural space is easily accessible. But as Marie Marquardt has argued in her study of Latino migrants in Doraville, Georgia, this multicultural table is not always open to new migrants. In some places, particularly in

333 http://www.unc.edu/about/mission.html

334 For example, Melanie Wasserman found that a productive way to distribute information on health care resources in Chatham County was through promotoras, Latino who served as messengers on behalf of UNC hospitals to their families and larger communities. And Wasserman found that providing information sessions at St. Julia Catholic church in Siler City was an effective way to identify promotoras and promote healthcare education. Melanie R. Wasserman, "Latina Immigrants, Bridge Persons, and Utilization of Preventive Health Services " Ph.D. Dissertation Thesis, University of North Carolina, 2004.
the American South, it just does not exist.\textsuperscript{335} To illustrate this tension between university multiculturalism and everyday practice, take for example a particular UNC Public Health study in Siler City. At the conclusion of this study, the authors suggested that, “a specific event such (as) the revival of a Fourth of July festival in Siler City could be a place where different races and cultures come together as a larger group and socialize.”\textsuperscript{336} On the surface, this seems like a fairly reasonable proposal; however, once situated in the parade’s contested racial history, it becomes highly problematic. In other words, how is cultural difference incorporated into a ritual performance where the organizers of that event (white Protestants) remember a time without that difference?

Like my UNC colleagues, my explorations of the past are motivated by questions about the present. I too came to Siler City because Latinos came to Siler City; however, I soon noticed that white Protestants responded to the cultural and demographic changes that accompanied Latino migration to Siler City by renewing rituals forged in the town’s New South history. Without excavating the ritual history of Siler City Fourth of July parades, I may have made the same mistake as the School of Public health researchers. I might have assumed that the ritual performance visually represented a present moment pregnant with multi-cultural consensus. Or, as those social scientist put it, the “Fourth of July festival in Siler City could be a \textit{place} where different races and cultures come together as a larger group.” But again, as J. Z. Smith noted in his commentary on


humanist geographers, “human beings are not placed, they bring place into being.” Just as there are many ritual performances in the geographic space of Siler City, there are multiple imaginings of Siler City as a communal body.

Extending the case involves more than moving back and forth in dialectical conversation between participant observations and theoretical interpretations, as Burawoy proposed or as the UNC Public Health researchers demonstrated. It also means placing these observations in historical context. In turn, though, this “placing” is an interpretive action. Context is not natural or organic. It does not spring from the ground up. It is not produced through observation alone. Identities and categories associated with place are not natural either. Scholars are implicated in the production of place and the construction of interpretive categories of race, class, and gender. Just as human beings are not placed, they also are not raced; they bring race (or class or gender) into being. This is particularly salient to the study of new migrant destinations in the American South, where the social location of white Protestants is often treated as a given. If place is a category only applied to Latino Catholics, however, then white Protestants function as the locative norm – or the benchmark in surveying and mapping. They are just Siler City people and everyone else, blacks and Latinos, are fighting for their place in Siler City. But as the private Fourth of July celebration and the renewed parades indicate, place also matters for Protestants. They too have used a public ritual to claim geographic space as religious territory.


This Land is Our Land

The use of nationalist rite to project southern cultures of Christian sacrifice beyond the local, a projection made possible through industrial production, suggests that the history of Fourth of July parades and ritual contestations in Siler City is relevant to present trends in American religious history. The story of this southern town resonates with larger patterns in United States religions – patterns within the last decade that include an apparent increase of evangelical Protestant fascination with crucifixion, a pattern that also parallels large movements of Latino Catholics to the United States. Scholars have struggled to make sense of why evangelicals have become so enamored with public displays of Christ on the Cross, including displays such as Mel Gibson’s, The Passion of the Christ, that conjure pre-Vatican II Catholic traditions. At first glance, it appears that these Protestants suddenly are expressing sacramental nostalgia. Or perhaps they have turned to liturgy and ritual for bearing in a postmodern sea of cultural flows. Or maybe such changes suggest a Latinization of American Christianity. Each of these explanations is possible; however, the story of Fourth of July parades in Siler City suggests another interpretation.

