

Lynchings in Alabama

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I found a list of lynchings in the State of Alabama. I immediately wanted to know how my county, Sumter stood in that record. The findings may be of interest to other county residents. The list started in 1877 just after reconstruction and ended the year I was born in Sumter County, 1950. A total of 363 lynchings were recorded in Alabama. That gives an average of 5.4 lynchings per county.

The research goal was that of determining if there were consistencies across the state or where there may have been high and low lynching numbers. There were a number of different findings that helped me to understand life and threat levels in various parts of the state.

Counties are listed in alphabetical order with the number of recorded lynchings reported for them. The list may not be used as a conclusion but as reporting because no crime gets reported 100% of the time. While reading, one may consider the fact that some of the people making the reports were possibly the same people that were doing some of the lynchings. Such could lead to under-reporting.

Lynchings by County

County	Lynched
Autauga	4
Baldwin	1
Barbour	5
Bibb	15
Blount	3
Bullock	3
Butler	12
Calhoun	3
Chambers	2
Cherokee	2
Chilton	12
Choctaw	7
Clark	6
Clay	1
Cleburne	2
Coffee	2
Colbert	12
Coosa	2
Covington	7
Crenshaw	4
Cullman	3
Dale	3
Dallas	15
Elmore	13
Escambia	1
Etowah	1
Franklin	2
Geneva	2
Greene	1
Hale	2
Henry	13
Houston	7

Jackson	3
Jefferson	29
Lamar	5
Lauderdale	2
Lawrence	2
Lee	4
Limestone	3
Lowndes	14
Macon	1
Madison	10
Marengo	4
Marion	1
Mobile	7
Monroe	18
Montgomery 12	12
Morgan	3
Perry	1
Pickens	15
Pike	5
Russell	5
Shelby	7
St. Clair	7
Sumter	7
Talladega	5
Tallapoosa	4
Tuscaloosa	8
Walker	4
Washington	3
Wilcox	6

Sumter and Joining Counties

County	Number
Pickens	15
Sumter	7
Choctaw	7
Marengo	4
Greene	1

Sumter is in an area of the state with the fewest lynchings. In this chart, the average is 6.8 lynching for Sumter and neighboring counties. The high number in Pickens County will be addressed later. This area finding is higher than the 5.4 average for the state.

Counties with Lowest Lynch Numbers

County	Number
Baldwin	1
Clay	1
Escambia	1
Etowah	1
Greene	1
Macon	1
Marion	1
Perry	1

These are the counties with the lowest number of lynchings. The counties are spread across the state and do not

fall in either of the other categories. Three-eighth or 37.5% were in the Black Belt. The county with the highest black population, Greene, is included on this list with the lowest number of lynchings.

Choctaw	7	41%
Pickens	15	40%
Pike	5	37%
Crenshaw	4	23%

Black Belt

County	Number	Black
Pickens	15	40%
Dallas	15	70%
Lowndes	14	73%
Montgomery	12	58%
Butler	12	44%
Sumter	7	72%
Choctaw	7	41%
Wilcox	6	70%
Russell	5	44%
Pike	5	37%
Barbour	5	47%
Marengo	4	51%
Crenshaw	4	23%
Bullock	3	70%
Hale	2	57%
Perry	1	67%
Macon	1	81%
Greene	1	80%

The average number of lynchings in the Black Belt was 6.6 per county. This list is considerably higher than the 5.4 average for the state. There was an average of 1.2 more people lynched in the Black Belt than average for the state. It looks like the more blacks in a county the less likely there was to be a lynching.

Pickens County is majority white but had the highest number of Black Belt lynchings. Something may still be going on in Pickens County. That is where the Feds sent Rodney Coats when he was moved from Sumter in the 2016 jail raid. Pickens is a majority white county but it lynched 200% more people than the average Black Belt County. Pickens also lynched more than two times the average for the state.

