*Remembering the Colfax Massacre: Race, Sex, and the Meanings of Reconstruction Violence*

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The Colfax Massacre—dubbed a “riot” by the victors—left 3 white and at least 63 black men dead on Easter Sunday 1873, making it one of Reconstruction’s bloodiest racial confrontations.[[1]](#endnote-1) A disaster for southern Republicans, it showed that Louisiana’s Republican government could not defend its supporters from white paramilitaries. Spilling over from the state’s remarkably fraudulent 1872 elections, both Republican and Fusionist candidates had claimed parish offices at Colfax, in Grant Parish, a local jurisdiction with a slight black majority created by state Republicans in 1869.[[2]](#endnote-2) In late March 1873, Republican office claimants, most of whom were white, occupied the parish courthouse under the protection of black militiamen. Amid rumours of black criminality and sexual threats against white women, white men from Grant and surrounding parishes quickly organized to expel the Republicans. As tensions rose, the African Americans, facing assault from white paramilitaries, started digging defences around the courthouse. On April 13, after all the white Republicans had fled, the Fusionist sheriff claimant Christopher Columbus Nash led an attack on the building. With the help of a steamboat cannon, the white paramilitaries burned the courthouse, forcing the black militiamen to surrender. They then murdered most of the prisoners. The ensuing trial of white paramilitaries ended with the Supreme Court’s 1876 *Cruikshank* decision that gutted the federal government’s ability to prosecute terrorist violence.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Seeking to justify violence on a scale that had troubled even conservative Louisianans, local white elites argued that Republican Governor William Pitt Kellogg had caused the confrontation, and embraced a series of implausible claims about black deviance; initially, these ranged from allegations of interracial sexual threats, robberies, and coffin desecration in the days before the battle, to contending that African Americans fired under a flag of truce.[[4]](#endnote-4) Most brazenly, they later linked the massacre to an alleged October 1873 black-on-white rape that occurred when a biracial state militia sought to arrest white Colfax paramilitaries. By the mid-1870s, some white Louisianans contended that one or more black-on-white rapes had *preceded* the April 1873 battle, a tendency that became more pronounced in subsequent decades even among the paramilitaries themselves.

“Imaginative errors,” as oral historian Alessandro Portelli contended, are themselves useful to historians, as they provide “the shared subjective dreams, desires, and myths of the narrators.”[[5]](#endnote-5) Psychological research has also demonstrated individuals’ susceptibility to false memory formation, especially when the new memory reinforced their prior beliefs.[[6]](#endnote-6) The errors Colfax paramilitaries and their supporters embraced, such as the recurring motif that African Americans had fired during a truce, mirrored the struggle other narrators faced in rationalizing even seemingly “just” violence. Similarly, narratives of Italian anti-fascist fighting in the 1940s presented partisan violence as a defensive response to attempted fascist attacks.[[7]](#endnote-7) Moreover, though self-serving – and initially clearly false – for white central Louisianans in the 1870s and later an alleged black-on-white rape was a far more plausible, justifiable, and seemingly proportionate cause for a white-led massacre than a disputed election, white paranoia about militarized black citizenship, or rumored black sexual threats against white women.[[8]](#endnote-8)

 White responses to black men’s sexual contact with white women, real and imagined, were never uniformly violent, but white conservatives deemed supposedly bestial black behavior sufficiently persuasive in the 1870s to use it, together with supposed state-level Republican misrule and alleged black criminality and dishonor, to excuse white paramilitary mass violence to a national audience.[[9]](#endnote-9) Reconstruction-era Klan apologists used nebulous claims of black sexual impropriety and other misconduct to justify widespread vigilante violence; with Colfax, white conservatives used similar rationales to defend a mass killing.[[10]](#endnote-10) Although scholars have debated the key moment for the emergence of a black rapist myth that demonized black men and disempowered white women, the Colfax case suggests that a locally-focused approach is fruitful. Locality mattered. Significant shifts occurred across the South in the 1880s and 1890s, but catalyzed by political competition, the intellectual work of creating a black rapist myth was largely complete in central Louisiana by the 1870s.[[11]](#endnote-11)

Hegemonic massacre memories, and Reconstruction memories more generally, shifted to meet contemporary demands.[[12]](#endnote-12) In the 1890s, the main stress was on elite white nationwide unity to protect white womanhood and good (Democratic) government. By the 1920s and 1930s, with Jim Crow facing greater internal and external threats, and white concerns about interracial sex surfacing often, white supremacist Reconstruction memories became more starkly racialized, sexualized, and sectional.[[13]](#endnote-13) Though white southern Republicans had been embroiled in a factional dispute in Grant Parish with more radical white and black party members before 1873, and key white massacre protagonists – including the Fusionist sheriff claimant Nash – had previously aligned with the Republican Party, southern white Republicans were largely forgotten in post-World War I Colfax Massacre narratives. Instead, white northerners assumed greater prominence.[[14]](#endnote-14) While many white southerners connected the Civil War and Reconstruction in their memories by that time, memories of Reconstruction itself subtly shifted as well.[[15]](#endnote-15) Nationally the dominant strain of Civil War memory remained reconciliationist, but Reconstruction memory – a key component of the Lost Cause – continued to sustain white southern sectional antagonism.[[16]](#endnote-16) Memories of the massacre and Reconstruction were increasingly tenuous by the 1950s, but the celebratory white supremacist interpretation’s outlines proved durable. By the twenty-first century, however, African Americans and more liberal white activists offered public challenges to the white supremacist-influenced story.

Following the April 1873 massacre, competing accounts soon emerged. Alongside implausibly asserting that black courthouse defenders had shot the white paramilitaries James W. Hadnot and Sidney Harris while purporting to surrender, conservative white recollections revealed longstanding anxieties about political and sexual submission.[[17]](#endnote-17) In a recurring allegation, George Stafford, one of the white paramilitary captains, claimed in May 1873 that “the negroes at Colfax shouted daily across the river to our people that they intended killing every white man and boy, keeping only the young women to raise from them a new breed.”[[18]](#endnote-18) Stafford’s claim of black sexual threats closely mirrored earlier allegations during feared slave insurrections, and could have come from antebellum or colonial times.[[19]](#endnote-19) There had been an alleged Rapides Parish slave insurrection plot in 1837 where, according to a contemporary newspaper report, “the negroes were forming plans to kill all the white males and to spare the females and children.” White central Louisianans were, then, likely primed to respond violently to characterizations of black political and military power as sexualized insurrection scares.[[20]](#endnote-20)

Recognizing their potential potency, the New Orleans *Republican* described these sexual rumours as “wicked, absurd and entirely unfounded,” simply “an invention of the Fusionists to bring in reinforcements” from surrounding parishes.[[21]](#endnote-21) Sexual metaphors had become a white conservative journalistic staple during Reconstruction, as following emancipation and the prospect of black political power, white conservatives increasingly portrayed political disputes through a sexual lens. Such an approach meshed with the elite white goal of restricting political participation to those capable of “virtuous manhood” – those who owned property, and successfully governed their households, and their own emotions.[[22]](#endnote-22) By focusing on black males’ economic dependency, and their alleged inability to control criminal or sexual urges, white conservatives presented them as unsuitable for wielding public power.[[23]](#endnote-23) In central Louisiana, correspondence pieces for the *Louisiana Democrat* newspaper, published in Alexandria, detailed metaphorical and literal rape allegations in the late 1860s from New Orleans and Washington, D.C. stemming from black political power.[[24]](#endnote-24)

In April 1873, the *Louisiana Democrat* stressed Governor Kellogg’s culpability, James Hadnot’s “murder,” and the “persecutions, robberies, and infamies” by African Americans in Colfax.[[25]](#endnote-25) Alongside alleging earlier black male sexual designs on white women, it published a Mobile *Register* piece on “white women… living openly and unblushingly with negro men… of the lowest and dirtiest type.”[[26]](#endnote-26) Before and after the massacre, the *Democrat* focused particular attention on lurid purported black misdeeds against Judge William R. Rutland. Rutland was a conservative white Republican who had left Colfax in April 1873. The newspaper issue immediately preceding the massacre claimed that blacks were committing “base and inhuman outrages” in Colfax, and that an African American crowd “searched and ransacked [Rutland’s] house, destroyed the furniture, and broke open a coffin containing the remains of a child of the Judge’s and threw its dead body into the road!” The alleged coffin desecration, denied by Republicans, formed a key part of subsequent white massacre justifications.[[27]](#endnote-27)

State Republican impotence and U.S. military unwillingness to intervene ensured that no white paramilitaries were arrested until late October—a full six months after the massacre. Then, a U.S. deputy marshal led the Metropolitan Police, a biracial state militia, from New Orleans to the Red River Valley to arrest assailants on federal charges.[[28]](#endnote-28) At this point, white locals claimed a black-on-white rape occurred. The alleged victims were Coralie Lacour and perhaps her mother Mary Cora Lacour as well, members of a respectable white family. Even at this stage, accounts disagreed whether both women had been raped, or if the younger Lacour had been raped in front of her mother. With Coralie Lacour’s grandfather, Malafret Layssard, implying that the black rapist was a soldier, a public meeting in neighboring Rapides Parish denounced the alleged attack either “by members of the… Metropolitan Police, or by negroes who are emboldened to commit acts of violence by the presence of that Police.”[[29]](#endnote-29)

Available sources prevent certainty over the allegation’s validity, though circumstantial evidence invites skepticism.[[30]](#endnote-30) Writing from Pineville, Lieutenant George Towle considered the reports of multiple rapes “false and exaggerated, only one woman having been abused, and a colored man the crimnal [*sic*].”[[31]](#endnote-31) The alleged rapist, Hampton Henderson, had been arrested on the charge of murdering a freedwoman in 1867, but the case was dismissed for lack of evidence.[[32]](#endnote-32) For its part, the New Orleans *Republican* claimed Henderson was “an open and avowed Democrat” friendly with several white massacre participants, who had taken the opportunity to assault a woman whose family members were Republicans.[[33]](#endnote-33) T. Montfort Wells, one of these Republican extended family members, wrote a letter to the *Louisiana Democrat* denouncing rumors that he had orchestrated the alleged attack “for political purposes.” Though he acknowledged that the Metropolitan Police played no role in the incident, Wells contended that “their presence instigated the negroes to commit the deed,” and “it was a concocted plot within the Parish to destroy the white families in ward No. 1.”[[34]](#endnote-34)

Yet doubts remain. First, Malafret Layssard’s account misdated the alleged attack by a week.[[35]](#endnote-35) Meanwhile, white Republicans, like Wells or the Rapides *Gazette* editor Tilghman G. Compton, were not immune to paranoia over militarized black men: Compton had urged General Winfield Scott Hancock to send cavalry to break up African Americans from military-style drilling in St. Landry Parish in December 1867 “for the sake of humanity.” Like the white conservatives, Compton denounced the presence of the Metropolitan Police in the Red River region, and he may even have endorsed the white Colfax paramilitaries’ behavior by 1874.[[36]](#endnote-36) Additionally, in an act joining together the parish’s old and new economic and political elite, Coralie Lacour, the alleged victim, married Charles Henry Teal, a Texas-born businessman in 1875. Given the elite social disapproval facing white women who had premarital sex, even non-consensually, it seems unlikely that Teal would have married a rape victim. One possible explanation, plausible given Lacour’s social status and apparent beauty, is that the affair was exaggerated (if not wholly falsified) to fulfil local white fears of black disorder as the Metropolitan Police came to Grant Parish.[[37]](#endnote-37)

In the ensuing trials of white paramilitaries in 1874 and in the White League press, conservatives capitalized on the alleged rape to excuse the massacre.[[38]](#endnote-38) In a March 1874 trial hearing, defence attorney E. John Ellis questioned whether the black participants were as innocent as the prosecution claimed, referencing “the horrors that followed the invasion of the Metropolitan Police…. Has not a young girl been raped by black bandits?”[[39]](#endnote-39) White supremacist newspapers, led by the newly-founded *Caucasian*, published in Alexandria, and co-edited by Stafford, recounted lurid tales of black sexual misconduct and theft before the massacre.[[40]](#endnote-40) Its first issue even claimed that a “constant companion” of the black militia leader Ward had “formed a ‘conspiracy’ with seven others... and perpetrated that horrible outrage an [*sic*] the person of Mrs. Lacour and her daughter.”[[41]](#endnote-41)

The *Louisiana Democrat* made an even bolder reinterpretation in April 1874. In an account that strained credulity, not least concerning the extent of the killing, the editor claimed:

Through [the Radicals’] machinations the ignorant negroes were secretly invited to acts of atrocity that culminated in the frightful crime committed upon the person of a young, beautiful and innocent girl of Grant Parish, a crime promptly avenged by the slaughter of the demons who perpetrated it. Afterwards came the bold and audacious attempt to seize the public offices and records of that Parish, the consummation of which was prevented only by the prompt appearance of the Sheriff with a posse summoned by himself officially, who routed the rioters and killed a few of the ringleaders.[[42]](#endnote-42)

Though not all local white accounts argued that black-on-white rape *preceded* the massacre, the column stressed themes that other conservatives used to excuse the Colfax violence, and which became prominent in the late nineteenth-century racialization of rape. These were, first, the demonization of black perpetrators and their conflation with the black male population at large; and second, the “girling of rape,” which heightened the sense of white female innocence and powerlessness.[[43]](#endnote-43) Coralie Lacour, the “girl” described in multiple accounts from 1874 (she was a “lady” in the 1873 reports) was 17 years old at the time of the alleged attack.[[44]](#endnote-44) She was younger than the mean white southern marriage age, though not by much.[[45]](#endnote-45)

In April 1874, the Committee of Seventy, a New Orleans-based conservative group, chaired by Robert H. Marr, the lead defense attorney for the Colfax paramilitaries, published a pamphlet on the “History of the Riot at Colfax.”[[46]](#endnote-46) Connecting the story to a broader critique of the Republican state government, the pamphlet contended that Governor Kellogg and William Ward's black militia members who helped Republicans seize local offices in March 1873 were the real culprits.[[47]](#endnote-47) With Kellogg's own government “maintained by force of Federal power” despite having lost the election, he “had learned that bayonets were stronger than popular will,” and despite having promised a commission to Nash, granted commissions to Republican office claimants “in absolute defiance of popular will.” The pamphlet noted, correctly, that Ward had been discharged from the state militia in December 1871. It then argued that his militia had “by intimation of Kellogg” sought to seize the parish offices, and further claimed that it had committed crimes including “arson, murder, burglary, and rape and treason.”[[48]](#endnote-48) But no such rape allegations reached the conservative press in the years before the massacre. The pamphlet also alleged that Eli H. Flowers, a local black Republican, robbed Judge Rutland’s house and “broke open” and tossed outside the coffin holding Rutland’s dead child. African Americans robbed Madame Lacour’s house, too. Lest readers forget, she was “the mother of the young and fair girl who, a few months after the riot, was brutally violated, in the presence of her mother, by five negro men.”[[49]](#endnote-49) Although the Committee of Seventy pamphlet likely drew upon the *Caucasian*’s writings to imply that Ward's militia had committed rape before the massacre, the two accounts disagreed over both the number of assailants and female victims.[[50]](#endnote-50)