Examining that history, it is clear that public rites of Christian sacrifice were a critical component of southern Protestant cultures in the New South. Compared to Latino Catholic images of a crucified Christ, however, southern Protestants expressed Christian sacrifice in a different form. Rather than depicting Jesus on the cross, they displayed that sacrifice in the masculine performance of southern soldiers. In Siler City, such practices

preceded Latino Catholic arrival. The patriotism of early Siler City Fourth of July parades was steeped in discourses of Confederate sacrifice.\textsuperscript{340} As I outlined in earlier chapters, white Protestants in the early twentieth century Siler City, as elsewhere in the American South, employed discourses of sacrifice and suffering for political and economic advantage. And those strategies persisted across the twentieth century.

In early twenty-first century Siler City, however, public Protestant displays of Christian sacrifice, however, appear to have changed. The revitalized downtown Fourth of July parades stopped in 2001. At the moment, it looks like they will not return. As long as the private white Protestant celebration continues, I doubt that there will be a successful effort to bring back the “old time” parades to downtown Siler City. And as public bodily performances of patriotic sacrifice have disappeared from downtown streets, public bodily performances of religious sacrifice have increased in Siler City.

For example, local evangelical congregations entered floats in the 2005 Siler City and Bennett Christmas parades that depicted a crucified Jesus, as performed by white men wearing a crown of thorns and a white robe with a patch of red blood over the

\textsuperscript{340} In the early twentieth century, the public display of Confederate sacrifice in Fourth of July parades helped reconcile what appear conflicting social obligations between southern regionalism, industrial capitalism, and American nationalism. My impressions of these social obligations are shaped by Derrida’s interpretation of the story of Abraham and Isaac, especially his assertion that the “gift of death” is the beginning of ethics. For Derrida, obedience or loyalty to an unknowable principle or command is always at odds with other competing principles or commands. I find this approach relevant to the South, where Christians have held theological principles of love in tension with social principles of racial order. For many southern white Protestants, both principles have coexisted within the same religious system and they have reconciled this tension with the “gift of death” provided by the sacrifice of black bodies, whether as the economic sacrifice of labor, the political sacrifice of lack of representation, or the literal sacrifice of lynching. And since the 1990s, Latino residents of Siler City have also become sacrificial economic placeholders. Jacques Derrida, \textit{The Gift of Death} (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995). For an interpretation of lynching as a southern religious rite, see Donald G. Mathews, “Lynching Is Part of the Religion of Our People: Faith in the Christian South,” in \textit{Religion in the American South: Protestants and Others in History and Culture}, eds. Beth Barton Schweiger and Donald G. Mathews (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 153-194.
heart. In addition, since 2004, the Rocky River Baptist Church in Siler City has performed “The Death and Resurrection of Christ,” a live drive-thru Easter pageant. In this event, church members dressed in costume and recreated moments from the Gospel accounts of the last days of Jesus. The audience rode in cars, proceeding along the asphalt drive that encircles the church and passes scenes that begin with the “Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem” and end with the “The Ascension.” Positioned at the apex of the circle drive, directly behind the church building, the “Crucifixion” scene was the most prominent image of the event in 2006 and 2007.

