To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Alison Patricia Cook entitled "Newspaper Coverage of Coal Strikes in Cullman, Jefferson, and Walker Counties in North Central Alabama, January and February 1921." I have examined the final paper copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Communication.

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NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF COAL STRIKES IN CULLMAN, JEFFERSON, AND WALKER COUNTIES IN NORTH CENTRAL ALABAMA, JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 1921

A Thesis
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Abstract

The coal strikes in Alabama, especially in Birmingham, Cullman, and Jasper, during January and February 1921, have not been studied. In the early 1900s, newspapers were generally the only source of information and news for people, both in rural and urban areas. The coal strikes during this time were some of the bloodiest in Alabama history. Beatings, lynchings, and murders of strikers were common. Strikebreakers, or scabs, also were abused. White northern Alabama farmers were treated worse than others because union miners felt the farmers were taking their jobs only out of spite. Some simply disappeared and later were presumed to have been murdered. The Alabama National Guard was called in by Governor Thomas E. Kilby to put down and prevent the violence.

The Birmingham News, Birmingham Age-Herald, Birmingham Post (all Jefferson County), The Mountain Eagle (Jasper, Walker County), Cullman Tribune and Cullman Democrat (both Cullman, Cullman County) were each examined for coverage of the coal strikes in January and February 1921.

Questions examined in this research were: 1) How were the coal strikes in January and February 1921 in Cullman, Jefferson, and Walker counties in Alabama covered in the mainstream press rather than in labor advocacy newspapers in the city of Birmingham and the smaller surrounding towns of Cullman and Jasper?; and 2) Were the strikes covered similarly in the urban Birmingham newspapers as in the rural Cullman and Jasper newspapers?

Some of the newspapers covered the strikes, while others did not. Coverage of a trial of National Guardsmen who lynched a man taken out of jail in Jasper usually made the

front-page more than general coverage of the strikes. If the strikes were so terrible, and violence was common, then why were the strikes not discussed more in the newspapers?

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Palmer Raids and other issues more than likely influenced the "society of fear" in Alabama in 1921. The newspapers, as well as the general public probably had suspicions about labor unions and revolts and feared the same would happen in America as in Russia in 1917. These issues, along with other racial and labor animosities added to the lack of coverage of the coal strikes in Alabama in January and February 1921.

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Introduction

There is a great need for the press' perspective to be examined on the topic of "Newspaper Coverage of Coal Strikes in Cullman, Jefferson, and Walker Counties in North Central Alabama, January and February 1921," because most individuals received their news during the early twentieth century either by newspaper or word of mouth. And there is no previous research-in-depth on this subject. The press covered the strikes, but just what the press reported has not been systematically studied.

The examination of newspapers in and around Cullman, Birmingham, and Jasper, Alabama during the strike in the first two months in 1921, when "the situation took a marked turn for the worse," might show what news the residents of the area received regarding the strikes and also the general attitude of the miners, government and mine operators.[1] Brian Kelly's book Race, Class, and Power in the Alabama Coalfields, 1908-21, the most definitive and relevant source on the topic, offers some history, reasons and assumptions as to what occurred during this time in Alabama.

Using that book as a guide, along with other selected secondary sources, and local newspaper coverage of the strikes, a few questions need to be answered in this research. How were the coal strikes in January and February 1921 in Alabama covered in the mainstream press, rather than labor advocacy newspapers, in the city of Birmingham in Jefferson County and the smaller surrounding towns of Cullman in Cullman County and Jasper in Walker County? Were the strikes covered the same in the urban Birmingham newspapers as in the rural Cullman and Jasper newspapers?

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[1] Brian Kelly, Race, Class, and Power in the Alabama Coalfields, 1908-21. (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 2001, 194.

Through examination and study of newspaper coverage of the strikes from January and February 1921, perhaps a better understanding can be developed as to the events in and surrounding Cullman, Jasper, and Birmingham and what was arguably the ugliest period in Alabama coal mining history.

I. Coal Strikes: The Issue

Coal miners were on strike in north-central Alabama from September 1920 to February 1921. The strikes were not peaceful, especially towards the end of 1920 and into January and February 1921, some of the most violent and bloody in mining history.

The United Mine Workers (UMW) called for the strikes officially in September 1920. Thousands protested against low wages and living and poor working conditions, as well as general health and safety issues. When more than half of the 26,000 miners in the region went on strike, other workers were brought in to continue the work.[2] The UMW, however, was not recognized by the state of Alabama. Governor Thomas J. Kilby, a Democrat, and other state officials supported the mine operators and refused to allow the miners to strike legally.

