



A Singletree: The Lynching of Charles Hurd

Wartburg, Tennessee 1895

Teacher's Guide

Summary: November 1895 in Morgan County, Tennessee, a disagreement between a boss, James Kelley, and a worker would ultimately lead to the murder of both. After a 10 day man hunt in the mountains, the accused, Charles Hurd, would be abducted from the jail and killed at the hands of a lynch mob in Wartburg.

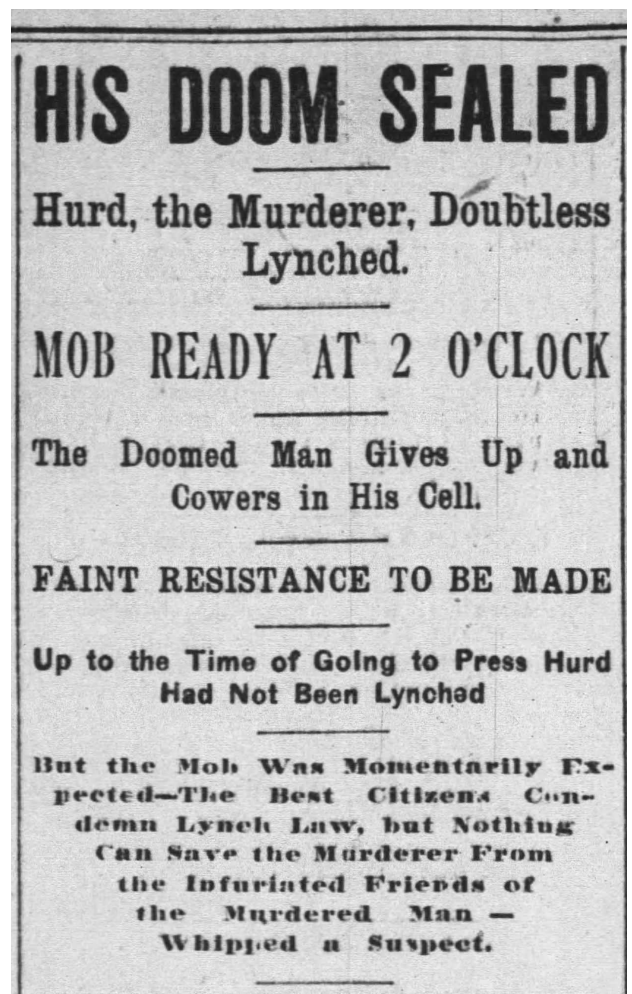
Teacher's Note: This film portrays a painful story in Appalachian history. It offers teachers a unique opportunity to bring a local and regional example of life in the post-Reconstruction South. Through discussion of the lynching of Charles Hurd, students can draw connection to the larger themes of race injustice during the period and the legacy of that injustice in shaping our communities today.

This film contains descriptions of lynchings. Teachers are strongly encouraged to preview the film and related materials before using them in the classroom.

Discussion Questions

Use the questions below to lead a class discussion after viewing the film.

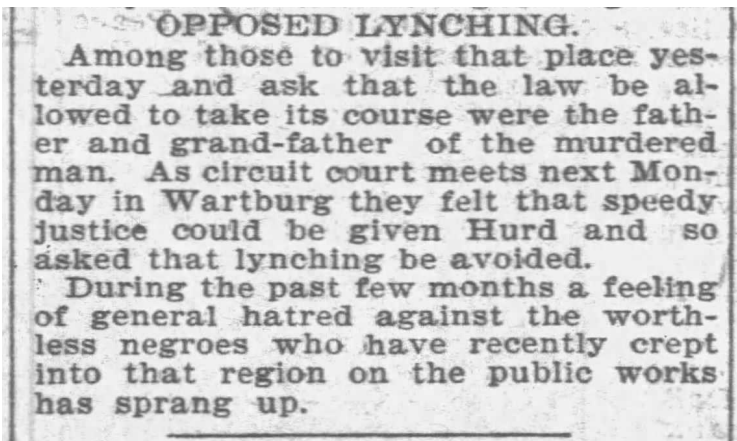
1. Describe the geography, economy and demographic make-up of Wartburg.
2. How did the railroad change the area?
3. How was Charles Hurd described? What do you think was meant by this language?
4. Who was Joseph Kelley?
5. What was the status of the Kelley family?
6. What was the reaction to Kelley's death? How did the family's status impact the response to Joseph's death?
7. Why do you think Jeff Watkins try to mislead the posse?
8. What did Charles Hurd do to try to hide from the posse?
9. What caused Hurd to be caught?
10. Who was Jim Hinch? What happened to him?
11. How was the mob described?
12. Why do you think Hurd's body was left hanging?
13. How do you think Hurd's lynching impacted racial relations in the area?