After first viewing the drive-thru pageant in 2006, I was convinced that this event was influenced by the arrival of Latino Catholic Good Friday processions to Siler City. As far as I can tell, Protestants in Siler City had never performed the crucifixion of Jesus outdoors prior to the drive-thru pageant. They have held Easter sunrise services outdoors, often in church cemeteries, but never a bodily performance of a crucified Jesus. The performance of a drive-thru pageant at Siler City’s oldest Baptist church, a congregation that was organized in the eighteenth century, was a significant moment in the religious history of the town. Struck by the parallels between that event and the Good Friday processions at St. Julia Catholic Church, where they also process around a circle drive, I asked Clyde Teague, who organized the event, where he got the idea for the drive-thru pageant. Initially, he told me that he had always wanted to have a drive-thru pageant. He said that the church had a circle drive, which he thought was ideal, and he felt that the

341 Chatham News, 15 December 2005. These churches differ from mainline churches like First Baptist and First United Methodist in Siler City. At these rural but growing congregations, rhetoric of Christian sacrifice has been expanded beyond the traditional Protestant discourses to include Christmas, a religious holiday in which Christians typically celebrate the birth of Jesus, not his death, as a gift of peace to all humanity. In the Christmas parade, however, that congregation reversed the emphasis. And other upwardly-mobile evangelical congregations have done the same. For example, in 2006, the pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Pensacola, Florida told the congregation in his delivered candle-light service message of that Christmas is about the death of Jesus, not his birth.
pageant would be a “good witness.” When I pushed the question, he admitted that he had heard about a similar drive-thru pageant at a church in Burlington, North Carolina. But when I asked Clyde if he had ever seen or heard of the Latino Catholic Good Friday processions at St. Julia, he said, to my surprise, that he had not.

Such a reaction suggests that the performance at St. Julia did not prompt the drive-thru pageant at Rocky River. This does not necessarily rule out an overlap with Good Friday processional traditions. The drive-thru pageants at Rocky River are part of a larger phenomenon among American evangelicals, one that blurs boundaries between Catholic and Protestant ritual traditions. For example, in addition to Siler City and Burlington, there are drive-thru performances in other parts of the U.S., such as Third Baptist Church in Portsmouth, Virginia and Central Christian Church in Orlando, Florida. These performances are a product of a Protestant ritual tradition of Passion Plays in America, one that has roots in Europe, particularly Germany. That ritual history differs from the history of Good Friday processions, which began in early Christianity but were halted in Protestant Europe. The Holy Week processions continued in Catholic Spain, though, and missionaries carried them to Latin America. There it thrived, particularly in Mexico. A century and a half later, migrants brought the practice with them to the American South, as seen in towns like Siler City. Some evidence

342 Jane Bryant, "Drive-through Easter Pageant a First for Church," The Virginian-Pilot 13 April 2006, B1; Steve Schneider, "What Would Jesus Drive?" Orlando Weekly, 24 April 2000. Evangelical publications also provide how-to instructions for organizing drive-thru pageants as outreach tools. For example, see Alysia Mathisen, "Drive-Through Passion Play Enables Church to Broaden its Easter Message," Baptist Press: News With a Christian Perspective, 10 April 2000. Based on limited evidence, it appears that Passion Plays increased in prominence since the 1980s. Evangelical congregations, from First Baptist Siler City to First Baptist Pensacola, Florida, have performed the crucifixion and resurrection dramas inside their congregations.

suggests, though, that Protestant Passion Play and Catholic Good Friday traditions have converged to some degree. For example, in 2005, the Chilhowee Baptist Association in Townsend, Tennessee, renewed the town’s outdoor Passion Play, which had stopped in 1992. In its promotional literature, potential audience members are told, “If you were entranced by Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, you will love this outdoor production of the greatest story ever told.”

In that film, Gibson, who is a Roman Catholic, blurs the ritual traditions of Passion Plays and Good Friday processions. It is not clear what genre he is using. And evangelical Protestants have consumed the film in various ways, as illustrated in the “Passion Play in the Smokies.” At the same time, Roman Catholics have incorporated elements of the Gibson film into their live performance of Good Friday processions. For example, in their 2006 Good Friday procession, Latino parishioners at St. Stephen Catholic Church in Sanford, North Carolina, included the temptress character performed in the Gibson film. That character, who wears a black cloak and shadows Jesus, is an invention of Gibson’s imagination. The inclusion of that character in the Good Friday procession at St. Stephen is clearly an example of religious innovation; but it is not clear what kind of innovation, whether Protestant or Catholic, or some combination of both.