The state brought in replacement workers called strikebreakers, or "scabs," to pick up the slack. Many were black, and their presence caused even greater animosity in an already hostile environment. Black miners could be hired at a cheaper price than white skilled laborers. The white workers often resented this idea, and violence ensued.

Lynchings, murders, beatings and other abuses were directed against those who would not support the UMW, regardless of race. There were also many brutal acts by the Ku Klux Klan, then a great political power in Alabama, against black and white strikebreakers and their families. As the state did not recognize the miners on strike, the striking miners did not recognize those individuals who were trying to work when others would not.

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[2] Kelly, 173.

As 1920 drew to a close, many miners and their families were evicted from company housing for refusing to work. Nearly 40,000 people then had to survive in what many of the newspapers termed "tent colonies." Surplus army tents and funds totaling $70,000 were donated by the UMW and concerned Alabama residents.[3]

Some areas were so dangerous that those strikebreakers who remained inside the coal camps were not allowed to leave unless they obtained written passes from the coal operators. Coal company houses were dynamited, prolabor newspaper publishers were harassed and beaten, and many strikers shot at trains bringing in strikebreakers hired by local coal companies. Hostility and brutality toward anyone against the strike could be seen everywhere as violence became widespread in January and February 1921.[4]

The strike eventually was officially called off on February 22, 1921. It ended miserably, with both sides losing out. The UMW lost half its national membership by the end of the 1920s. The coal industry in Alabama never regained its pre-strike level of coal production because of the labor strife and the decline of workers.[5]

Many coal companies also blacklisted those miners who sided with the UMW during the strike so that they could be denied future employment. Many strikers left Alabama and headed north to the rich coal fields of Kentucky and West Virginia in search of better working conditions, higher wages, and a better life.[6]

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[3] William Warren Rogers et al., Alabama: The History of a Deep South State. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press), 1994, 420.
[4] Ibid, 420.
[5] Ibid, 420.
[6] Ibid, 420; Kelly, 194, 196-97, 200.

II. Background for the Coal Strikes

The Bolshevik Revolution, Red Scare, and Palmer Raids

A number of other issues were also occurring in the United States at the same time or before the coal strikes in Alabama that more than likely had a bearing on the coal strikes and the general fear felt by the public and newspapers. Red scares, reactions to the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, as well as the Palmer raids and deportation of foreign agitators in the U.S. were happening in this same time period.

In November 1917 in Russia Vladimir Lenin led his Bolshevik party in a revolution to overthrow the existing czarist government because of the lack of ammunition for Russian troops in World War I and a lack of food for the Russian people. Lenin and his party promised the Russian people they would have "Peace, Land, and Bread." After gaining control of the government, Lenin ceased fighting, even though German troops covered Russia. On March 3, 1918, Lenin and the Bolsheviks sought a separate peace agreement with Germany. This resulted in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. [7]

Lenin was influenced in his revolution in part through the ideas of Daniel DeLeon, the dominant figure in the Socialist Labor Party in America. DeLeon was editor of the party's newspaper, The People. He wanted to "organize industrial unions with a socialist purpose, and to build a political party that would abolish the state once it gained power," allowing the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance to gain control.[8] The Socialist party

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[7] George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi, America: A Narrative History. Volume II. (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company), 1999, 1145-46.
[8] Ibid, 922.

reached its peak in the U.S. in 1912. Differences over the United States' involvement in World War I split the party and many later left to join the new Communist party.[9]

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 enhanced the American public's fear of labor strikes and race riots. Many believed these small outbreaks were the beginnings of something larger and more similar to that of the turbulence in Russia. It was only a small minority in Russia that succeeded in overthrowing the government, and many in America feared the same for their government.[10]

Many members left the Socialist party in 1919 after World War I to join the Communist party and the Communist Labor party. Fear of "all things German" was funneled into a Red Scare after World War I. In April 1919 several bombs were seized by the U.S. postal service. These bombs were addressed to important and well-known citizens. In June 1919 a bomb damaged Attorney-General A. Mitchell Palmer's house in Washington, D.C. These bombs and other violence did not resemble tactics used by the Bolsheviks, but they further enhanced the belief of a Red Scare.[11]

Attorney-General Palmer wanted to be President. He also wanted to remove all immigrants from the U.S. In 1919 all radical immigrants were deported by the Justice Department. J. Edgar Hoover was appointed head of the newly formed General Intelligence Division. Hoover maintained a file on all radical immigrants. On November 7, 1919 Palmer began his famous "raids," tracking down and deporting thousands of radical immigrants. Between November 1919 and January 1920, over 5,000 people suspected of being radicals were arrested, and some were deported. On December 22,

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[9] Tindall and Shi, 924.
[10] Ibid, 1159.
[11] Ibid, 1160.