In congressional testimony in February 1875, Robert Hunter, by then the *Caucasian*’ssole editor, linked black threats against white residents, and black militia crimes before the Colfax Massacre, to the alleged rape of the Lacour women and the lynching of the perpetrators. When pushed on the rape’s timing, Hunter placed it in May 1873, one month after the massacre (the supposed incident, in fact, took place in October). He also claimed that the younger Lacour was “crazy from the effects of it,” unlikely since she married Charles Teal the same year. Hunter moved directly from the Lacour incident to allegations that black locals threatened “to murder all the men and take all the women for their wives.”[[51]](#endnote-51) In his telling, the massacre and the Lacour rape were part of the same story. Other witnesses who did not fight at Colfax further endorsed the notion that the white paramilitaries had fought to protect their wives and children.[[52]](#endnote-52)

These allegations of uncontrolled black sexuality and criminality made the massacre more justifiable to a wider conservative audience. They also reinforced the broader conservative argument that to end corrupt and inefficient government in the South, the best men should rule. One of the eventual congressional reports, authored by Illinois Democrat Samuel Marshall, quoted the Committee of Seventy pamphlet at length to justify the “unfortunate riot.”[[53]](#endnote-53) He also referenced Marr’s testimony to raise the spectres of slave revolt, and mass black-on-white rape and murder.[[54]](#endnote-54)

From 1874, northern newspapers proved more willing to accept the conservative rationale for the massacre as well. In an October 1874 New York *Times* article, a correspondent visiting Louisiana excused white violence as stemming from Republican misrule, and contended that “when [the negro] thinks he has the upper hand, he displays it by burning cotton-gins and outraging white women. And this was what happened while the blacks were holding Colfax Court-house.”[[55]](#endnote-55) The St. Louis *Republican*, which had since turned against military support of southern Republicans, published a correspondence piece in February 1875 offering “the truth about the Colfax Butcheries.” It claimed that William Ward, “a notorious Ethiopian,” had “instigated the poor blacks to attack, pillage and sack [Colfax]… and that it resulted in the killing of scores of negroes.”[[56]](#endnote-56) In May 1875, the New York *Sun* embraced the Louisiana conservative rationale for Colfax wholeheartedly in an article on William Smith Calhoun, the leading white Republican in Grant Parish. “Ostracised by respectable white families on account of his personal vices,” Calhoun embraced black companionship, and found “opportunity for revenge” during Reconstruction. Then, “under his protection the worst negroes in his parish opened war upon the white residents of the region, drove some of them from their homes, and were guilty of outrages too terrible to name.”[[57]](#endnote-57) In 1876, the New York *Herald* reported that Ward and Flowers, by then supporting the Democratic candidate for governor, argued that in a bid for northern sympathy Kellogg and Republican gubernatorial nominee Stephen B. Packard “were urged to prevent it [the Colfax Massacre], and refused.” Several later accounts incorporated this claim.[[58]](#endnote-58)

By the late 1870s, Louisianan newspaper reports of lynchings illuminated hardening white attitudes toward alleged interracial liaisons.[[59]](#endnote-59) In 1875, the Opelousas *Courier* noted approvingly that after the attempted rape and murder of a white woman, her neighbors arrested and hung a freedman, even though “the [alleged] murderer refused to make a full confession.”[[60]](#endnote-60) Later that month, the *Courier*’s French language edition reported a black man’s removal from prison and lynching near Raleigh, Tennessee, following an alleged rape attempt on a white widow.[[61]](#endnote-61) Likewise, the local coverage of an October 1880 lynching in Rapides Parish exhibited key features of the developing black rapist myth. In that case, white mob members from Grant and Rapides Parishes lynched Champe Rendon, an educated mulatto rumored to have “committed assaults upon young white ladies at other times within the recent past; but the public were never permitted to obtain the evidence in such form that they could apply the remedy.”[[62]](#endnote-62) The lynchers contended, with scant evidence, that Rendon had raped and murdered his twelve year-old white half-sister Frances. In its issue publicizing the lynching, the Louisiana *Democrat* emphasized Frances’s helplessness and sexual purity.[[63]](#endnote-63)

In the years after Reconstruction, with local elites fearing that Grant Parish retained a bad reputation for race relations, local white accounts moved from excusing the Colfax Massacre to celebrating it. Under a self-professed independent editor, the Colfax *Chronicle* published a letter in 1876 bemoaning the “unenviable reputation, from which we are now, Phoenix-like, just emerging,” before detailing the parish’s prosperous and peaceful future.[[64]](#endnote-64) Under new ownership by 1878, the Democratic editor Howard Goodwyn contended that “the time for old enmities has gone” and urged a “kindly feeling,” though the context was telling. The article called for moving scores of corpses buried in a shallow trench near the parish courthouse.[[65]](#endnote-65) Such macabre reminders of social disorder, periodically exhumed in Colfax, were probably bad for business, too.[[66]](#endnote-66) This boosterism continued into the 1880s, with a repackaging of the massacre as “that struggle between the elements of disorder and the law of nature.” “For its baptism in blood and its consercation [*sic*] by fire,” claimed a Rapides Parish correspondent in 1881, “we owe thanks to this youngest of our towns.”[[67]](#endnote-67)

The *Chronicle* periodically responded to unflattering accounts of the town’s violent past, most significantly in June 1882. Then, Goodwyn printed a cover story on the massacre to “[correct] a misstatement of facts” from a New Orleans *Mascot* article. This became the official local massacre account, and was reprinted in the *Chronicle* in 1912 and 1914, and in the Alexandria *Town Talk* and Opelousas *Clarion-Progress* in 1921 and 1922 respectively.[[68]](#endnote-68) Borrowing from the Committee of Seventy’s 1874 history, this 1882 account further remade the massacre’s chronology. Following the disputed election, “a mob of negroes” took control of Colfax, with a great number of African Americans assembling there by April 1, 1873. They threatened to “kill all the white men and take the women and raise up a new people,” robbed indiscriminately, ransacked Judge Rutland’s house, and tossed out the contents of the coffin containing his dead child. Beyond these deeds, “the catalogue of crimes” this mob committed included “robbery, rape, and murder.”[[69]](#endnote-69) The paper gave no examples.

In Grant Parish, an area with a small white majority, and a sizeable population of disaffected white small farmers, the massacre’s public memory, and white supremacy more generally, propped up the existing political structure.[[70]](#endnote-70) This massacre usage mirrored late nineteenth-century Lost Cause memory’s stress on social order, in part a response to social tensions in the rapidly-changing post-Reconstruction South.[[71]](#endnote-71) As a hotspot of Louisiana Populism, white class tensions around Grant Parish made appeals for white political unity all the more important. In March 1888, a Democratic pamphlet reminded voters that “the memory of Easter Sunday 1873 is too fresh in the minds of the people of the parish of Grant for them to rivet anew the shackles they that day struck off.”[[72]](#endnote-72) Similar invocations urged party-line voting into the 1890s.[[73]](#endnote-73)

Although white southern apologists with a national mission downplayed Reconstruction-era violence by the 1890s, the Colfax Massacre held a key place in Lost Cause celebrations in Grant Parish.[[74]](#endnote-74) The parish’s post-war creation likely explains this focus on Reconstruction violence rather than wartime service. When not travelling further afield for post-war reunions, local Confederate veterans typically went to nearby Montgomery (Winn Parish), Natchitoches, and Alexandria.[[75]](#endnote-75) Locally, then, “the War of Reconstruction in Grant Parish,” as Colfax veteran Dr. Milton Dunn put it in his 1922 tribute to Nash, offered a more useful Lost Cause past.[[76]](#endnote-76)

Kate K. Grant, a politically-connected white woman and aspiring writer, completed a history of the massacre in novel form by July 1891. A range of white notables from Grant and neighbouring Natchitoches Parish had spoken with her and then recommended the book manuscript to prospective publishers, but she died before it reached publication. The novel’s endorsers included Nash, by then the sitting police jury president, and *Chronicle* editor Goodwyn.[[77]](#endnote-77) For white Red River residents at least, Grant’s account appeared persuasive. In 1933, Mary LaCour Simmons, descended from multiple white Colfax paramilitaries, claimed in the Alexandria *Town Talk* that Grant’s unpublished account was “the only complete true story of this unfortunate bit of history of Central Louisiana.”[[78]](#endnote-78)

For the melodrama, Grant wrote that she “blended Fact with Fiction,” but “endeavoured in [her] descriptions of the various outrages upon the people of Grant, to adhere solely to the Truth.” To ensure truthfulness she included the names of several aggrieved parties (“the Rutlands, Lacours, Hadnots, etc”) as “living witnesses whose testimony will corroborate the charges made by me against the Republican mob.”[[79]](#endnote-79) Grant focused the story on the events leading to the massacre. She was closely related to the Lacour women through her husband Richard Henry Grant: the younger Lacour was Richard’s cousin.[[80]](#endnote-80) Addressing the decision to exclude the subsequent “disturbances incident upon the coming of the Metropolitans,” Grant wrote of “dark scenes there over which I have deemed it best to cast a veil. Not this the hand could bare the wounds that Time has cicatrized.”[[81]](#endnote-81)

The novel had an evident regional and local political purpose. Entitled “‘From Blue to Gray’ or The Battle of Colfax,” with a northern-born lead character dying on the side of the white paramilitaries, and the manuscript explicitly addressing “my northern readers,” it was part of the growing literature selling southern racial expertise to a northern audience.[[82]](#endnote-82) Grant disempowered black actors, treated violence as a justified defence of white womanhood, and stressed the just rule of white Democratic elites over poorer classes. In the introductory section, struck out in the manuscript, Grant’s present-day political goals were evident. “Prosperity, Peace and Plenty crown the Democratic rule in Grant to day,” she wrote. “Contrast this with the riotous scenes of mob rule described in the subsequent chapters; and ask yourselves my readers whom [ha]ve you to thank for your present blessings.”[[83]](#endnote-83)

The three lead characters hail from a village near New York before finding themselves in Colfax in 1873: Emily, the young belle; Herbert Hastings, the dashing outsider who abandons his first love before winning Emily’s affection; and Robert Ashland, Emily’s childhood sweetheart who stands aside once she falls for Herbert. Once Herbert and Emily marry, they move to Louisiana in search of commercial opportunities. On their journey to Louisiana, Emily quickly adopts the white southern racial and political viewpoint, for which Herbert initially scolds her, before converting too after spending some time in New Orleans. Upon buying land in Grant Parish, at first Herbert treats his black laborers kindly, while his white southern neighbors ostracize him. Yet with pro-Republican political activism in 1872, African Americans become “frenzied,” and labor stops on the plantation. Herbert resolves not to “blame the poor negro – his ignorance is an excuse,” but rather “those low white men that incite him to his reckless disregard of his employers[’] interest and indeed of his own.”[[84]](#endnote-84) After the stolen 1872 election, Herbert sees evidence of black robberies (including the Lacour place). In blending oral history with her story, Grant recounted Adolphe Layssard relaying African Americans’ “premeditated diabolism” – the rumor (presented as fact) that “the white men were to be trapped and the women and children thus left without protectionwere to be captured by the dastardly wretches who proposed (to use their own words) raising a new race of people.”[[85]](#endnote-85)

The manuscript advanced a class narrative as well: Nash, the Fusionist sheriff claimant and white paramilitary leader urges his troops camped outside of Colfax to bring law back to the town, despite the long odds the white posse faces. To this, backwoodsmen, speaking in dialect (reserved elsewhere in the manuscript for Irish maids and black characters) claim Nash has “er screw loose shomewhar” and leave the white camp.[[86]](#endnote-86)

The battle itself is narrated from the perspective of women observing the town from their house across the river. These women notice (implausibly, given the distance) that “*the negroes have fired on a flag of truce!*”[[87]](#endnote-87) Fighting then begins in earnest. Even with the burning courthouse causing black militiamen to flee, they fight “madly” and voice their sexually rapacious intentions. Rather than addressing the murder of prisoners directly, Grant contested claims from “partisan journals of the Bloody shirt type” about alleged white atrocities during the battle.[[88]](#endnote-88)

Grant’s novel developed several redemptive and reconciliatory themes. Herbert, confronted by Mrs. Lee, his jilted lover’s mother, before the battle, fights with Nash and is redeemed through death. Mrs. Lee initially curses Herbert before the battle, and later confesses to burning Emily’s portrait while joining with African Americans to ransack white Colfax residences, and even denying Herbert water when he was dying at Colfax. Yet through a religious conversation with Robert, Mrs. Lee forgives Herbert and reconciles with Emily. Robert, who, remarkably, is also at the battle tending to black and white casualties before being wounded himself, stays in the same house as Emily in 1873 without her realizing it, but ensures that Emily’s father informs her first about Herbert’s death. Emily, upon discovering Robert’s earlier actions, marries him.[[89]](#endnote-89) Robert, the more honorable man and repeated conciliator, eventually triumphs.

The massacre’s celebration drew a committed local following in the early twentieth century, capped by the dedication of a cemetery monument in April 1921 to the white “heroes… who fell in the Colfax riot fighting for white supremacy.”[[90]](#endnote-90) Local politicians noted their presence at the massacre, their claimed service as home guards in 1873, or their family ties to Colfax veterans to aid their careers.[[91]](#endnote-91) Meanwhile, in 1914 the daughter of one of the white casualties even alleged in the Colfax *Chronicle* that several men who did not fight in 1873 had since become bandwagon Colfax veterans.[[92]](#endnote-92) Highlighting the dominance of white celebratory massacre memory after World War I, one local historian claimed in *Pershing Way Magazine* – a publication promoting North American automobile tourism – that the massacre was the “most important event since Appomattox.”[[93]](#endnote-93) The *Town Talk* repeated the boast in its 1939 article on the massacre’s 66th anniversary.[[94]](#endnote-94) In the spirit of regional reconciliation on white southern terms, Colfax merited celebration for speeding the return of white home rule to the South.