In the ambiguity that surrounds the production and reception of the Gibson film, there appears to be a commingling of Protestant and Catholic traditions, one that suggests an expanding political market for religious consumers. As scholars have noted, evangelical Protestants and conservative Catholics have formed ecumenical alliances since the 1980s, finding common ground on social issues such as abortion and gay

---

While The Passion of the Christ is not explicitly political, the rhetoric and images of crucifixion portrayed are part of a common consumptive discourse that has pervaded evangelical Protestant churches in the last decade. I point to these cross-denominational alliances not so much to demonstrate theological or ecclesiastical commonalities. For sure, there are differences between and among Protestants and Catholics. Instead, I emphasize these alliances because I think that they point to a pervasive political economy of Christian sacrifice. As Robert Wuthnow has argued, since World War II, denominational identity has declined in significance as inter-denominational political alliances have increased in effectiveness. What I want to suggest here is that discourses of Christian sacrifice are a significant component of this political economy.

This might seem obvious: Protestants invoke a rhetoric of suffering and sacrifice in both their interpretations of and their actions in the world. After all, the redemptive power of western Christianity is predicated on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. But because Protestants have emphasized resurrection over crucifixion, it is often difficult to discern how they have used discourses of sacrifice for political ends. This is especially true of southern Protestants. With few exceptions, scholars have labeled evangelicals in the American South as “otherworldly,” concerned more about spiritual salvation in the next life than changing the material conditions of the present.  

345 Mark Noll, American Evangelical Christianity.


347 While I do think that religion is about the power of material production, I do not think that religious practices are “determined” by “modes of material production,” as stricter Marxian scholars might argue. In other words, I do not think that religion is an “ideological reflection” of divisions of labor. (This is why I start with Durkheim and not Marx.) As later twentieth century religious movements (see, for example, popular religion in Latin America) have demonstrated, religion can be a disruptive force. For a reworking
interpretation is very much warranted, based on sermons inside the congregation as well as evangelical reluctance to challenge social injustice outside the congregation, such as racial segregation in the twentieth century. The problem I find with these interpretations, though, is that in the American South, evangelical Protestants have been actively engaged in their communities; they have just not been engaged in the ways that liberal scholars would prefer.\textsuperscript{348} What appears a failure to challenge culture is actually a successful attempt to maintain a bounded cultural consensus.

The ritual production of consensus, though, is a violent act. By definition, it excludes other forms of ritual production. Somewhere between interpretations of civil religion and articulations of cultural captivity, scholars have lost sight of this fact. Consensus does not necessarily equal shared belief; rather, it implies a ritual hegemony.

\textsuperscript{348} By liberal scholars, I mean scholars that hold out hope for “good religion,” religion that is integrative in the most positive sense, religion that creates communities of tolerance and love. Liberal here refers to a faith in the goodness of humanity coupled with the assumption that education is a vehicle of moral formation. I consider myself a liberal scholar.
The Fourth of July parade in Siler City is one example of how southern white Protestants have used public ritual to produce cultural consensus. Again, consensus does not mean that every resident of Siler City shared the same image of America projected in those performances. Indeed, there is no single meaning performed or received in the parades. Rather, a particular group of white Protestants used the Fourth of July parades to contest competing ritual practices, such as the Good Friday procession. Using Rhys Isaac’s language, they used that nationalist rite to limit the “distribution and control of access” to the urban landscape of downtown streets. In this example, one can see that Protestants constructed a place that includes some and excludes others.