Black Belt by Population

County	Number	Black
Macon	1	81%
Greene	1	80%
Lowndes	14	73%
Sumter	7	72%
Bullock	3	70%
Wilcox	6	70%
Dallas	15	70%
Perry	1	67%
Montgomery	12	58%
Hale	2	57%
Marengo	4	51%
Barbour	5	47%
Russell	5	44%
Butler	12	44%

The above chart looks at the number of lynchings vs percentage of black people in the county. Macon County is home to the city of Tuskegee and Greene County joins Sumter for the fewest lynchings. Both have 80% black population. When multi-race citizens and foreigners are deducted, the white populations are less than 20%. When one looks at Lowndes County that joins both Dallas and Montgomery the number of lynchings is high. Dallas and Montgomery have a black population percentage that is close to the same as Macon and Greene Counties, but the lynch numbers are quite different.

Russell County is across the River from Columbus, GA a major metropolitan area. It is located like Epes and Boligee. Russell County, Alabama and Columbus, Georgia may have allowed for freer movement and escape if people could quickly cross the river and fall under a different jurisdiction.

Black Belt Counties with Majority White

County	Number
Pickens	15
Montgomery	12
Butler	12
Choctaw	7
Russell	5
Pike	5
Barbour	5
Crenshaw	4

The majority white Black Belt Counties had 8.1 lynchings per county.

Black Belt Counties with Majority Black

County	Number
Dallas	15
Lowndes	14
Sumter	7
Wilcox	6
Marengo	4
Bullock	3
Hale	2
Perry	1
Macon	1
Greene	1

The majority black counties in the Black Belt had 5.4 lynchings per county. It would appear that the code was clearer in majority black counties. That may make sense as there were enough blacks to help and hide each other. Counties with former slaves knew how to elude the former masters. This group may have been more likely to escape or leave than in a majority white county.

Dallas County is explained. Lowndes County is between Selma and Montgomery. A large part of Lowndes joins Dallas County on the west and it joins Montgomery County on the east. Whatever was going on in Dallas County appears to have been going on in Lowndes. On today, Dallas County has a black population of 69% and Lowndes has 73%.

Counties with Majority Black Population

County	Lynch	Black	Seat
Dallas	15	69%	Selma
Lowndes	14	73%	Hayneville
Sumter	7	72%	Livingston
Wilcox	6	70%	Camden
Marengo	4	51%	Demopolis
Bullock	3	70%	Union Springs
Hale	2	59%	Greensboro
Perry	1	67%	Marion
Macon	1	81%	Tuskegee
Greene	1	80%	Eutaw

These are the counties with the highest black population vs the number of lynching. Dallas County is clear but Lowndes County is not explained. Something has been going on in Dallas County for a while. Bloody Sunday and the Edmond Pettus Bridge speaks to the issues in Dallas. Perry County with only one lynching joins Dallas County in land.

The county line seems to have made a difference, if one could cross it from Dallas. The counties with the highest black population percentage did not have the highest number of lynchings.

What is missing is the number of blacks that may have killed whites. That may show a level of resistance if it existed. The average for majority black counties was the same 5.4 as the state's average.

*It must be noted that the counties with the highest percentage of black citizens were not necessarily the counties that had the highest number of citizens or the highest number of lynchings. The lynching was not in equal percentage with the population. To get a clearer picture, detailed research is necessary for each county, but the findings would not have been useful for this writing.

Majority White Counties

Central East Alabama
Regional 6

County	Lynched	White
Henry	13	70%
Butler	12	53%
Covington	7	84%
Houston	7	69%
Pike	5	60%
Barbour	5	49%
Crenshaw	4	72%
Dale	3	74%
Coffee	2	76%
Geneva	2	87%

This Region is directly across the state from Sumter County and on the Georgia line instead of Mississippi. The average was 6.0 lynchings per county which was higher than the average. Geneva County makes the most sense on the list with 87% white and 2 lynchings. Henry County makes the least sense with 13 lynchings of 30% non-white citizens. Henry County lynched about 1 of every 2% of its non-white population.