Natchitoches physician Dr. Milton Dunn, secretary of a newly-formed Colfax veterans’ association from 1914, was particularly committed to celebrating the massacre as part of a southern cause he believed was being too quickly overlooked.[[95]](#endnote-95) Born in 1851 and too young to serve in the Civil War, Dunn fought at Colfax, while his father Christopher C. Dunn (a private in the Confederate Twenty-seventh Louisiana Infantry) had supplied horses and procured the steamboat cannon for white paramilitaries.[[96]](#endnote-96) In a March 1914 letter to the *Town Talk* editor urging community support for the Confederate Soldiers’ Monument unveiling in Alexandria, Milton noted that with William Irwin’s death no Colfax prisoners remained, before lamenting that “the heroes who fought these battles are forgotten now in the mad rush for pelf [money].” He connected the need for vigorous commemoration activities with demonstrating the vitality of the white southern cause. “A conquered people,” he wrote, “doesn’t hold reunions and emulate her heroes.”[[97]](#endnote-97) Dunn’s 1924 obituary published in the Shreveport *Caucasian* implicitly recognized his paramilitary action during Reconstruction as a continuation of Confederate wartime service with the contention that he was “a gallant Confederate soldier.”[[98]](#endnote-98)

Cammie Henry, a plantation mistress, United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) member and patron of the arts who developed a friendship with Dunn toward the end of his life, was yet more forthright in supporting Colfax veterans.[[99]](#endnote-99) In one of her many scrapbooks, Henry annotated a clipping on the 1921 Colfax monument unveiling: “Colfax *Riot* indeed! Why not Colfax martyrs?”[[100]](#endnote-100) She was an avid collector of Colfax and other Lost Cause memorabilia, and in 1921 even acquired the cannon white paramilitaries had used in April 1873 as a garden centerpiece for her Melrose Plantation.[[101]](#endnote-101)

She, too, feared that younger southerners did not recognize their forbears’ sacrifices, as her response to the cutting down of the Colfax “riot tree” demonstrated. By 1929, the pecan tree near the battle site, dedicated by white celebrants alongside the 1921 cemetery monument unveiling, was rotting, having been struck by lightning several years earlier.[[102]](#endnote-102) It was cut down in 1931, a decision that incensed Henry.[[103]](#endnote-103) Next to a photograph of the pecan tree, she annotated in pen, “And to think the mayor of Colfax allow [*sic*] this sacred tree to be cut for fire-wood for darkies! What a crime,” and in pencil (presumably at another time), “Sentiment and appreciation of sacrifice, a thing of *the past*. The ‘*Tree*’ means nothing to this generation.”[[104]](#endnote-104)

 Partly owing to their fears of losing relevance, Dunn and Henry corresponded with Colfax survivors and gathered narratives about their experiences. After Dunn’s death in November 1924, Henry continued gathering narratives and other massacre-related material. These narratives revealed tensions between official and vernacular memories, especially concerning participant numbers and death tolls.[[105]](#endnote-105) Though their accounts presented white violence as necessary and just, white paramilitaries expressed some remorse at the extent of violence, unlike more celebratory accounts from white women and other non-veterans. John I. McCain’s 1920s account, published in the *Town Talk*’s 1933 Golden Jubilee edition, railed against the effort to prosecute the Colfax paramilitaries—using the testimony of “an ignorant negro who knew not that an oath had a single syllable of sacredness in it” to prosecute “many of the best men that ever lived” was “enough to make hot blood flow with leaps and bounds fifty-four years after it happened”—but still sought reconciliation on white supremacist terms. He “[did] not believe in celebrating and keeping alive that most unfortunate tragedy, that had to come, and is now in the past, only as a page of history.” Likewise, Dunn took pride in his role in ending Reconstruction, but claimed “I only regret so many poor negroes were killed.”[[106]](#endnote-106)

By the early twentieth century, several white paramilitaries recalled interracial rape preceding the massacre or simultaneous with it.[[107]](#endnote-107) Dunn identified a photograph as the “place where the negro Henderson was burnt for Rape of white girl *during* Parish riot – *April* 1873.”[[108]](#endnote-108) McCain’s account, which closely followed the *Chronicle*’s official Colfax Massacre causation, noted that before the pitched battle, “armed negroes” made open threats of violence and rape, and “committed robbery, rape and other crimes that have escaped my memory.”[[109]](#endnote-109) One account from 1934 gave a particularly outlandish re-imagination of black sexual misdeeds. The story, relayed by the nephew of one of the paramilitary captains, Captain John Peck, claimed that during the battle, Captain Stafford “learned that 12 white girls were being held prisoners by the negroes in a secluded place.” In return for clemency, twelve African Americans helped Peck’s group find the girls.[[110]](#endnote-110)

By 1934, Dosia Williams Moore, a white schoolteacher who grew up in Louisiana’s Red River Valley during the Civil War and Reconstruction, sought to publish her childhood recollections. She was close with Cammie Henry and her friend Caroline Dormon (a botanist and aspiring writer), and was also well acquainted with the literary circle Henry had assembled around Melrose Plantation.[[111]](#endnote-111) Moore taught for many years around Bayou Rapides (in Rapides Parish), and lectured to local schoolchildren on the region’s Civil War and Reconstruction history in the 1930s.[[112]](#endnote-112) Though she was not a UDC member – she lacked the elevated social status many UDC chapters demanded – Moore shared her Lost Cause-infused views with Dixie’s sons and daughters, fitting her into the UDC’s drive for pro-Confederate teaching.[[113]](#endnote-113)

Moore’s recollections, gathered and typed up in Henry’s collection and compiled by Dormon into a book manuscript, likely conveyed the views of many white locals, and were starkly racialized, sexualized, and sectional.[[114]](#endnote-114) African Americans, faithful under slavery, became dangerous and insolent after emancipation. In a familiar refrain, Reconstruction was terrifying for white southerners, especially white women, as Moore’s account of Loyd Shorter’s post-massacre murder, written some time before October 1931, highlights. (White residents denied the killing during Reconstruction, and Dormon’s manuscript excluded the story.) In it, Moore claimed that “we lived in a state of terror, as the negroes were insolent, and insulting in many parts of the country, and their threats against the womanhood of the white people were unspeakable.”[[115]](#endnote-115) African Americans, according to Moore, gained the right to vote immediately upon emancipation, with white citizens having to wait until 1870. Northern “carpetbag” interference loomed large too: these men impoverished former slaves and “drove the aristocracy of the South to acts of desperation,” causing “bitterness” that “will never be eradicated until the last proud old heart is stilled.”[[116]](#endnote-116)

Moore’s massacre story stressed these sectional, sexual, and racial themes. Whereas Reconstruction-era conservatives blamed the African American militia leader William Ward for inciting the local black population, the villain in Moore’s account was the white New Yorker Delos White, a former Freedmen’s Bureau agent in neighboring Winn Parish, and Grant Parish sheriff until March 1870. Though he was, in fact, murdered in September 1871, Moore contended that White set off the chain of events leading to the Colfax Massacre by inciting poor behaviour from impressionable local African Americans. When a group of drunken black men raped the mother and daughter of a respected white family, white locals swiftly lynched the perpetrators, an action Louisiana’s Republicans used to justify replacing the parish’s white elected officials with African Americans. (In fact, multiple Republican office claimants were white, including the sheriff and the parish judge.[[117]](#endnote-117)) As the African Americans threateningly entrenched themselves at the parish courthouse, white citizens organized to drive them from the town. The black force shot the unarmed white emissary demanding they disband, and then “pandemonium ensued.”[[118]](#endnote-118)

The prominence black-on-white rape received in early twentieth-century white central Louisianan Colfax memories mirrored an increased focus on supposedly hyper-sexualized Reconstruction-era black males from white southern apologists in popular history, literature, and popular culture. In her 1906 *Dixie After the War*, Myrta Lockett Avary placed the emergence of this “crime against womanhood” during Reconstruction, and Claude Bowers’s 1929 *The Tragic Era* labelled rape “the foul daughter of Reconstruction.”[[119]](#endnote-119) The 1915 *Birth of a Nation* film (adapted from Thomas Dixon’s 1905 *The Clansman* novel), hugely popular in central Louisiana and nationally, featured numerous instances of post-war black sexual deviancy, including an attempted rape of a white girl, as catalysts for nationwide white racial unity.[[120]](#endnote-120) Meanwhile, in Margaret Mitchell’s 1936 *Gone with the Wind* Klan members lynch a black man who boasted of raping a white woman, and Scarlett survives a possible rape attempt.[[121]](#endnote-121)

Local historical writing also embraced racialized, sexualized, sectional, and celebratory white massacre narratives, as in Manie White Johnson’s 1930 Southern Methodist University M. A. thesis, publicized in the *Weekly Town Talk*. The *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* published it in its 1930 volume.[[122]](#endnote-122) It was influential in central Louisiana: into the twenty-first century *Town Talk* pieces relied on Johnson’s account, with a front-page article from 2007 claiming she had written “probably the most accurate account of the Colfax Riot to date.”[[123]](#endnote-123) Johnson’s father, Judge Horace Henry White, facilitated conversations with a range of older white paramilitaries and their contemporaries, which alongside the *Condition of the South* congressional investigation and a series of conservative newspaper articles, supported her account of what the *Town Talk* dubbed “the celebrated riot.”[[124]](#endnote-124) Employing conservative congressional committee arguments at length, notably Illinois Democrat Samuel Marshall’s report, Johnson alleged that Kellogg had double-crossed the Fusionists by issuing commissions to the Republican office claimants, and emphasized black males’ alleged hyper-sexuality and propensity for violence. Quoting the congressional report, she claimed that William Ward’s black militia had committed “mutiny, riot… theft… arson, murder, burglary, and rape.” Echoing her conservative sources, Johnson placed the Metropolitan Police’s attempt to arrest white paramilitaries in the massacre’s immediate aftermath, rather than six months later. In a footnote, she included Colfax veteran A. L. Hopkins’s 1928 claim that “these negroes they brought up from New Orleans were the biggest, blackest, most inhuman things we ever saw.” Johnson’s conclusion was congratulatory: “the riot… in the little town of Colfax” had “served to carry the Southern question into the highest tribunal of the United States… and to place the South legally, as well as actually, well on the road to home rule.”[[125]](#endnote-125)

Alexandria high school student Claude O’Quin, Jr. made a similar case in his 1933 Colfax “Riot” article, which won a national Scholastic Award prize.[[126]](#endnote-126) In 1936, the *Daily Town Talk* published the piece for its local history series. For O’Quin, Reconstruction as a whole was a time of rampant taxation, congressional irresponsibility, and rule by “carpetbaggers, and… negroes whom they could control.” Kellogg plotted to “precipitate race strife by issuing two seats [*sic*] of commissions of election” and told Ward “to seize the offices.” After capturing the courthouse, the “mob of armed negroes” soon “began threatening to kill all the white men and seize their wives and daughters,” and “began breaking into the houses, pillaging, assaulting what women they found, and even threw a casket containing a child’s body into the yard of its home.” During the battle, African Americans fired under the flag of truce, with such “treachery” rendering their subsequent killing just.[[127]](#endnote-127)

As with other contemporary accounts, O’Quin’s narrative de-emphasized white southern Republicans; instead, outside forces held primary responsibility for Reconstruction. Although O’Quin mentioned the alleged coffin desecration before the massacre, he did not acknowledge Judge Rutland (then a Republican) by name.[[128]](#endnote-128) Johnson’s thesis also downplayed white southern disunity. She noted that “scalawags,” alongside “carpet-baggers,” had “infused into the hearts of the negroes’ [*sic*] hatred for the whites,” but labelled Rutland merely a “prominent lawyer and politician.”[[129]](#endnote-129) Nor did Judge John A. Williams’s 1928 reflections on the massacre – published in the Grant Parish *Enterprise* in 1928, cited in Johnson’s thesis, and based upon conversations with white Colfax veterans and Rutland himself – identify Rutland’s party affiliation.[[130]](#endnote-130) In contrast, the 1882 “Facts of the Colfax Riot” noted that Rutland had been a Republican, but later joined the Democratic Party, and Kate Grant’s “From Blue to Gray” featured a chapter on a white southern Republican’s indifference toward black misconduct in Grant Parish.[[131]](#endnote-131) Local newspaper references to Reconstruction after World War I typically stressed white southern unity against enemies within and without, arguably a more usable past for white southern segregationists than one that recognized white political pragmatism during Reconstruction.[[132]](#endnote-132)

 A Louisiana State Museum 1938 publication entitled *Carpet-bag Misrule in Louisiana*, featuring a picture of a carpet bag on the front, highlighted the emphasis on outside meddling and black misrule in post-World War I white Louisianan Reconstruction accounts. It mentioned Colfax simply as “a serious race riot.” The publication took four lines to describe “scalawag,” versus fifteen for “carpet-bagger.”[[133]](#endnote-133) Overall, it mentioned “scalawag” five times, versus thirty-six for “carpet-bag,” “carpet-bagger,” or “carpet-baggers.” Interestingly, it labelled the black state leaders Oscar J. Dunn and Pinckney B. S. Pinchback, born in New Orleans and Georgia respectively, as two of “the five carpet-bag chiefs.” Demonstrating the parallel blackening of Reconstruction accounts, Pinchback, the light-skinned son of a Mississippi planter and a slave woman, was depicted as much darker than the three white Republican leaders.[[134]](#endnote-134) Alexandria schoolteacher Mabel Brasher’s 1929 *Louisiana, A Study of the State* (the state Department of Education’s recommended text for teaching eighth-grade Louisiana history in 1931), and the 1941 Federal Writers’ Project-funded *Louisiana: A Guide to the State* wrote southern white Republicans out of the Reconstruction story as well.[[135]](#endnote-135)

With the last white Colfax paramilitary dying in 1942, memories of Reconstruction and the massacre became increasingly remote by the 1940s.[[136]](#endnote-136) White southerners still harnessed Reconstruction memory to mobilize resistance to challenges to Jim Crow, but its salience was waning. Emphasizing white victimhood and struggle against malign outside influences remained persuasive, but by the 1950s Cold War parallels and ostensibly race-neutral constitutional arguments proved cannier segregationist defenses.[[137]](#endnote-137)

It was in this context that the 1951 historical marker contending that “the Colfax riot in which three white men and 150 negroes were slain… marked the end of carpetbag misrule in the South” was erected: although warding off perceived external threats to segregated race relations was important, promoting tourism mattered too. With the parish “destined to become the playground of the state and nation in the near future,” a state Department of Commerce and Industry representative scheduled meetings in Grant Parish in 1947 to agree on suitable tourist attractions. Betraying the limited options available to tiny towns like Colfax seeking to sell their histories, the representative identified two possible local points of interest: its burning well and the “riot” site.[[138]](#endnote-138) After the town’s mayor C. Aswell “Hooker” Rhodes requested a commemorative “riot” marker from the department in 1949, the department director eventually unveiled the sign in June 1951 as one of fifty similar markers put up around Louisiana to highlight “the many historic and fascinating parts of the state.”[[139]](#endnote-139) Its wording reflected the public dominance of celebratory massacre memory, shorn of the sexualized imagery of earlier accounts. The marker became part of the town’s tourist trail: a 1961 *Town Talk* article reported Texas visitors being treated to a “Tourist Appreciation Day” that included a town tour of both massacre markers, followed by a lunch where Mayor Rhodes handed over local food specialities – syrup and pecans – alongside a state travel guide and pamphlets on Colfax and “Colfax Riot” histories.[[140]](#endnote-140)