In order to account for cases like the Fourth of July parades in Siler City, scholars should be just as attentive to Protestant ritual productions as they are to textual sources. In other words, it is obvious that Catholics in Siler City have used ritual for political ends, as illustrated in the Holy Week pilgrimage stop in 2000. At times, though, it is less obvious how Protestants have used ritual for political ends. But turning to a more Catholic model of American religious history, such as the one advocated by Jon Butler, one can more clearly see how Protestants used public ritual to construct place. In the Fourth of July parade, what appears to be a nationalist and integrative rite proved an effective strategy of regional resistance, a resistance in the name of religious order. Functionally, that civic rite was similar to the religious rites of baptism and communion. It included bodily performances of Christian sacrifice that incorporated residents into moral communities. In Siler City, those communities were rooted in the religious history of the American South.
In the early twenty-first century, similar southern discourses have been distributed beyond the region. Take for example, the 2007 Chevy commercial, “This is Our Country.” When first released, the ad featured a montage of natural disasters and cultural tragedies, from post-Katrina New Orleans to post-9/11 New York City. But those images proved too troublesome and were replaced by clips of cowboys on the open range. In its many versions, however, the Chevy commercial is accompanied by John Mellencamp’s lyrics, which include the verse, “from the east coast to the west coast, down the Dixie highway back home, this is our country.” In these projections, an auto company is staking claim to what it means to be American, linking their product to that identity, and joining both to a genealogy of sacrifice and suffering that runs through the South. In these projections, an auto company is staking claim to what it means to be American, linking their product to that identity, and joining both to a genealogy of sacrifice and suffering that runs through the South.\(^\text{349}\)

Much like the incorporation of Siler City, the “Dixie Highway,” built in the early twentieth century, connected the heart of the South to the rest of the country.

The Chevy commercial is just one of many examples that link the production and consumption of trucks and SUVs to a political economy of Christian sacrifice, one that assumes that redemptive sacrifice is necessary for the preservation of the nation-state.\(^\text{350}\)

\(^{349}\) I also find it interesting that the drive-thru Easter pageant incorporates automobiles into its ritual performance of Christian sacrifice.

\(^{350}\) Other examples include Ford commercials featuring Toby Keith, the country singer known for brash lyrics describing American response to terrorists and evil doers, such as “we’ll stick a boot in your ass.” Toby Keith has also teamed with Willie Nelson to produce a song about cowboys who take justice into their own hands. In one of the verses, Nelson suggests that those who want to preserve justice should “take all the rope in Texas, find a tall oak tree, round up all the bad boys, and hang ‘em out in the streets, for all the people to see.” Keith then responds in another verse that such actions “will settle them down.” At the least, this song promotes institutional violence. Those on the side of the law have the right to use the death penalty to secure the safety of a nation. And the promotion of such death as public hanging comes very close to a justification of lynching. It is assumed that the good guys know who the bad guys are and that these good guys are compelled by their duty to round up all the bad guys and hang them out in the streets. There is a confidence in institutional justice – to use the “long arm of the law to put a few more in ground,” as Keith puts it – that needs little if any evidence of wrong doing. If we know who the bad guys are, then we know who the bad guys are. In the twentieth century, white Protestants used that same tautology of guilt to justify lynching black men in the American South. It was assumed that black men were sexually deviant and even if there was no evidence of a sexual violation, the public hanging of black bodies by white men was justified by this ever present guilt. The United States government also used a similar logic to
But other Christians have contested those imagined national boundaries. Latino Catholics and progressive Christians also have used rhetoric of sacrifice and suffering to stake claim to American identity. For example, in the April 10 Rally – part of a national day of protest – that took place in front of City Hall in Siler City in 2006, white protestors displayed symbols similar to those used at the Holy Week pilgrimage of 2000, as well as it predecessor movements of the 1980s, such as Witness for Peace. And Latino protestors, many of them Siler City residents, displayed the American flag alongside visual representations of Latino suffering and sacrifice. For example, two protestors carried a painting on canvas that portrayed workers in a Mexican field on one side and an American field on the other, distinguished by their respective national banners. The split image of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Statue of Liberty stood in between and white crosses, signifying the sacrifice of migrant workers, marked the American flag (Figure 15). Thousands of Latino protestors also carried American flags and many chanted, “We Love America!” In addition, Latino protestors carried signs in both Spanish and English with messages pertaining to relevant issues, such as “DMV: License for All,” a reference to the policy changes regarding migrant status and driver’s license. Other messages invoked a higher law, such as the sign that read “We Are Not Alone, Our Lawyer is Jesus Christ.” And although the only African American I noticed that day was a local minister, the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. was invoked by a variety of speakers, including a white woman who sang Woody Guthrie’s “This Land is Your Land” in Spanish.