The 1800s race mixing and role confusion may have led to the high number of lynchings in Henry County, if role confusion existed. A local church's history says a number of closely related black and white people with the same last name co-exist in that county on today. Race mixing could have caused negative confusion among both black and white people. That makes the date of lynching important, especially if the dates were close together.

This average of 6.0 competes with the Black Belt of 6.6 where there are a high number of blacks. About 70% of the population in Region 6 is white. This majority white region had a higher percentage of lynchings than the group of majority black counties. It would have been interesting to know how many of the lynchings were related to race matters vs other issues like stealing and fights.

Counties with Highest Number of Lynchings

County	Number
Jefferson	29
Monroe	18
Pickens	15
Dallas	15
Bibb	15
Lowndes	14
Henry	13
Elmore	13
Colbert	12
Chilton	12
Montgomery	12
Butler	12

Jefferson and Dallas Counties show up on almost every list that has high lynching. For reference, the county seats are Birmingham and Selma. Something was going on in the Selma area. It has been home to a historically black college since 1878. The lynchings started around the time that Selma University was born. Lynchings appear to have been strong enough to over-power the black Baptist preacher's college where a number of Sumter County preachers have attended.

Large Population Counties

County	No.	City
Jefferson	29	Birmingham
Dallas	15	Selma
Montgomery	12	Montgomery
Madison	10	Huntsville
Tuscaloosa	8	Tuscaloosa
Mobile	7	Mobile

In the large metropolitan areas, Selma and Birmingham have the highest number. Dr. King had the most challenge in those areas as well. There may have been high black resistance to whatever was going on in those areas. Mobile has a low number considering the size of that city. There was no Civil Rights disturbance of record for Mobile and Tuscaloosa as it was for Birmingham and Selma.

The above chart shows an average of 14 lynchings per high population county. That is more than two times higher than the 5.4 average for the state, also higher than Sumter and its surrounding counties, as well as higher than the Black Belt. Tuscaloosa has low numbers. When the Governor stood in the University of Alabama's door in 1963 the issue was peacefully resolved. The earlier generation may have been civil in the Tuscaloosa community.

Conclusion:

The number and location of lynchings suggests that it was less safe for blacks to live in majority white counties than it was for them to live in majority black counties. The year of lynching would have been helpful. I am also able to conclude that blacks living in the Black Belt where they were worked hard were not as likely to be lynched as those that lived in counties that did not have the Black Belt's rich farm land.

In Sumter, there is a published account of a 1930 riot between the Dial, Boyd, Robbins, and Robinson families. Several blacks and a white person were killed in the Emelle area. North Sumter appears to have been the hot bed for lynching.

The record shows that in 1883 Paul Archer, Will Archer, Emma Fair, Ed Guyton, Joe Floyd, and Paul Hill were lynched by a white mob in Pickens County. They had been arrested and accused of burning a mill and cotton gin. The Archie family now lives in North Sumter, just below the Pickens County line. It was not unusual during reconstruction for Negroes of the day to bump heads with a white person, change their name and leave the area. During reconstruction, one did not have to go far to be out of reach.

In 1946, a group from Aliceville came to Sumter County looking for my second cousin L. T. Connor. He had bumped heads with a white man in Aliceville. He did not tell my grandmother, his aunt when he got to Sumter County.

As the story goes, my grandmother, told L. T. to send his mother some of the money he was making. When he sent money the postmaster told the lynch mob where L. T. was living. The lynch mob put L. T.'s brother in a car and drove from Aliceville one Saturday night to find L. T. When they could not find him, they shot my grandfather, Robert Johnson, in the head. Dr. Hill did surgery but my grandfather soon died from the shooting.

The verifiable story goes on that another second cousin Alice got L. T. a wig, dress, purse, and lunch. She put him on the train in Meridian and he went to Cleveland, OH and never returned to Alabama. My innocent grandfather took another man's bullet from the Pickens County lynch mob. There was Sumter County court action on the matter.

My grandfather has two living children today. They will turn 86 and 92 this year. They were in the house when the lynch mob came and took their father away. For 72 years the family has only talked about this experience with family members. The talk has been limited to Robert and Clara

Johnson's descendants. Lynch mobs in Pickens County don't play.