With the most tangible connection to the events of 1873 being the occasional unearthing of human remains around Colfax, casual celebratory massacre references remained in local culture.[[141]](#endnote-141) The title of the historically white Colfax High School student newspaper, the Colfax *Riot*, was one such striking example. Begun in the 1940s, it was still running in 1971 when Grant Parish, under court order to create racially unitary schools, consolidated Colfax High and three other schools into a single high school at Dry Prong.[[142]](#endnote-142) At times, the connection between these references and present-day white supremacy was clear, as when in 1960, next to a *Town Talk* picture of the editorial team, the caption joked, “putting down the Colfax riot was one thing, and putting out the ‘Colfax Riot’ newspaper is quite another.”[[143]](#endnote-143) But for the most part, these “riot” references reflected unsurprising racial insensitivity with minimal meaningful engagement with the details of the massacre itself. Tellingly, the other major school symbol, “the flame,” referred to Colfax’s burning fountain, the town’s other significant local attraction.[[144]](#endnote-144)

Despite academic consensus overturning earlier white supremacist scholarship, the way the Alexandria *Town Talk*’s 1983 centennial issue addressed central Louisianan Reconstruction history demonstrated these interpretations’ popular tenacity and the persistence of celebratory white massacre memories. Though no longer cast in explicitly white supremacist terms, the newspaper presented Reconstruction as “designed to perpetuate the Republican Party,” rather than “laying the foundation for a more democratic and just society,” with the era characterised by “confusion and hostility” alongside “corruption.” In this telling, Kellogg's alleged interest in promoting “an incident of racial strife” was “one interpretation” of his behavior before the massacre. The most salacious details of older white supremacist accounts were muted, but still present: using the passive voice, the article noted that “the story of [William R. Rutland’s] child’s body being thrown into the street in the general ransacking of the house has been written numbers of times.” Likewise, before the fighting, “whites were… stirred by threats of black insurrections that would only begin at Colfax and spread out from there,” a fear “fanned by politicians expecting to exploit the situation.” Interestingly, the account used Loyd Shorter “strangely disappear[ing]” as a cause of “suspicions and unrest” in Grant Parish (he was, in fact, murdered after the massacre). Recounting the April 13 violence, the article again implied that the black militiamen had brought their wholesale murder upon themselves by shooting the white paramilitary James Hadnot under a flag of truce (though, again, these flags “were said to have been waved” by the black courthouse defenders).[[145]](#endnote-145) Such exculpatory narratives dominated public massacre discussions until the twenty-first century.

Although muted in the decades after 1873 and rarely articulated publicly, black massacre accounts survived.[[146]](#endnote-146) White narratives unsurprisingly dominate the historical archive, but contemporary black voices are recoverable from the trial of white Colfax paramilitaries in the New Orleans *Republican* from February, March, May, and June 1874.[[147]](#endnote-147) Nationally, the *Christian Recorder* explained the relative lack of nationwide outrage over Colfax by placing the massacre in the broader context of American westward expansion.[[148]](#endnote-148) Locally, however, self-preservation demanded public silence: African Americans who had helped federal authorities apprehend white paramilitaries, like Loyd Shorter, died in suspicious circumstances.[[149]](#endnote-149)

Away from the Red River Valley, some black writers addressed the massacre in the mid-twentieth century. Frank Yerby, who worked at Southern University in Baton Rouge in the early 1940s, published *The Vixens* in 1947.[[150]](#endnote-150) Significantly reworked from the originally-titled “Ignoble Victory” – a work more forthrightly critical of white southerners during Reconstruction – it portrayed widespread post-war dislocation, corruption, and anti-black violence at Colfax and elsewhere within the context of a subtly subversive historical romance novel.[[151]](#endnote-151) For the New Deal-era Louisiana Writers’ Project, Marcus Christian’s “The Negro in Louisiana” manuscript – unfinished when the project closed in 1942 – addressed the massacre in some detail.[[152]](#endnote-152) Christian’s Colfax account, which stressed white Republican cowardice in abandoning their black allies, suggested another cause of black public near-silence about the massacre.[[153]](#endnote-153) As historian Bruce Baker has argued, though a vital part of private Reconstruction memories, black public commemorations of such violence were unworkable in the Jim Crow-era rural South, as they both invited white reprisals and contradicted optimistic narratives of community advancement.[[154]](#endnote-154)

Still, private counter-narratives persisted. Lalita Tademy’s author’s note to *Red River* (2006), a mix of family stories and fiction about black lives after 1873, wrote of a “type of family story, lacking shape and enthusiasm, only stingily disclosed, rationed within vague hints or whispers, and only then with great reluctance and obvious discomfort by the teller.” On her repeated questioning of her Aunt Ellen about the Colfax “Riot,” Tademy wrote, “‘Our people were there,’ she [Ellen] volunteered for the first time. ‘Some got out, and some didn’t.’ To this day I don’t know if she knew any more than that, but it was the full extent of what she was willing to share.” Tademy’s characters are similarly uncomfortable discussing the massacre publicly. In the prologue, set in 1935, Polly Tademy contends “the littlest colored child in Colfax, Louisiana, know better than to speak the truth of that time [1873] out loud, but the real stories somehow carry forward, generation to generation.” Jackson Tademy remarks in a separate 1935 episode, “Don’t never let nobody tell you it was a riot. I was there…. It was a massacre.”[[155]](#endnote-155) Similarly, a 1989 article in the *Angolite*, a publication produced by inmates at Angola prison, on the “Tragedy at Colfax” noted the reluctance of local black Colfax residents to talk on record about the massacre.[[156]](#endnote-156)

Black narrators, like white ones, reimagined the massacre to stress their ancestors’ valor. Several African Americans mentioned in the *Angolite* article contended that far more white paramilitaries had died during the 1873 fighting than the officially counted three.[[157]](#endnote-157) Rather than significantly revising the massacre’s events, Tademy’s novel presented it as part of a longer story of African American resilience against formidable challenges, and striving for educational opportunities. Their main triumph comes in creating a permanent local black elementary school by 1925 (white supremacists burn a commissary that served as a schoolhouse in 1907). Before the massacre, Sam Tademy spells out this educational imperative with the claim that “one day, Lord willing, we build a colored school right here in Colfax…. We need education, not bullets. That the only way we win.”[[158]](#endnote-158)

In the twenty-first century, Colfax was shrinking. Its population declined from 1,892 residents in 1970 to 1,659 in 2000 and 1,558 by 2010. With a substantial black-majority population, the town elected Gerald Hamilton as its first black mayor in 2006, and voted in its second after that.[[159]](#endnote-159) With demographic change alongside greater public and scholarly attention to the massacre, white celebratory narratives proved harder to sustain.[[160]](#endnote-160)

By 2003 African Americans alongside some sympathetic white voices publicly contested the dominant massacre account. In what became an annual occurrence, in April 2003 Colfax natives Diana Kimble and Odinga Kambui held a public commemorative ceremony for “massacre victims” at the Grant Parish Courthouse. “What happened here that Easter Sunday,” claimed Kimble, “was a true act of terrorism.”[[161]](#endnote-161) The massacre provided a usable past for these activists: Kimble and Antoinette Harrell, another black Louisianan activist, subsequently connected the massacre with present-day protests against racially discriminatory criminal prosecutions and calls for reparations for past discrimination against African Americans.[[162]](#endnote-162) Meanwhile, in 2007 the multiracial Red River Heritage Association formed with the goals of more accurately telling the story of the 1873 events, and building an interpretative center and courthouse memorial to the massacre’s victims.[[163]](#endnote-163)

*Town Talk* articles about the massacre from 2007 highlighted both the discrediting of the most celebratory white supremacist-influenced accounts, and the difficulties of fully dismantling this perspective. In endorsing efforts to more accurately remember “a scar called the Colfax Riot,” a January editorial argued that “the real reason for this post-Civil War assault was hatred and racism.”[[164]](#endnote-164) Yet the newspaper used Manie White Johnson’s 1930 piece, absent its reflections on supposed black hyper-sexuality and criminality, to retell the “events leading to the Colfax Riot” as a story of white Louisianan victimhood, and northern public support for Louisiana’s anti-Reconstruction forces.[[165]](#endnote-165) The main story about public commemoration efforts replaced the traditional white supremacist massacre causation with an account that avoided assigning blame to local participants: it was “something unfortunate stirred by political factions that literally led to the end of Reconstruction in the South.”[[166]](#endnote-166) Another *Town Talk* article about Grant Parish history from June 2007 showed the persistence of a sanitized version of white supremacist massacre memory. In this telling, the massacre was “one of the young parish’s darkest days,” but its consequences were implicitly redeeming, since “the ‘Riot’ eventually helped to bring about the end of ‘carpetbag misrule.’” With Reconstruction governance reduced to “carpetbag misrule” (rather than, say, a brief period of biracial democracy), even violent measures to overthrow it appeared more easily justifiable.[[167]](#endnote-167)

In the last decade, the story of the massacre and its problematic local monuments have received far greater attention, but efforts to supplement or replace the town’s existing historical markers have stalled.[[168]](#endnote-168) The Red River Heritage Association ran out of money, and disagreements remained over terminology. By 2013 two of the major movers behind the defunct association – white former Dry Prong mayor Glynn Maxwell, and black First Baptist Church minister Avery Hamilton – still considered the 1873 clash a “riot” and “massacre” respectively.[[169]](#endnote-169) Moreover, in May 2017 the parish police jury tabled a proposal from a Louisiana State University graduate student to purchase and erect an additional explanatory marker next to the 1951 “carpetbag misrule” sign. One of the police jurors cited a lack of constituent support for a new sign.[[170]](#endnote-170) Other Colfax residents likely agreed with Rev. Dr. Daniel W. O’Reagan’s 2007 call for “passerby muckrakers to please go somewhere else.”[[171]](#endnote-171) Should there be a revival of public will to better understand the 1873 massacre, the collaboration of academics, civil rights organizations, the National Parks Service, and historical societies around Memphis in 2016 offers a model for future commemorative activity in Colfax and other locales wracked by Reconstruction violence.[[172]](#endnote-172)

 Reconstruction, a complex story without an obvious morally triumphant arc, is a harder sell for public commemoration than the Civil War. Moreover, memorials of race massacres at Colfax and elsewhere present challenges for historians keen to emphasize Reconstruction’s radical possibilities rather than its often depressing and violent endings. The massacre did stem, in part, from earlier black political successes. But white residents soon argued that black criminality, battlefield dishonor, and sexual deviance (including a questionable rape allegation from six months after the massacre), alongside state-level Republican misrule, excused the April 1873 mass killing. Such behavior suggests that in central Louisiana at least, much of the intellectual work in creating a black rapist myth to justify subsequent Jim Crow laws and customs was complete by the 1870s, hardly an optimistic message for commemoration.[[173]](#endnote-173) Still, a more thorough public airing of the Colfax Massacre’s background, course, and aftermath would bring historical perspective to present-day discussions of racial assumptions, racial violence, and criminal justice. In the current era, better public understanding of the conditions that led Americans to commit racial atrocities during Reconstruction, and the subsequent reshaping of these memories to allow their celebration, is more important than ever.