When Latino Catholics and progressive Protestants appealed to rhetoric of sacrifice and suffering in the April 10 rally, it is clear that they were making a political
statement. But when American evangelicals consume images of sacrifice and suffering in the early twenty-first century, whether in the Mel Gibson film or the Chevy commercial, are they also making a political statement, one akin to that made by white Protestants in Siler City Fourth of July parades? Are they singing “this Land is our Land – and not your land,” a political inverse of Guthrie’s refrain? Although it less clear, I tend to think that many of those self-identified evangelicals are singing that political refrain.351 If so, then the history of Siler City may help scholars interpret the pervasive economies of political sacrifice in the United States. Across the twentieth century, white Protestants in that southern town used the miracle of modern industry and the sacramental rite of Fourth of July parades to take place and make it their own.352

351 Historically locating evangelicals is a difficult task. Although evangelicals often share common beliefs, such as a theological divide between secular and sacred sources (between science and revelation), revivalism, and a missionary zeal rooted in the Great Commission, characteristics that perhaps distinguish them from liberal Protestants, their religious practices and political persuasions are diverse. So diverse in fact that I would argue that interpretations, such as those by Mark Noll and others, that assume a historical continuity between American evangelicals today and those converted in the eighteenth and nineteenth century revivals of the Great Awakenings are historical fictions, a phrase historian Jon Butler has used to describe the Awakenings themselves. Converts at those revivals were all Protestants. And there are similarities among them. But any attempt to speak of evangelicals in the theological “we” defies the social sources of those diverse religious movements, from abolition to prohibition. This is why, as I have noted earlier, that I much prefer the historical interpretations of Donald Mathews and Paul Johnson, who argued that those revivals organized individuals and families into class movements. So when I speak of self-identified evangelicals, I do not imply necessary historical continuities. Rather, I suggest that calling oneself an evangelical in the twenty-first century is a political statement. It is a contested identity that often is used strategically by upwardly-mobile American Protestants. On historical continuities, see Mark Noll, American Evangelical Christianity: An Introduction (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2001). On self-identification, see Christian Smith, American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). On the diversity of evangelicals in the United States, see also Christian Smith, Christian America?: What Evangelicals Really Want (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