Aliceville probably saved the lynch mob of question. The Connor family was very close and they did not play at all. This is how close they were. L. T. was Uncle Jack's son and he was living at his Aunt Clara's house. It was Aunt Carrie's daughter Alice that put him on the train and he went to Cleveland where Aunt Bessie's children lived, Eloise, Louise, and John. Love was such that ten years later in 1957 my grandmother named a grandson Jack. The Connor family is from the Kinterbish area.

May 15, 2018 Addition
Pickens County Alabama, Lynching

Year	Name	Method	Accused for
1893	Archer, Paul	Shot	Mill and Gin Arson
1893	Archer, Will	Shot	Mill and Gin Arson
1893	Fair, Emma	Shot	Mill and Gin Arson
1893	Floyd, Joe	Unknown	Unknown
1893	Guyton, Ed	Shot	Mill and Gin Arson
1893	Hill Paul	Shot	Mill and Gin Arson
1878	Wells, Henry	Shot	Courthouse Arson

William Archer was born in 1865 and he was 28 years old in 1893. Will married Mary Bradley in 1891. There is some change in the name, therefore this is not considered to be confirmed as the same person.

There is a Joe Floyd in the 1870 census in Alabama but it does not give a city of resident. He would have been 27 at the time of the lynching.

Ed Guyton was born in 1880 and would have only been 13 years old at the time of lynching, if this is the same person.

Paul Hill was 36 and had two sons.

Henry Wells was 52 and may have been the leader. He was born in Mississippi but his parents were born in South Carolina. Another family was living with him in the 1880. The travel suggests to me that he had been a slave. His age suggests to me that he was a leader.

There was no death record found for any of the people that were lynched. That may suggest that these people were wiped from the record at the time of lynching.

Sumter County

I recall having heard of another lynching in Sumter County. Mr. Steve Larkin at my home community, born in 1820 had a son name Steve Jr. Steve Jr, (Uncle Steve) they called him was born in 1859 and died in 1939. Uncle Steve's daughter was lynched. The Walton family came to lynch her husband and she reached for the shot gun and they killed her that night. She has living nephews that can tell the full story. I do not want to get into that because I am not in that family. I know both the Walton and the Larkin family very well.

Uncle Steve died at 80, some 11 years before I was born. His lynched daughter has living grand-children and nephews today. I have heard the lady's nephew and two of my relatives tell the Sumter County lynch story. This did not take place in my life time.

1900 Census

<i>Household</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Birthplace</i>	<i>Birth Year</i>
Stephen Larkin Jr.	Head	M	*56	Alabama	1854
<u>Caroline Larkin</u>	Wife	F	*46	Alabama	1864
<u>Mamie Larkin</u>	Daughter	F	18	Alabama	1882
<u>Pearl Larkin</u>	Daughter	F	16	Alabama	1884
<u>Tonie Larkin</u>	Son	M	14	Alabama	1886
<u>Lena Larkin</u>	Daughter	F	12	Alabama	1888
<u>Isabella Larkin</u>	Daughter	F	9	Alabama	1891
<u>Sallie Larkin</u>	Daughter	F	7	Alabama	1893
<u>Bessie Larkin</u>	Daughter	F	5	Alabama	1895
<u>Ema Larkin</u>	Daughter	F	3	Alabama	1897
<u>Annie May Larkin</u>	Daughter	F	1	Alabama	1899

Uncle Steve had several children born in the 1900s, but it was one of the older daughters since that lady has a grandchild that is more than 90 years old.

*Uncle Steve's age was corrected in the published census report as there are three different ages listed for him. His brother's age was used to justify the change.

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Sources

Main source: Lynchings in America, confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror, Supplement Lynchings by County, 2nd Edition, Equal Justice Initiative, 122 Commerce Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36104. 334-269-1803, www.eji.org, African American Lynchings Victims in the South, 1877-1950, number of lynchings by county/parish.

The verification source for this writing was U. S. Census Bureau Quick Facts.

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