1. This figure takes U.S. Attorney James R. Beckwith’s lower estimate from his 1875 congressional testimony. See U.S. House of Representatives, 43 Cong., 2 Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, *Report of the Select Committee on that Portion of the President’s Message relating to the Condition of the South* (Washington, D.C., 1875),413; hereinafter cited as *Condition of the South*. Other accounts gave much higher death toll estimates. For a discussion of the numbers killed, see Charles Lane, *The Day Freedom Died: The Colfax Massacre, The Supreme Court, and the Betrayal of Reconstruction* (New York, 2008), 265-66. The author is especially grateful to Martin Crawford, Adam Fairclough, and the *Journal*’s anonymous readers for their feedback on earlier drafts of this article; Bruce Baker, Catherine Clinton, Marie Molloy, Michael Murray, and delegates at the 2018 Historians of the Twentieth Century United States and 2018 British American Nineteenth Century Historians annual conferences for their generous advice on various aspects of this piece; Michelle Riggs, Theresa Tademy, and Mary Linn Wernet for their help in locating primary source materials; and Diana Kimble and Thomas Barber for sharing their experiences with him. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Historian Joe Gray Taylor claimed that “the 1872 election [in Louisiana] was so shot through with fraud that no one ever had any idea who had actually won.” See Joe Gray Taylor *Louisiana Reconstructed* (Baton Rouge, 1974), 241. Further confusion derived from the Republican Governor William Pitt Kellogg appearing to have issued commissions to both sets of officials. See Lane, *Day Freedom Died*, 66-69, 71. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. For works on the Colfax Massacre, see especially Lane, *Day Freedom Died*; LeeAnna Keith, *The Colfax Massacre: The Untold Story of Black Power, White, Terror, and the Death of Reconstruction* (Oxford, 2009); Joel M. Sipress, “From the Barrel of a Gun: The Politics of Murder in Grant Parish,” *Louisiana History*,42 (Summer 2001), 303-21; Carole Emberton, “Axes of Empire: Race, Region, and the ‘Greater Reconstruction’ of Federal Authority after Emancipation,” in William A. Link and James J. Broomall, eds., *Rethinking American Emancipation: Legacies of Slavery and the Quest for Black Freedom* (Cambridge, Eng., 2015), 119-45; Nicholas Lemann, *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War* (New York, 2006), 3-29. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. The Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, for instance, initially labelled the clash a “forced and lamentable affair,” but judged it “the result of the policy of Mr. Kellogg to trifle with the people.” See “The Colfax Riot,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, April 16, 1873, p. 2 (first quotation); “The Colfax Troubles,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, April 16, 1873, p. 2 (second quotation). [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, N.Y., 1991), ix, also quoted in K. Stephen Prince, “Remembering Robert Charles: Violence and Memory in Jim Crow New Orleans,” *Journal of Southern History*, 83 (May 2017), 297-328 (quotations on 323). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Elizabeth L. Loftus and Jacqueline E. Pickrell, “The Formation of False Memories,” *Psychiatric Annals*, 25 (December 1995), 720-25; Steven J. Frenda et al., “False Memories of Fabricated Political Events,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 49 (2013), 280-86. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison, 1997), 134-38. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. For a twentieth-century parallel, concerning the year of Italian steelworker Luigi Trastulli’s death, see Portelli, *Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 15. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. On the incompleteness of white lethal violence as a response to black male-white female sex, see Lisa Lindquist Dorr, “Black-on-White Rape and Retribution in Twentieth-Century Virginia: ‘Men, Even Negroes, Must Have Some Protection,’” *Journal of Southern History*, 66 (November 2000), 711-48. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Martha Hodes, “The Sexualization of Reconstruction Politics: White Women and Black Men in the South after the Civil War,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 3 (January 1993), 402-17; Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill, 2009), esp. 182, 193-96; Elaine Frantz Parsons, *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan during Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill, 2015), esp. 163, 294-5. See also Lisa Cardyn, “Sexualized Racism/Gendered Violence: Outraging the Body Politic in the Reconstruction South,” *Michigan Law Review*, 100 (Feb. 2002), 675-867. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. On the connection between the black rapist myth and the disempowerment of white women, see, for instance, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “‘The Mind That Burns in Each Body: Women, Rape, and Racial Violence,” in Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds., *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York, 1983), 328-49. For scholars who present Reconstruction as an inflection point for increasingly intolerant approaches toward sex across the color line, see Hodes, “Sexualization of Reconstruction Politics”; Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South* (New Haven, 1997); Peter W. Bardaglio, *Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex, and the Law in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill, 1995); Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*. Michael J. Pfeifer similarly noted that “increasingly racialized and ritualized” lynchings and “whites’ paranoid fear of the rape of white women by black men” in Louisiana developed during Reconstruction. See Michael J. Pfeifer, “The Origins of Postbellum Lynching: Collective Violence in Reconstruction Louisiana,” *Louisiana History*, 50 (Spring, 2009), 189-201 (quotations on 198 and 200). In contrast, Gilles Vandal’s study of post-Civil War violence in Louisiana documented the murder of nine black men during Reconstruction for sexual intimacy with white women, but he argued that black-on-white rape “did not excite public opinion” during Reconstruction. See Gilles Vandal, *Rethinking Southern Violence: Homicides in Post-Civil War Louisiana, 1866-1884* (Columbus, Ohio, 2000), 124. For accounts that locate the development of a black rapist myth in the late 1880s or 1890s, see for instance Dianne Miller Sommerville, *Rape and Race in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill, 2004); Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*; Joel Williamson, *A Rage for Order: Black/White Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (New York, 1986), esp. chap. 3; Madelin Joan Olds, “The Rape Complex in the Postbellum South,” in Kim Marie Vaz, ed., *Black Women in America* (London, 1995), 197-205. Estelle B. Freedman located key developments for racializing rape and lynching in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. See Estelle B. Freedman, *Redefining Rape: Sexual Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013), chap. 5. Likewise, William D. Carrigan’s study of central Texas counties showed an increased focus on alleged sexual impropriety in justifying anti-black violence after the 1870s. See William D. Carrigan, *The Making of a Lynching Culture: Violence and Vigilantism in Central Texas, 1836-1916* (Paperback ed.; Urbana, Ill., 2006), 149-53. For a recent historiographical overview of rape myth scholarship, see Sommerville, *Rape and Race*, 223-59. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Historians widely accept memory as “a continuous process of meaning production, always fluid, selective, interpretative and organizational.” Geoffrey Cubitt, “History, Psychology and Social Memory,” in Cristian Tileagă and Jovan Byford, eds., *Psychology and History: Interdisciplinary Explorations* (Cambridge, Eng., 2014), 21. See also David Thelen, “Memory and American History,” *Journal of American History*,75 (March 1989), 1117-29; Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (2nd ed.; Boston, 2015). [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. On challenges to white supremacy in the South after World War I, see, for instance, Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York, 2001), 98-201. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. On the Republican factional dispute in Grant Parish, see Sipress, “From the Barrel of a Gun.” On Nash’s earlier Republican connection, see also “The Courts; United States Commissioner’s Court—Ku-Klux Case,” New Orleans *Republican*, November 14, 1871, p. 1. Early twentieth-century Lost Cause advocates in North Carolina similarly downplayed Reconstruction-era white southern political disunity. See Adam H. Domby, *The False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory* (Charlottesville, 2020), 28-30. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Caroline E. Janney contended that “by the 1930s many white southerners could not disentangle Confederate defeat from the origins of Reconstruction.” See Caroline E. Janney, “War over a Shrine of Peace: The Appomattox Peace Monument and Retreat from Reconciliation,” *Journal of Southern History*, 77 (February 2011), 91-120 (quotation on 107). [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. For key works on memory and the American South, see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Where these Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill, 2000); David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War: The American South and Southern History* (Baton Rouge, 2002). Reconstruction memory has a growing historiography. See, for instance, Bruce E. Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant* (Charlottesville, 2007); Grace E. Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York, 1998), chap. 2; K. Stephen Prince, *Stories of the South: Race and the Reconstruction of Southern Identity, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill, 2014); Carole Emberton and Bruce E. Baker, eds., *Remembering Reconstruction: Struggles over the Meaning of America’s Most Turbulent Era* (Baton Rouge, 2017); Lawrence N. Powell, “Reinventing Tradition: Liberty Place, Historical Memory, and Silk-Stocking Vigilantism in New Orleans Politics,” *Slavery & Abolition*, 20 (April 1999), 127-49; Jennifer Whitmer Taylor and Page Putnam Miller, “Reconstructing Memory: The Attempt to Designate Beaufort, South Carolina, the National Park Service’s First Reconstruction Unit,” *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 7 (March 2017), 39-66; David M. Prior et al., “Roundtable: Reconstruction in Public History and Memory Sesquicentennial,” *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 7 (March 2017), 96-122; Brook Thomas, “Reconstruction and World War I: The Birth of What Sort of Nation(s)?” *American Literary History*, 30 (Fall 2018), 559-83. For works stressing white regional reconciliation over Civil War memory, see especially David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001); Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, 1993). On the trajectory of Civil War memory, broadly defined, after World War I, see particularly Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation* (Chapel Hill, 2013), esp. chap. 9; Janney, “War over a Shrine of Peace”; Karen L. Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville, 2003); Robert J. Cook, *Civil War Memories: Contesting the Past in the United States since 1865* (Baltimore, 2017); Nina Silber, *This War Ain’t Over: Fighting the Civil War in New Deal America* (Chapel Hill, 2018). Recently, Robert Hunt has argued that after World War I, the Lost Cause memory promoted by United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) members became less relevant to the lives of most southerners. See Hunt, “Luke Lea, the Legionnaires, and the Legacy of Two Wars: The Politics of Memory in the Mind of a Nashville Progressive, 1915-1945,” *Journal of Southern History*, 83 (August 2017), 617-56. For recent historiographical overviews of Civil War memory, see Nina Silber, “Reunion and Reconciliation, Reviewed and Reconsidered,” *Journal of American History*,103 (June 2016), 59-83; Robert J. Cook, “The Quarrel Forgotten? Toward a Clearer Understanding of Sectional Reconciliation,” *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 6 (September 2016), 413-36. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Beckwith subsequently argued that the locations of the wounds Harris and Hadnot received rendered the claim that black men shot them “so shadowy that it is hardly worth discussion.” See *Condition of the South*, 415-6 (quotation on 415). According to Assistant Adjutant General Theodore W. DeKlyne, who visited Colfax shortly after the massacre, “Mr. Hadnot was shot through the stomach from side to side, and Mr. Harris in the back under both shoulders.” See “From Grant Parish; Official Report of Staff Offices; On the Ground Tuesday Morning; Horrible Massacre; Burial of Sixty Bodies; An Interview with Nash; The Killed and Wounded,” New Orleans *Republican*, April 18, 1873, p. 1. On the implausibility of white supremacist claims that African Americans had shot Hadnot and Harris, see also Lane, *Day Freedom Died*, 132-4. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. “Statement of Colfax Fight,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, May 14, 1873, p. 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. On white concerns over black male sexuality at times of feared slave insurrection, see particularly Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill, 1968), esp. 150-54. As with white Colfax Massacre memories, the eighteenth-century accounts Jordan cited became more lurid in the retelling. See also Charles B. Dew, “Black Ironworkers and the Slave Insurrection Panic of 1856,” *Journal of Southern History*, 41 (August 1975), 321-38; Justin Behrend, “Rebellious Talk and Conspiratorial Plots: The Making of a Slave Insurrection in Civil War Natchez,” *Journal of Southern History*, 77 (February 2011), 17-52, esp. 36. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. “Southern News. By the Express Mail,” New York *Evening Post*, October 27, 1837, p. 2. See also David Grimsted, *American Mobbing, 1828-1861: Toward Civil War* (New York, 1998), 171. Solomon Northup’s slave narrative suggested such rebellion fears (if not sexual panic) from 1837 were well-founded. See Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave. Narrative of Solomon Northup, A Citizen of New-York…* (Auburn, N.Y., 1853), 246-49. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. “The Grant Parish Trouble; A Short Statement of the Origin; The Result of Taking Offices by Force,” New Orleans *Republican*, April 26, 1873, p. 1. In May 1873 the Louisiana *Democrat* clipped a Cincinnati *Times and Chronicle* correspondence piece from a wealthy white Rapides Democrat that claimed the allegations of black outrages sexual threats were false, and that the white force had shot Hadnot. The paper’s editor denounced the statement in its previous issue, and likely included the piece in an effort to silence its author. See “Louisiana. Important Testimony Concerning the Colfax Massacre,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, May 21, 1873, p. 3; “Important Testimony Concerning the Colfax Massacre,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, May 14, 1873, p. 2. See also Lane, *Day Freedom Died*, 134, 289-90. Similarly, in congressional testimony in 1875, a white Republican from Catahoula parish contended that the white paramilitaries who fought at Colfax “were fooled into it.” See *Condition of the South*, 384. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Laura F. Edwards, *Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction* (Urbana, Ill., 1997), esp. 125-26. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. *Ibid*., esp. 185-86, 217. See also Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom*, 124-27. On the limited appeal of these arguments to poorer white southerners, see Karin L. Zipf, “‘The WHITES Shall Rule the Land or Die’: Gender, Race, and Class in North Carolina Reconstruction Politics,” *Journal of Southern History*, 65 (August 1999), 499-534. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. On claims that black-on-white rapes were commonplace in New Orleans and Washington, D.C., see “Washington Correspondence,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, August 25, 1869, p. 2; “New Orleans Correspondence,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, July 10, 1867, p. 2. For an allegory likening southern cooperation with Military Reconstruction to a woman voluntarily submitting to “the lowest depths of degradation,” see “The General Assembly – A Convention,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, January 23, 1867, p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, April 23, 1873, p. 2; “The Colfax Fight,” *Ibid*. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, April 23, 1873, p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. “The Colfax Emeute,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, April 9, 1873, p. 2 (quotations). See also “The Colfax Troubles,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, April 16, 1873, p. 2. Before the massacre, Rutland made similar claims about his property and the coffin in the New Orleans *Republican*, though he claimed that “the negro mob had taken [the coffin] out and burned it.” See “The Riot in Grant Parish; Both Parties Armed and Belligerent; Abduction of Mr. Calhoun,” New Orleans *Republican*, April 10, 1873, p. 1. Local Republicans claimed the incident at Rutland’s house occurred when “some person or persons, without the knowledge or consent of the authorities… committed some trifling depredations on some articles of clothing, leaving furniture and articles of value, together with a box containing the embalmed body of a child entirely unmolested.” See “The War of Races. Nearly Three Hundred Negroes Burned to Death by Whites in Louisiana—A Horrible Affair,” New York *Times*, April 16, 1873, p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Lane, *Day Freedom Died*, 142-46. Henry M. Hyams Jr. was arrested but then released on bond in June 1873. It is unlikely that he was involved at Colfax. See Petition of Henry M. Hyams Jr. and order filed in case of United States v. Columbus C. Nash, et al., June 20, 1873, Record Group 21, National Archives Identifier 251444, National Archives and Records Administration (<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/251444>, accessed July 9, 2020); “Clerk of Court Dead,” Winnfield (La.) *Southern Sentinel*, March 8, 1907, p. 3; “The Reunion of Colfax Veterans,” Colfax *Chronicle*, April 18, 1914, p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. “Public Meeting,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, November 5, 1873, p. 2 (quotation). See “Statement of the Colfax Outrage,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, November 26, 1873, p. 2 for Malafret Layssard’s account. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. In the nineteenth-century South, respectable white families used rape allegations to cover up consensual interracial sexual encounters. See Sommerville, *Rape and Race*; Catherine Clinton, “‘Southern Dishonor: Flesh, Blood, Race, and Bondage,” in Carol Bleser, ed., *In Joy and In Sorrow: Women, Family, and Marriage in the Victorian South, 1830-1900* (New York, 1991), 58-60. On the problems of determining consent from sources alleging rape, see LeeAnn Whites, “Love, Hate, Rape, Lynching: Rebecca Latimer Felton and the Gender Politics of Racial Violence,” in Timothy B. Tyson and David S. Cecelski, eds., *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and its Legacy* (Chapel Hill, 1998), 145. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. George T. Towle to Assistant Adjutant General, November 3, 1873, Vol. 1, Entry 1, Part 5, Record Group 393, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; hereinafter cited as RG 393. See also Lane, *Day Freedom* Died, 148-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. “Complaints and Trials, Alexandria,” August 7, 1867, p. 38, Records of the Field Offices for the State of Louisiana, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1863-1872, Reel 54, image 333, M1905, National Archives and Records Administration, <https://archive.org/details/recordsoffieldoo0054unit/page/n331>. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. “The Outrage in Grant Parish,” New Orleans *Republican*, November 6, 1873, p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. “To the Public,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, November 26, 1873, p. 2. T. Montfort Wells’s wife, Mary Harriet Grant, was Coralie Lacour’s cousin. See “Deaths,” Alexandria *Weekly Town Talk*, June 13, 1925, p. 8; “Died,” Colfax *Chronicle*, January 20, 1906, p. 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. “Statement of the Colfax Outrage,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, November 26, 1873, p. 2. Layssard’s account placed the attack on Thursday October 30, 1873. The *Rapides Gazette* account dated the attack to October 25, while the Alexandria public meeting that denounced the alleged rape met on October 28. See “Grant Parish Horror,” Alexandria *Rapides Gazette*, November 15, 1873, p. 2; “Public Meeting,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, November 5, 1873, p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Tilghman G. Compton to Winfield Scott Hancock, December 27, 1867, Box 1, E 4575, Pt. 1, RG 393 (quotation); “Public Meetings,” Alexandria *Rapides Gazette*, November 8, 1873, p. 2; “An Explanation,” Alexandria *Rapides Gazette*, November 15, 1873, p. 2. Though *Gazette* issues from early 1874 have not survived, in April 1874 the Alexandria *Caucasian* purportedly reproduced a *Gazette* editorial that supported white paramilitary action at Colfax. See “Rapides Gazette on Colfax Prisoners,” Alexandria *Caucasian*, April 4, 1874, p. 2. On white Louisiana Republicans’ discomfort with potential black political militancy, see Ted Tunnell, *Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism, and Race in Louisiana, 1862-1877* (Baton Rouge, 1984), 217-18. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Joel M. Sipress, “The Triumph of Reaction: Political Struggle in a New South Community, 1865-1898” (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1993), 144-45. See also Mabel F. Harrison and Lavinia M. McNeely, *Grant Parish, Louisiana: A History* (Baton Rouge, 1969), 115-16. Teal became parish sheriff in 1880. See “Our New Officials,” Colfax *Chronicle*, March 27, 1880, p. 4. A report on the alleged rape in the St. Louis *Republican* noted skeptically that “the latest advices indicate that the outrage is a fabrication.” See “Crime. Contemptuous Treatment...,” St. Louis *Republican*, November 5, 1873, p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Following an initial mistrial in March 1874, a second trial from May 18 to June 10, 1874 brought a guilty verdict against three defendants. Supreme Court Justice Joseph P. Bradley then dismissed these charges on June 27, which led to the Supreme Court’s 1876 *Cruikshank* decision gutting the Enforcement Act. See Lane, *Day Freedom Died*, 160-247. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. “Chronique de la Ville. Cour de Circuit des Etats-Unis. Avant dernier jour du procès des prisoniers de la paroisse Grant,” *L’Abeille de la Nouvelle-Orléans* (New Orleans *Bee*), March 13, 1874, p. 1, also cited in Lane, *Day Freedom Died*, 180. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. See, for instance,“Sheriff Nash. By J. Smith,” Alexandria *Caucasian*, May 16, 1874, p. 1; “The President’s Message,” Alexandria *Caucasian*, January 23, 1875, p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. “A Contrast,” Alexandria *Caucasian*, March 28, 1874, p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. “Patience—Its Uses and Abuses,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, April 29, 1874, p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. On these trends, see Freedman, “‘Crimes which Startle and Horrify’: Gender, Age, and the Racialization of Sexual Violence in White American Newspapers, 1870-1900,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 20 (September 2011), 465-97 (quotation on 492). [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. In 1873 the *Louisiana Democrat* had termed the younger Lacour “one of the most respectable young ladies of that Parish [Grant].” See “The Metropolitans,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, November 5, 1873, p. 2. Malafret Layssard’s account also referred to the Lacours as “ladies.” See “Statement of the Colfax Outrage,” Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, November 26, 1873, p. 2. The *Rapides Gazette* referred to Cora Lacour as “a young lady in Grant.” See “The Outrage in Grant,” Alexandria *Rapides Gazette*, November 1, 1873, p.2. Cora Lacour (who appears in sources as “Cora,” “Mary Cora,” and “Coralie”) was born in February 1856. See Colfax, Grant Parish, Louisiana, image 54, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database online]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2004. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. In the West South Central region for the 1870 census, about one in five white women aged 15 to 19 were already married. See J. David Hacker, Libra Hilde and James Holland Jones, “The Effect of the Civil War on Southern Marriage Patterns,” *Journal of Southern History*, 76 (February 2010), 39-70, at 54. Similarly, Victoria E. Ott’s study of elite white southern women who reached adulthood during the Civil War era found that most married in their early twenties. See Victoria E. Ott, *Confederate Daughters: Coming of Age During the Civil War* (Carbondale, Ill., 2008), 105. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. On the Committee of Seventy, see Lane, *Day Freedom Died*, 155. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. This claim mirrored the Democratic press’s focus on alleged black militia misconduct to excuse Klan violence in Union County, South Carolina in 1870. See Parsons, *Ku-Klux*, 288. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. *Condition of the South*, 891-95 (first quotation on 894, second and third quotation on 895, fourth and fifth quotations on 894). For information on Ward’s discharge see Sipress, “From the Barrel of a Gun,” 313-14; Lane, *Day Freedom Died*, 55-59. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. *Condition of the South*, 896. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. “A Contrast,” Alexandria *Caucasian*, March 28, 1874, p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. *Condition of the South*, 515. The *Caucasian* connected the massacre directly to the alleged Lacour rape in June 1874. See “Can It Be So?” Alexandria *Caucasian*, June 27, 1874, p. 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. *Condition of the South*, 533-34, 580. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. *Ibid.*, 10-19 (quotation on 10). [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. Marshall contended that “one successful rising of and massacre by the negroes would endanger the lives of the entire white people of the Red River region…. Their families would be exposed to horrors a thousand-fold worse than death.” See *Ibid.*, 11. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. “Condition of the South. On Horseback Through Louisiana…,” New York *Times*, October 23, 1874, pp. 1-2 (quotation on p. 2). [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. “Louisiana. Reception of the News of Pinch’s Defeat…,” St. Louis *Republican*, February 23, 1875, p. 4. The New York *Sun* clipped this article. See “Kellogg’s Legislature. Expulsion of Negro Ruffian who is Responsible for the Colfax Massacre—Ignominious Work for Federal Troops,” New York *Sun*, February 27, 1875, p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. New York *Sun*, May 13, 1875, p. 2. The Wilmington (Del.) *Daily Gazette* and, in St. Landry Parish, the Opelousas *Courier* reproduced the *Sun*’s piece. See Wilmington (Del.) *Daily Gazette*, May 14, 1875, p. 2; Opelousas *Courier*, June 5, 1875, p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. “The Colfax Massacre,” New York *Herald*, October 11, 1876, p. 6. The Greenville (Miss.) *Times* clipped the article. See “The Colfax massacre,” Greenville (Miss.) *Times*, October 21, 1876, p. 4. Louisianan newspapers reported on the allegations as well. See, for instance, “Recruits,” Alexandria *Louisiana* *Democrat*, October 11, 1876, p. 2; “Ward’s Speech,” Alexandria *Louisiana* *Democrat*, October 11, 1876, p. 2; “Bloody Colfax,” Colfax *Chronicle*, October 14, 1876, p. 2; “The Grant Parish Affair,” Colfax *Chronicle*, October 21, 1876, p. 3. See also Lane, *Day Freedom Died*, 257. [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. On the rationales for lynching in Louisiana, and the South more generally, see, for instance, Michael J. Pfeifer, *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947* (Urbana Ill., 2004), esp. 15-16, 22-24, 64-85. There is a voluminous literature on lynching. For a recent historiographical survey, see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “Conclusion: Reflections on Lynching Scholarship,” *American Nineteenth Century History*,6 (September 2005), 401-14. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. “Atrocious Crime and Swift Punishment,” Opelousas *Courier*, May 1, 1875, p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. Opelousas *Courier* (French edition), May 22, 1875, p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. “Unparalleled Atrocity. Rape, Incest and Murder…,”Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, October 13, 1880, p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, October 13, 1880, p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. “Colfax, Grant Parish, La., July 17, 1876; Editor Chronicle,” Colfax *Chronicle*, July 22, 1876, p. 1. For further examples of the paper contrasting the acrimonious past with the promising future, alongside the supposed hypocrisy and unreliability of black citizens’ supposed white allies, see (all in Colfax *Chronicle*) “Grant Parish as It Is,” June 2, 1877, p. 2; “At Raven Camp. The First Gathering of Colored Men to Listen to Democratic Speakers Ever Held in Grant,” October 12, 1878, p. 2; “Easter Sunday Six Years Ago,” April 19, 1879, p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. “Dead Men’s Bones,” Colfax *Chronicle*, April 27, 1878, p. 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. On fears that social conflict would discourage outside investment, see Paul Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York, 1970), 73. In 1882, construction works uncovered skeletons buried near the courthouse. See “Skulls and Cross-Bones,” Colfax *Chronicle*, March 18, 1882, p. 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. “‘Tobias’ Writes Up Colfax,” Colfax *Chronicle*, September 24, 1881, p. 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. “A History of the Colfax Riot; Correcting the Misstatement that it Was a ‘Massacre’ of Innocent Negroes by Whites Without Cause or Any Grounds or Warrant of Justification,” Colfax *Chronicle*, May 25, 1912, p. 1; “A History of the Colfax Riot; Facts Gathered from Eye Witnesses…,” Colfax *Chronicle*, March 14, 1914, p. 1; “Facts of The Colfax Riot; Written by the Late Editor of the Chronicle to Refute Misstatements,” Alexandria *Weekly Town Talk*, May 28, 1921, p. 4; “Facts of the Colfax Riot; Written by the late Editor, H. G. Goodwin [*sic*], of the Chronicle to Refute Mistatements [*sic*] (From the Colfax (La.) Chronicle, June 3, 1882.),” Opelousas *Daily Clarion-Progress*, June 7, 1922, p. 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. “Origin of the Colfax Massacre. Correcting a Misstatement of Facts,” Colfax *Chronicle*, June 3, 1882, p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. This usage follows John Bodnar’s “public memory” description. See John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, 1992), 13-14. For the parallel harnessing of the 1874 Battle of Liberty Place by New Orleans elites, see Powell, “Reinventing Tradition.” [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York, 1987). [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. “An Address to the Voters of Grant Parish on the Political Issues Involved in the Present Campaign,” March 24, 1888, Melrose Scrapbook 67, Melrose Collection (Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Watson Memorial Library, Northwestern State University of Louisiana; hereinafter cited as CGHRC), cited in Sipress, “Triumph of Reaction,” 213-4. On Populism in Louisiana, see particularly William Ivy Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics, 1877-1900* (Baton Rouge, 1969), esp. chapters 9 and 10; Donna A. Barnes, *The Louisiana Populist Movement, 1881-1900* (Baton Rouge, 2011). On Populism in Grant Parish, see Sipress, “Triumph of Reaction”; Joel M. Sipress, “The Race Cry Doesn’t Scare Us… Or Does It? Populism and Race in Grant Parish, Louisiana,” in James M. Beeby, ed., *Populism in the South Revisited: New Interpretations and New Departures* (Jackson, Miss., 2012), 3-35; Joel M. Sipress, “A Narrowing of Vision: Hardy L. Brian and the Fate of Louisiana Populism,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*,7 (January 2008), 43-67. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. See “From Reuben. Bennettsville, La., July 29, 1890,” Alexandria *Weekly Town Talk*, August 9, 1890, p. 1; “True Democracy. The People Aroused and Ready to Support the Regular Democratic Nominee…,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, April 15, 1892, p. 1. For non-central Louisianan invocations of the massacre to urge white political unity, see “The Man on the Fence,” Ouachita *Telegraph*, August 27, 1887, p.2; Plaquemine *Weekly Iberville South*, March 14, 1896, p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. Hilaire A. Herbert’s 1890 co-authored *Why the Solid South?* was one such nationally-focused work. On its arguments, see especially K. Stephen Prince, “Jim Crow Memory: Southern White Supremacists and the Regional Politics of Remembrance,” in Emberton and Baker, eds., *Remembering Reconstruction*, 20-21; Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant*, 23-25. [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. “Reunion of Confederate Veterans. Montgomery, La., July 13, 1886,” Colfax *Chronicle*, July 24, 1886, p. 1; “Confederate Veterans’ Reunion. Natchitoches, La., July 28, 1887,” Colfax *Chronicle*, August 6, 1887, p. 1; Colfax *Chronicle*, October 25, 1890, p. 4; “Attention, Old Soldiers,” Colfax *Chronicle*, June 22, 1895, p. 4; “Notice,” Colfax *Chronicle*, July 4, 1896, p. 4. According to a 1969 local history, it was “almost impossible” to trace Civil War enlistments from Grant Parish. See Harrison and McNeely, *Grant Parish*, 62. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. “Memorial to Captain Christopher Columbus Nash,” Colfax *Chronicle*, October 13, 1922, p. 1. See also Carin Peller-Semmens, “Unreconstructed: Slavery and Emancipation on Louisiana’s Red River, 1820-1880” (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Sussex, 2016), 168. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. “Personal Mention,” Alexandria *Weekly* *Town Talk*, July 4, 1891, p. 3. As Nash’s endorsement listed his position as president of the Grant Parish Police Jury (a position he took up in July 1888), it is unlikely that Grant had completed the manuscript before then. See “Official Proceedings of the Police Jury of the Parish of Grant,” Colfax *Chronicle*, July 7, 1888, p. 1; Christopher C. Nash et al. “To Whom it May Concern,” n.d., Folder 12, Box 1, Layssard Family Papers Mss. 2875 (Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana; hereinafter cited as LLMVC). For analyses of Grant’s novel, see also Peller-Semmens, “Unreconstructed,” 168; Lemann, *Redemption*, 7-10. [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. “From Mrs. M. L. Simmons,” Alexandria *Weekly Town Talk*, April 1, 1933, p. 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. Kate K. Grant, “‘From Blue to Gray’ or The Battle of Colfax,” introduction, Folder 9, Box 1, Layssard Papers. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. Richard Henry Grant and Coralie Lacour were both grandchildren of Malafret Layssard. See “Died,” Colfax *Chronicle*, January 20, 1906, p. 4; “Capt. Grant, 81, Dies Here; Prominent in Affairs of Central Louisiana for 50 Years,” Alexandria *Weekly Town Talk*, September 19, 1936, p. 5; Find A Grave, database and images (https://www.findagrave.com: accessed 30 September 2019), memorial page for Mary Joseph Harriet Layssard Grant (22 Jan 1829–9 Jun 1855), Find A Grave Memorial no. 28691533, citing Lacour Cemetery, Rapides Parish, Louisiana, USA ; Maintained by SFC USA RET Duffie and Kathy (contributor 46950425). [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. Grant, “From Blue to Gray,” introduction. [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. Grant, “From Blue to Gray,” 88, Folder 10, Box 1, Layssard Papers (quotation). The manuscript fitted what Bruce Baker termed the “racist conversion” genre. See Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant*, 53. See also Prince, *Stories of the South*; Prince, “Jim Crow Memory.” [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. Grant, “From Blue to Gray,” introduction. [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. Grant, “From Blue to Gray,” 73-74, Folder 10, Box 1, Layssard Papers. [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. Grant, “From Blue to Gray,” 135-36 (first quotation on 135, second quotation on 135-36), Folder 11, Box 1, Layssard Papers. [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. Grant, “From Blue to Gray,” 150, Folder 12, Box 1, Layssard Papers. [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. Grant, “From Blue to Gray,” 179, Folder 12, Box 1, Layssard Papers. Original emphasis. This claim mirrored J. C. Morantini’s far-fetched contention during the 1874 trial that he had seen African Americans fire on white truce flag-bearers from the opposite side of the river. See Lane, *Day Freedom Died*, 172. [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. Grant, “From Blue to Gray,” 181-82, Folder 12, Box 1, Layssard Papers. [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. Grant, “From Blue to Gray,” chapters 11-12, 20-22, Folders 10-12, Box 1, Layssard Papers. [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. On the monument dedication, see “Colfax Riot Monument Unveiled; Fitting Ceremonies Commemorating Historical Event Carried Out Between April Showers,” Colfax *Chronicle*, April 16, 1921, p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. See, for instance, “E. J. Hardtner,” Alexandria *Weekly Town Talk,* April 13, 1907, p. 11; “Judge Francis Douglas Henderson of Boyce Holds Public Office 61 Years; First Elected Justice of Peace in 1877,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, March 4, 1938, p. 9; “Veteran Juror Harris Recalls Battle Over Murray St. Span,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, May 31, 1960, p. 28. [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. “The Roll of Colfax Riot Veterans,” Colfax *Chronicle*, May 9, 1914, p. 1. In contrast, Baker contended that many white southerners likely downplayed their involvement in Reconstruction-era violence in subsequent years. See Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant*, 84. [↑](#endnote-ref-92)
93. See *The Pershing Way Magazine*, clipping, [n. d.], in Melrose Scrapbook 67, p. 35. The *St. Landry* *Clarion* termed Pershing Way Magazine “a highway paper of much value” in its August 28, 1920 edition. See “St. Landry Quota Not Yet Secured,” Opelousas *St. Landry* *Clarion*, August 28, 1920, p. 1. The *Pershing Way Magazine* article was probably published in 1920 or 1921, following the agreement to construct a Pershing Way road through Grant Parish. See (all in Colfax *Chronicle*) “A Rousing Pershing Way Meeting,” February 14, 1920, p. 2; “Exaggerations That Hurt the Whole State of Louisiana,” March 13, 1920, p. 2; “Pershing Way Manager Visits Colfax,” March 19, 1920, p. 2; “The Pershing Way Perfects Its State Organization,” March 27, 1920, p. 2; “No Fight Between Colfax and East and West Grant,” April 4, 1920, p. 2; “Marking the Pershing Way,” July 3, 1920, p. 2; “Annual Pershing Way Convention in Ruston, La.,” February 26, 1921, p. 1; “Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of Road District No. 8,” April 30, 1921, p. 1. John H. McNeely, mentioned as the source of Colfax information in the *Pershing Way Magazine* article, died in January 1927. See John Hodges McNeely, *Louisiana, Statewide Death Index, 1819-1964* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2002. The Shreveport *Times* published a piece in 1922 that likewise labelled “the struggle at Colfax” as “the most important event in the history of this country after Appomattox.” See “Grant Parish Establishing Claim to Fame; ‘Colfax Riots’ Claims Give Way to Agricultural Opportunities,” Shreveport *Times*, October 22, 1922, p. B14. [↑](#endnote-ref-93)
94. “66th Anniversary of Riot at Colfax Is Marked Easter,” Alexandria *Weekly Town Talk*, April 15, 1939, p. 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-94)
95. “The Reunion of Colfax Veterans,” Colfax *Chronicle*, April 18, 1914, p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-95)
96. Keith, *Colfax Massacre*, 90, 96-97. On Christopher Columbus Dunn’s military service see Andrew B. Booth, *Records of Louisiana Confederate Soldiers and Louisiana Confederate Commands* (3 vols.; New Orleans, 1920), Vol. 2, Part 2, 716. On Milton Dunn, see *Confederate Veteran*, 33 (July 1925), 268. [↑](#endnote-ref-96)
97. “History, Legend and Tradition,” Alexandria, *Weekly Town Talk*, March 21, 1914, p. 10. See also undated clipping, Melrose Scrapbook 67. On the monument’s unveiling, see “The Unveiling of the Confederate Monument…,” Alexandria *Weekly Town Talk*, March 28, 1914, pp. 7-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-97)
98. See newspaper clipping, Shreveport *Caucasian*, December 5, 1924; and newspaper clipping, n.d., “Personal,” both in Melrose Scrapbook 67. [↑](#endnote-ref-98)
99. On Henry’s Melrose plantation residence and relationship with Dunn, see Lucy Gutman with Shannon Frystak, “Carmelite ‘Cammie’ Garrett Henry (1871-1948): The Evolution of a Plantation Mistress and Chatelaine of the Arts,” in Mary Farmer-Kaiser and Frystak, eds., *Louisiana Women: Their Lives and Times—Volume 2* (Athens, Ga., 2016), 180-81, 184. Dunn lived at Melrose from 1918 until his death in 1924. [↑](#endnote-ref-99)
100. Annotation next to newspaper clipping, “Colfax Riot Monument Unveiled,” Colfax *Chronicle*, April 14, 1921, Melrose Scrapbook 67. Original emphasis. The *Chronicle* had referred to the “Colfax Riot martyrs” earlier in April 1921. See Colfax *Chronicle*, April 2, 1921, p. 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-100)
101. Gutman with Frystak, “Carmelite ‘Cammie’ Garrett Henry,” 185. [↑](#endnote-ref-101)
102. See William Steen to N. D. Canterbury, November 2, 1929; Canterbury to Caroline Dormon, November 4, 1929; Robert Moore to Canterbury, November 22, 1929; Canterbury to Steen, November 25, 1929; Canterbury to Dormon, December 2, 1929, all in Folder 386, Caroline Dormon Collection, CGHRC. On the tree dedication, see “Historic Colfax Tree Registered in Hall of Fame at Washington,” Colfax *Chronicle*, April 9, 1921, p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-102)
103. “Grant Parish; Some Famous Early Explorers Remarked on the Unknown Pecan Nut and Settlement Began With a French Land Grant; Famous Today for the Pecan Festival,” Alexandria *Town Talk*, February 27, 1999, “Legends & Lore; Annual Report 1999” section, p. 26. [↑](#endnote-ref-103)
104. Melrose Scrapbook 67. Original emphases. [↑](#endnote-ref-104)
105. See, for instance, Oscar W. Watson to Milton Dunn, June 16, 1922, Melrose Bound Volume 5, pp. 349-50, Melrose Collection. Watson disagreed with several elements of the *Chronicle*’s account of the massacre. For another example of disagreement over the death toll, see Cammie Henry annotation (citing Milton Dunn’s estimate) on June 4, 1921, “Statement of Facts concerning the Colfax Riot by C.H. Thomas,” Melrose Scrapbook 67, p. 26b. This article employs Bodnar’s definitions of vernacular versus official memory. See Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 13-14. See also Cubitt, “History, Psychology and Social Memory,” 23. [↑](#endnote-ref-105)
106. Melrose Bound Volume 2, pp. 43, 47-8, Melrose Collection. See also “Following is an interesting review…,” Folder 33, Judge Jones Collection, CGHRC. McCain’s account was likely from 1928 or slightly later. It was subsequently published in the Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*. See “Montgomery, La., Man Tells about Colfax Riot,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, March 17, 1933, p. 18. For Dunn’s recollection, see Melrose Bound Volume 3, p. 148, Melrose Collection. [↑](#endnote-ref-106)
107. As a slight exception, Oscar Watson’s recollection briefly noted the prevalence of black theft and murder before the massacre, and that “negro men were making brags, [*sic*] that they would clean out the white men and take their women for wives,” but he did not mention any alleged rapes. See Watson, “One of the Incidents of My Boyhood Days,” Melrose Bound Volume 2, p. 56. Perhaps significantly, Watson lived in Texas, not Louisiana’s Red River Valley, where hegemonic white Colfax memory was more frequently articulated. Not all recollections addressed the massacre’s causation. See, for instance, A. B. Conley to Dunn, September 9, 1923, Melrose Bound Volume 5, pp. 164-74. [↑](#endnote-ref-107)
108. Photograph annotated and signed by Milton Dunn, Melrose Scrapbook 67. Emphases added. [↑](#endnote-ref-108)
109. Melrose Bound Volume 2, p. 43. [↑](#endnote-ref-109)
110. Josephine Means to Cammie Henry, September 4, 1934, Folder 100, Melrose Collection. In 1910, James H. Cosgrove, who had published a militantly anti-Republican newspaper in Natchitoches in the 1870s but did not fight at Colfax, also alleged that black rape preceded the massacre. See Shreveport *Cosgrove’s Weekly*, December 10, 1910, Melrose Scrapbook 67, p. 35. On Cosgrove’s later life, see Fairclough, *The Revolution that Failed: Reconstruction in Natchitoches* (Gainesville, 2018), 319. [↑](#endnote-ref-110)
111. See for instance, Dosia E. Moore to “My Dear Girls” [Dormon and Henry], July 17, 1928; Moore to “My Dear Girl,” May 14, 1930, both in Folder 1064, Dormon Collection; Moore, “On the Hill Top,” May 29, 1929, Melrose Bound Volume 5, pp. 63-65. On Dormon, see Donald M. Rawson, “Caroline Dormon: A Renaissance Spirit of Twentieth-Century Louisiana,” *Louisiana History*, 24 (Spring 1983), 121-39. [↑](#endnote-ref-111)
112. Moore to Henry, April 16, 1934, Folder 105, Melrose Collection; “Cheneyville High School News,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, May 16, 1932, p. 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-112)
113. On the UDC’s efforts to control historical writing on the Confederacy, see, for instance, Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters*, esp. chap. 6; Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy* (New York, 2018), chap. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-113)
114. For Moore’s written recollections, see, for instance, Folder 1197, Melrose Collection, and (in typed form) Melrose Bound Volume 5, 25-71. For Moore’s book manuscript, see “Once in the Dear, Dead Days, Beyond Recall,” Folder 890, Part A, Dormon Collection. One recollection on Reconstruction described her account as “what we on Bayou Rapides heard about the Colfax Riot.” See Melrose Bound Volume 5, p. 49. Suggesting that Moore’s stories built upon local oral tradition, one of Moore’s recollections about the burning of Alexandria during the Civil War closely mirrored Margaret K. Texada’s account. Margaret Texada was the wife of Colfax paramilitary and cotton planter Joseph W. Texada. See Carol Wells, ed., *War, Reconstruction, and Redemption on Red River: The Memoirs of Dosia Williams Moore* (Ruston, La., 1990), 22-23; “Reminiscences of the C. War,” n.d., Folder 65, Box 1, Texada Family Papers Mss. 5119, LLMVC. On Joseph Texada’s role in the Colfax Massacre, see James K. Hogue, *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge, 2006), 109. For a similarly sexualized post-World War I account of Reconstruction violence in Louisiana from a white woman who grew up during the era, see Lucy Paxton Scarborough, “So It Was When Her Life Began,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, 13 (July 1930), 428-443, at 440-1. Scarborough’s narrative addressed the 1874 Coushatta Massacre. [↑](#endnote-ref-114)
115. “Loyd Shorter,” Melrose Bound Volume 5, pp. 66-69 (quotation on p. 69). The inside cover of the volume is annotated “C.G. Henry Sept 28, 1931.” For white locals’ knowing denials of Shorter’s death, see Lane, *Day Freedom Died*, 152; “Noblesse Oblige,” Alexandria *Caucasian*, February 27, 1875, p. 2. Carol Wells considered the Shorter story “probably… too sensitive to be made public” in Dormon’s compilation. See Wells, ed., *War, Reconstruction, and Redemption*, ix. [↑](#endnote-ref-115)
116. Moore, “Beyond Recall,” 35. [↑](#endnote-ref-116)
117. See Lane, *Day Freedom Died*, 70. [↑](#endnote-ref-117)
118. Moore, “Beyond Recall,” 40-45 (quotation on 45). The manuscript incorrectly stated the year as 1872. [↑](#endnote-ref-118)
119. Myrta Lockett Avary, *Dixie After the War: An Exposition of Social Conditions Existing in the South, During the Twelve Years Succeeding the Fall of Richmond* (New York, 1906), 377; Claude G. Bowers, *The Tragic Era: The Revolution after Lincoln* (Cambridge, Mass., 1929), 308, cited in Sommerville, *Race and Rape*, 178. For an overview of these arguments, see Sommerville, *Race and Rape*, esp. 176-8, 232-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-119)