352 My description of ritual action as an event that “takes place” is a direct reference to the work of J. Z. Smith on ritual and place. From Smith, I take away the importance of constructed ritual environments and the idea that “human beings are not placed, they bring place into being.” Jonathan Z. Smith, To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 28. My understanding of ritual action, landscape, and performance, is also informed by anthropological interpretations of structure and ritual, particular studies influenced by the work of Clifford Geertz, such as Rhys Isaac’s interpretation of Baptists in colonial Virginia. Drawing on critiques of structuralism, however, I try to avoid the universalizing tendencies of these latter approaches. No matter the force of particularity, the variances of the local are consumed by the totality of “culture” in Geertzian anthropological approaches. This interpretive process of connecting the particular and the whole is reflected in the title of Geertz’s
ethnography of local Islamic practices, “Islam Observed,” and also in his descriptions of the ritual actions of a Balinese cockfight as representative of all community members. Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971); Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 412-453. Building on Geertz, Isaac tries to avoid the problem of taking the particular as representative of a society; however, he still incorporates the local, via ritual action, into an “encompassing” cultural system. For example, Issac suggests that “concepts for social analysis of encounters are the appropriate first steps in a methodology for the ethnographic history of the everyday world, but parts must not be mistaken for the whole. We must ask how the encompassing social system may be viewed in an action perspective.” Rhys Isaac, “A Discourse on the Method: Action, Structure, and Meaning,” *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1982), 350. So even though I reference aspects of Isaac’s wonderful ethnographic history, I want to make clear that I differ on key points, especially on the idea that there is a seamless relationship between “culture” and “the encompassing social system.” In my rereading of this ethnographic tradition, I have been influenced by the writings of Michel Foucault, which have emphasized comparative difference, rather than similarity or homogeneity, those qualities of “form” often expressed as cultural consensus. See, for instance, Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972). For a critique of Geertz, see Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 27-54.
### TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Less than High School</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Some College</th>
<th>College Graduate</th>
<th>Post Graduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FUMC-Siler City</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Average</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Average Annual Household Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FUMC-Siler City</td>
<td>$63,929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>$51,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Average</td>
<td>$64,338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
FIGURES

Figure 1: Robert E. Lee Hall, Blue Ridge YMCA (Date unknown)

Figure 2: W.P.A. Mural in Siler City Post Office (Photo taken 2006)
Figure 3: Chatham Avenue – Downtown Siler City, circa 1906

Figure 4: July 4, 1864

Figure 5: July 4, 1901
Figure 6: Fourth of July – Downtown Siler City, circa 1910

Figure 7: Blackface Halloween Costumes in 1954 Siler City
High School Annual
Figure 8: Emerson-Marsh Fourth of July 2006

Figure 9 – Fourth of July Fan, Emerson-Marsh Fourth of July 2006
Figure 10: Pig-pickin’ Station, Emerson-Marsh Fourth of July 2006

Figure 11: Dessert Tent, Emerson-Marsh Fourth of July 2006

Figure: 12 Good Friday Procession, St. Julia Catholic Church, 2006
Figure 13: The Chatham News, 7 July 1988

Figure 14: Mural Dedication at Farmer’s Alliance Store, August 2006
Figure 15: April 10 Rally Downtown Siler City, 2006
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

“George D. Heaton Collection,” Auburn University, Auburn, AL.

“Kathryn B. Rees Collection,” Wren Memorial Library, Siler City, N.C.

“Southern Historical Collection,” University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

PERIODICALS

News and Observer
News and Record
Chatham Record
Chatham News
Siler City Grit
Pittsboro Weekly
Raleigh Christian Advocate

BOOKS AND ARTICLES


———, *The Irony of Southern Religion* (New York: P. Lang, 1994).


———, *Dead Cities: And Other Tales* (New Press, 2003).


———, *Religion across Borders: Transnational Immigration Networks* (Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press, 2002).


Geertz, Clifford, “Religion as a Cultural System,” in Interpretation of Cultures: Basic Books, 1973),


———, Freedom's Coming: Religion Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2005).


Massey, Doreen, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).


Mathews, Mary Beth Swetnam, *Rethinking Zion: How the Print Media Placed Fundamentalism in the South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006).


McDonogh, Gary W., “Constructing Christian Hatred: Anti-Catholicism, Diversity, and Identity in Southern Religious Life,” in *Religion in the Contemporary South:*


Montgomery, William E., Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African-American Church in the South, 1865-1900 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993).


Niebuhr, H. Richard, Social Sources of Denominationalism (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1987, 1929).


Norman, Corrie E. and Don S. Armentrout ed. Religion in the Contemporary South (University of Tennessee Press, 2002).


———, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (New York, 1957).


———, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).


———, “Our Lady of Guadeloupe Visits the Confederate Memorial,” *Southern Cultures* (Summer 2002): 72-93.