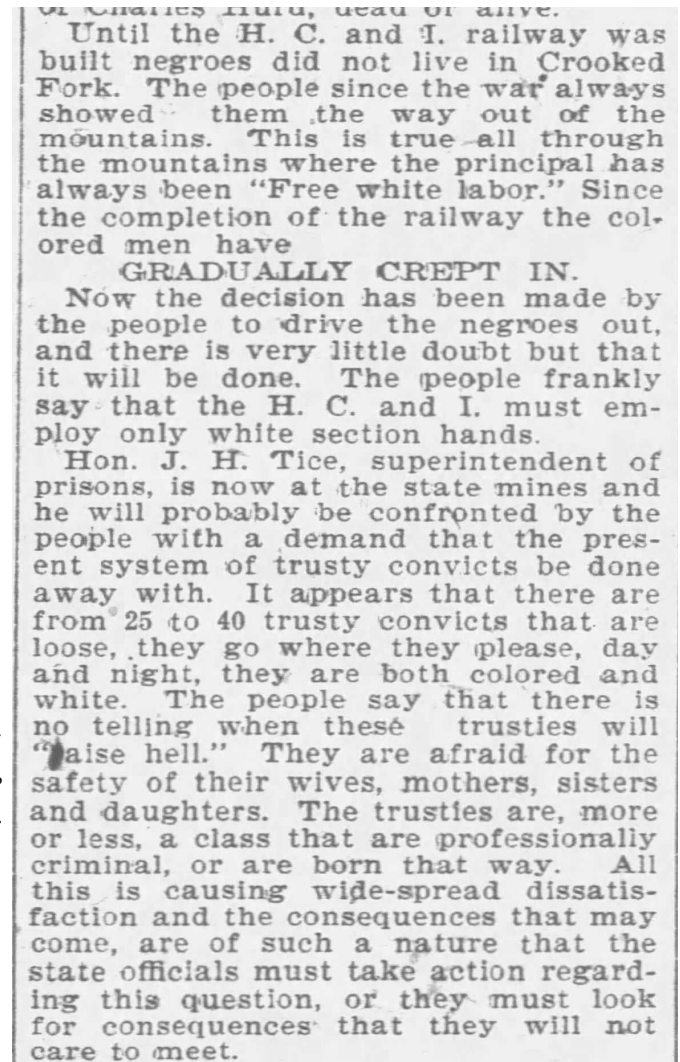
Chattanooga Daily News, Nov. 21 1895

Classroom Extensions

- One of the drivers of lynchings throughout this period is economic competition between whites and blacks. Ask students to read the two excerpts below. How were the changes brought to the area by the railroad and new economic opportunities impacting racial relations? How did the convict lease labor system further escalate the tensions in the area? You may wish to have students research the [Coal Creek Wars](#) to understand the broader context for economic anxieties and how it impacted racial relations. You may also wish to look at other videos in this series that explore stories of racial expulsions.



Knoxville Tribune. November 22, 1895.



Knoxville Tribune.
November 18,
1895.

Additional Educational Resources

- Lesson Plan: [Domestic Terror: Understanding Lynching During the Jim Crow Era](#) from PBS
- Curriculum Unit: [Teaching the Legacy of Lynching in the United States](#) from the Equal Justice Initiative
- Lesson: [Due Process Ignored: Lynching and American Culture](#) from Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
- Primary Source Set: [The New South](#) from Teaching with Primary Sources-MTSU
- Newsletter: [The New South](#) from Teaching with Primary Sources-MTSU