120. On the film’s reception in central Louisiana, see, for instance, “The Birth of a Nation,” Alexandria *Weekly Town Talk*, May 20, 1916, p. 4; “Talk of the Town,” Alexandria *Weekly Town Talk*, June 3, 1916, p. 5; Colfax *Chronicle*, June 3, 1916, p. 3; “Montgomery Dots,” Colfax *Chronicle*, March 24, 1917, p. 2. On the portrayal of the Civil War and Reconstruction in *Birth of a Nation*, see especially Melvyn Stokes, *D. W. Griffith’s* The Birth of a Nation*:* *A History of the “The Most Controversial Motion Picture of All Time”* (Oxford, 2007), chap. 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-120)
121. Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (new ed.; London, 2015), 718, 758-59. [↑](#endnote-ref-121)
122. Manie White Johnson, “The Colfax Riot of April 1873” [1930], Grant Parish Public Library, Colfax, Louisiana; hereinafter cited as Johnson, “Colfax Riot,” GPPL; Johnson, “The Colfax Riot of April, 1873,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, 13 (July 1930), 391-427. [↑](#endnote-ref-122)
123. “Turning point; Efforts under way to learn more about event that helped end Reconstruction,” Alexandria *Sunday Town Talk*, January 28, 2007, p. A1. See also “Colfax has rich, storied history,” Alexandria *Town Talk*, July 8, 2002, p. 4. Pap Dean, author of *Colfax: Its Place in Louisiana*, claimed in 2003 that Johnson’s account was “probably the best written on the riot.” See “Pap Dean knows Colfax has stories to tell, Alexandria *Town Talk*, November 7, 2003, p. D3. [↑](#endnote-ref-123)
124. “Thesis Is Written On Colfax Riot Of 1873; Mrs. Manie White Johnson Tells of Clash At Grant Parish Courthouse On Easter Sunday,” Alexandria *Weekly Town Talk*, May 31, 1930, p. 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-124)
125. Johnson, “Colfax Riot,” GPPL, 7 (Kellogg), 11 (first quotation), 17 (Metropolitan Police), 30 fn 120 (second quotation), 21 (third quotation). Assistant Adjutant General DeKlyne arrived shortly after the massacre, but he did not make arrests during that visit. See Alexandria *Louisiana Democrat*, May 7, 1873, p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-125)
126. “Bolton High Students Win National Honors; Claude O’Quin, Jr., and Shirley Forgotson Awarded First and Second Prizes for Literary Efforts,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, May 4, 1933, p. 3. Claude O’Quin Jr. may have been related to the John O’Quin charged in *United States v. Columbus C. Nash, et al.* (1874). See Indictment filed in case of *United States v. Columbus C. Nash et al.*, February 20, 1874, Case Files, 1873-1911, Record Group 21, NARA, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/251436>. [↑](#endnote-ref-126)
127. “Reconstruction Period In South Is Reviewed; Planters and Their Wives in Constant Terror of Carpetbaggers and Negroes,” Alexandria *Daily* *Town Talk*, November 2, 1936, p. 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-127)
128. *Ibid.* [↑](#endnote-ref-128)
129. Johnson, “Colfax Riot,” GPPL, 11 (“hatred”), 8 (“politician”). [↑](#endnote-ref-129)
130. “Judge J. A. Williams Writes Interesting Review of Colfax Riot-White Supremacy, 1873; Breastworks Demolished By Canon Served By A Northern Soldier and English Canoneer—Summerfield Springs was Headquarters,” Colfax *Grant Parish* *Enterprise*, August 30, 1928, p. 1. The newspaper published further articles by Williams addressing the topic on September 6, 13, and 20, 1928. [↑](#endnote-ref-130)
131. Colfax *Chronicle*, June 3, 1882, p. 1; Grant, “From Blue to Gray,” chap. 18, Folder 12, Box 1, Layssard Papers. [↑](#endnote-ref-131)
132. One advert informed readers, “during Republican carpet-bag days and negro rule, a bond issue was put upon our state… Is it wise now to go back fifty years and imitate the ignorant negro lawmakers?” See “Taxpayers of Louisiana; Read A Careful Warning,” Alexandria *Daily Town Town*, November 17, 1928, p. 3. For other examples, see “‘Ku Klux Klan’ Presented at Park; Edna Park Players Staging Last Play of Their Engagement,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, August 17, 1923, p. 9; “Confederates are Welcomed; Louisiana’s Heroes in Gray Open Reunion At City Hall,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, November 25, 1926, p. 1. For an exception to this general rule – a political attack against gubernatorial candidate John M. Parker for his supposed Reconstruction-era racial apostasy – see “The Attention of Voters of Alexandria and Rapides Parish,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, January 15, 1920, p. 3. Parker, who had faced similar charges when campaigning as a Progressive party candidate in 1916, won the governorship in 1920. See William Ivy Hair, *The Kingfish and His Realm: The Life and Times of Huey P. Long* (Baton Rouge, 1991), 76-78, 93-100. [↑](#endnote-ref-132)
133. James J. A. Fortier, ed., *Carpet-Bag Misrule in Louisiana: The Tragedy of The Reconstruction Era Following the War Between The States* (New Orleans, 1938), 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-133)
134. *Ibid.*, 23. On Pinchback and Dunn’s birthplaces, see Charles Vincent, *Black Legislators in Louisiana during Reconstruction* (Carbondale, Ill., 1976), 8, 33. On the “carpetbagger” term’s genesis, see especially Ted Tunnell, “Creating the ‘Propaganda of History’: Southern Editors and the Origins of *Carpetbagger* and *Scalawag*,” *Journal of Southern History*, 72 (November 2006), 789-822; K. Stephen Prince, “Legitimacy and Interventionism: Northern Republicans, the ‘Terrible Carpetbagger,’ and the Retreat from Reconstruction,” *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 2 (December 2012), 538-63. [↑](#endnote-ref-134)
135. Mabel Brasher et al., *Louisiana: a Study of the State* (Richmond, 1929), 13; Louis J. Nicolosi, “The Teaching of Louisiana History in the School Curriculum,” *Louisiana History,* 13 (Winter 1972), 35-45 at 39; Harry Hansen (ed.), *Louisiana: A Guide to the State* (New rev. ed.; New York, 1971), 48-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-135)
136. “C. A. Duplissey, Last Survivor of Colfax Riot, Dies,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, November 12, 1942, p. 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-136)
137. Jason Morgan Ward, “Causes Lost and Found: Remembering and Refighting Reconstruction in the Roosevelt Era,” in Emberton and Baker, eds., *Remembering Reconstruction*, 50-2, 55 fn35; Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant*, 160. On invocations of Reconstruction by white supremacist women in the 1950s and 1960s, see McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance*, 188-89, 192, 195. [↑](#endnote-ref-137)
138. “State Official Slates Meetings in Grant Parish; To Stimulate Interest in Area’s Tourist Attractions,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, February 18, 1947, p. 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-138)
139. Lane, *Day Freedom Died*, 260; “Historic Colfax Riot Plaque To Be Unveiled June 14,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, June 11, 1951, p. 15 (quotation). [↑](#endnote-ref-139)
140. “Texas Tourists Feted in Colfax,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, May 3, 1961, p. 7. See also “Michigan Couple Feted in Colfax,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, May 10, 1962, p. 7. For a later example, see “History is Economic Resource,” Alexandria *Town Talk*, January 25, 1992, p. 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-140)
141. See for instance, *Grant Parish, Louisiana Planning Board, Resources and Facilities* (n.d. [c. 1947]), Grant Parish Public Library, Colfax, Louisiana, 20; “Skeletons Dug Up at Colfax Believed Those of Victims of 1873 Racial Riot,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, April 15, 1965, p. 11. For a joking reference to “the big Colfax Riot down at Clarks [likely Clarks, Caldwell Parish],” see “Kelly News,” Caldwell(La.) *Watchman-Progress*, April 16, 1948, p. 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-141)
142. “Prep Scene by Al Nassif,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, October 26, 1971, p. A12. On the court-ordered school consolidation in Grant Parish, see “Grant Readying for First Full School Day Wednesday,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, p. A2. On school desegregation and integration in Louisiana, see Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915-1972* (2nd ed.; Athens, Ga., 2008), chap. 14. For the longevity of the student newspaper name see “Bolton ‘Cumtux’ Rated Excellent at Press Meeting,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, December 13, 1948, p. 12; “Colfax ‘Riot’ Staff Gets Set for First Issue,” Alexandria *Town Talk*, September 25, 1965, p. A14; “Coveted State Awards Are Won By Colfax Students, Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, June 11, 1966, p. B1; *Flame ’71: Colfax High School, Colfax, Louisiana* Volume 21, p. 29. The 1965 article claimed that the paper started “in the early 1940’s.” [↑](#endnote-ref-142)
143. “Putting Out ‘Colfax Riot,’” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, November 19, 1960, p. 15. [↑](#endnote-ref-143)
144. “Coveted State Awards Are Won By Colfax Students, Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, June 11, 1966, p. B1. [↑](#endnote-ref-144)
145. “Reconstruction,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk* *Centennial Edition*, March 18, 1983, pp. 104-6 (first to seventh quotation on 104; eighth to eleventh quotation on 105; twelfth quotation on 105-6; thirteenth quotation on 106). For another example of the persistence of white supremacist-influenced interpretations in newspaper accounts of Reconstruction (and the Colfax Massacre in particular), see “How We Were Almost Shreveport, Texas,” Shreveport *Times*, January 27, 1996, p. B5. [↑](#endnote-ref-145)
146. On historical silences, see especially Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 26. [↑](#endnote-ref-146)
147. Sipress, “Triumph of Reaction,” 369. [↑](#endnote-ref-147)
148. Emberton, *Beyond Redemption: Race, Violence, and the American South after the Civil War* (Chicago, 2013), 210. See also Emberton, “Axes of Empire.” [↑](#endnote-ref-148)
149. Lane, *Day Freedom Died*, 150-52. In 1874 Deputy U.S. Marshal DeKlyne also voiced the fear that without U.S. troops stationed at Colfax, black trial witnesses “would surely be massacred as fast as they returned to Grant Parish.” See William H. Emory to Assistant Adjutant General, June 23, 1874, Letters Sent, Department of the Gulf, pp. 78-79, Vol. 115, E 1962, Pt. 1, RG 393. [↑](#endnote-ref-149)
150. “The Literary Tradition of North Louisiana,” Shreveport *Times*, July 13, 1958, p. F1; “Famous Writer; continued,” *Ebony*, June 1966, p. 190. [↑](#endnote-ref-150)
151. Frank Yerby, *The Vixens: A Novel* (New York, 1947), 9, 303-21 (quotation on 9); Stephanie Brown, *The Postwar African American Novel: Protest and Discontent, 1945-1960* (Jackson, Miss., 2011), esp. 71-97. [↑](#endnote-ref-151)
152. Joan Redding, “The Dillard Project: The Black Unit of the Louisiana Writers’ Project,” *Louisiana History*, 32 (Winter 1991), 47-62. Christian revised portions of the manuscript between 1942 and his death in 1976. See “Foreword,” Marcus Christian Collection, Mss. 11, Louisiana and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans, <https://louisianadigitallibrary.org/islandora/object/uno-p15140coll42%3A8>. [↑](#endnote-ref-152)
153. Marcus Christian, “The Negro in Louisiana,” chapter 28, 25-32, Christian Collection, <http://www.louisianadigitallibrary.org/islandora/object/uno-p15140coll42%3A32>. [↑](#endnote-ref-153)
154. Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant*, 84. Florida native T. Thomas Fortune’s public career was an exception to this general rule, although he highlighted Reconstruction-era violence while living outside the South. See Shawn Leigh Alexander, “T. Thomas Fortune, Racial Violence of Reconstruction, and the Struggle for Historical Memory,” in Emberton and Baker, eds., *Remembering Reconstruction*, 59-83. [↑](#endnote-ref-154)
155. Lalita Tademy, *Red River* (2nd ed.; London, 2015), 428 (first quotation), 430 (second quotation), 2-3 (third quotation), 383 (fourth quotation). [↑](#endnote-ref-155)
156. “Tragedy at Colfax,” *The Angolite*, November/December 1989, 35-53. [↑](#endnote-ref-156)
157. *Ibid.*, 49-50. See also Lane, *Day Freedom Died*, 260. [↑](#endnote-ref-157)
158. Tademy, *Red River*, 98 (quotation), prologue, chap. 25, 356-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-158)
159. *1990 Census of Population and Housing; Population and Housing Unit Counts; Louisiana* (Washington, D.C., 1990), 32, <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen1990/cph2/cph-2-20.pdf>; “Colfax, Louisiana Population: Census 2010 and 2000 Interactive Map, Demographics, Statistics, Quick Facts,” *Census Viewer* (2011-12, Moonshadow Mobile, Inc.), <http://censusviewer.com/city/LA/Colfax>; “Colfax riot or massacre,” Baton Rouge *Advocate*, March 7, 2013, <https://www.theadvocate.com/nation_world/article_6ba52506-ed40-5fa3-a55b-c2ddb54e01f9.html>. [↑](#endnote-ref-159)
160. See, for instance, “The Colfax Riot: Stumbling on a Forgotten Reconstruction Tragedy, in a Forgotten Corner of Louisiana,” *The Atlantic*, July/August 2003, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2003/07/the-colfax-riot/378556/>. Books addressing the Colfax Massacre by Lalita Tademy, Charles Lane, and LeeAnna Keith, were published in 2006, 2008, and 2009 respectively. Another book on the topic, aimed at younger readers, came out in 2018. See Lawrence Goldstone, *Unpunished Murder: Massacre at Colfax and the Quest for Justice* (New York, 2018). [↑](#endnote-ref-160)
161. “Colfax Riot; 1873 Massacre Recalled,” Alexandria *Town Talk*, April 13, 2003, p. A3. For subsequent ceremonies, see “Calendar; Today’s events,” Alexandria *Town Talk*, April 13, 2008, p. A2; “The Seeds of Survival,” New York *Times*, June 13, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/14/garden/juneteenth-gardens-planting-the-seeds-of-survival.html>. [↑](#endnote-ref-161)
162. “‘Righteous Cause; Reparations are Key on Path to Healing, Group Claims,” Alexandria *Daily Town Talk*, April 14, 2008, p. 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-162)
163. “Turning Point; Efforts Under Way to Learn More about Event that Helped End Reconstruction,” Alexandria *Town Talk*, January 28, 2007, p. A1; “Colfax Riot Informational Meeting Draws Film Crew,” Alexandria *Town Talk*, September 8, 2007, p. A5. [↑](#endnote-ref-163)
164. “Our View; Moving Ahead Means Really Remembering,” Alexandria *Town Talk*, January 30, 2007, p. B4. [↑](#endnote-ref-164)
165. “Events Leading to the Colfax Riot,” Alexandria *Town Talk*, January 28, 2007, p. A1. [↑](#endnote-ref-165)
166. “Riot,” Alexandria *Town Talk*, January 28, 2007, p. A5. [↑](#endnote-ref-166)
167. “Tranquil Nature Belies Grant’s Rich Heritage,” Alexandria *Town Talk*, June 16, 2007, p. A6. The same wording appeared in “Nature,” Alexandria *Town Talk*, April 15, 2007, “Fact, Fiction, Folklore” section, p. 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-167)
168. See, for instance, Equal Justice Initiative, *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror* (3d ed., 2017), <https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/report/>; “Hatewatch; In a small Louisiana town, two monuments to white supremacy stand on public ground,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, January 24, 2018, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/01/24/small-louisiana-town-two-monuments-white-supremacy-stand-public-ground>. [↑](#endnote-ref-168)
169. “Colfax riot or massacre,” Baton Rouge *Advocate*, March 7, 2013, <https://www.theadvocate.com/nation_world/article_6ba52506-ed40-5fa3-a55b-c2ddb54e01f9.html>. A shortened version of this article, that excluded Avery Hamilton’s disagreement over the “riot” label, appeared in the *Town Talk*. See “Massacre at Colfax Was Pivotal Event in Reconstruction,” Alexandria *Town Talk*, February 24, 2013, p. A7. [↑](#endnote-ref-169)
170. Grant Parish Police Jury Minutes, May 11, 2017; Thomas E. Barber, email correspondence with the author, July 24, 2019. On the difficulty of removing, modifying, or supplementing the town’s 1951 marker, see also “Cover Story: The Ghosts of Colfax,” *Bayou Brief; Nonprofit Journalism for Louisiana*, June 16, 2017, <https://www.bayoubrief.com/2017/06/16/the-ghosts-of-colfax/>. [↑](#endnote-ref-170)
171. “Colfax Doesn’t Need Meddlers,” Alexandria *Town Talk*, February 4, 2007, p. D3. [↑](#endnote-ref-171)
172. “Remembering Reconstruction: The Memphis Massacre of 1866,” October 11, 2016, <http://blogs.memphis.edu/memphismassacre1866/2016/10/11/remembering-reconstruction-the-memphis-massacre-of-1866/>. [↑](#endnote-ref-172)
173. On the challenges and opportunities surrounding public commemorations of Reconstruction, including episodes of mass violence, see especially Prior et al., “Roundtable.” For a parallel example concerning the commemoration of painful histories (in this case, the massacre of Native Americans in Colorado in 1864) and their incorporation into national narratives, see Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013). [↑](#endnote-ref-173)