1920, a ship left New York for Finland with 249 people on board, all dubbed "anarchists, criminals, and public charges."[12] From Finland, these radicals were deported to Russia and never received a proper trial. In one day, January 2, 1920, several police raids in different cities, organized by Attorney-General Palmer, took in more than 5,000 suspected radicals. Police did not have arrest warrants for several of these suspects, but took them from their homes anyway. Around 2,500 people were kept in custody. At the same time, members of the Socialist party who were elected to the New York legislature were expelled by the legislature.[13]

By June 1920 the Red Scare began to wear thin. It had become like any other fad, and died out. Bolshevism was found only in Russia, because many of the other Communist revolutions in Europe had ceased. Many saw Attorney-General Palmer's threats as attacks on civil liberties. A bomb exploded in New York at the corner of Broad and Wall Streets in September 1920, killing thirty-eight people. Most Americans viewed this, however, as the work of a single lunatic and not that of a Bolshevik Revolution. The Red Scare, however, did disgrace the labor unions in America. It also led to the anti-union open-shop campaign and sentiment and the "America Plan."[14]

Coal Strikes, Coal Industry, Labor Issues

There has been little research on newspaper coverage of the coal strikes in Cullman, Jefferson, and Walker counties in Alabama, especially for the time period of January and February 1921. A few works detail strikes in the coalfields during the 1800s and early

[12] Tindall and Shi, 1160.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid, 1160-61.

1900s, and only one work mentions newspaper coverage of these events. Newspaper coverage can only be determined through primary sources such as the original newspapers. However, there is documentation and study of the strikes in the coalfields of Alabama during the early 20th century, as well as information detailing the coal industry in general.

Brian Kelly's (2001) book primarily focused on black and white miners in the Birmingham, Alabama area and examines the coal strikes in Alabama in-depth from 1908 to 1921. Kelly also examined the strikes there in 1908 and 1920-21. Kelly looked at the efforts by authorities and industrialists of the time to split the workforce, prevent the formation of unions, and lower wages.[15]

Kelly noted three factors that led to the major strike of 1920-21. The mine operators openly defied the United States Coal Commission. The operators also attempted to use "racial manipulation and red-baiting" against the union.[16] Finally, the use of the military by the government in the coal mines and throughout the camps helped the union decide to take action and strike against the operators.[17]

Strikes were occurring by early spring 1920, and by the summer more than five thousand miners were on strike. It would only get worse, Kelly wrote, as the year progressed.[18] John L. Lewis, president of the national UMW, officially called for the

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[15] Chapter six of Kelly's book specifically discusses the many issues and events surrounding the 1920 strike in District 20, the Birmingham district, of the Alabama coalfields. The strike lasted from September 1920 to February 1921. This strike, Kelly said, would set the mood for the general labor relations and problems for the many years to come. Kelly also pointed out that the re-emergence of the UMW during late 1920 and into early 1921 was attributed to outside sources, particularly "radicals, carpetbaggers, and" other "outside agitators." See Kelly, 162-202.
[16] Kelly, 171.
[17] Ibid, 171.
[18] Ibid, 172.

strike on September 7, 1920 in an attempt to force a meeting to compromise between the strikers and the operators. Kelly noted that nearly 13,000 coal miners responded to the call. Another 5,000 men were under contract with the union, but 8,000 refused the call and remained at work in the mines.[19]

Kelly noted that scabs usually could easily be convinced to join the union by union members. Also, he said the hostility towards scabs by the union was not racially motivated. If anything, Kelly said, the white union miners were more sympathetic to the black rather than the white strikebreakers. The white union miners believed that the black scabs could not help their situation and were merely trying to earn a living. However, they had no sympathy for the white scabs, many of whom were farmers from northern Alabama, who they believed were attempting to take advantage of the union's bread wagon. The UMW continually tried to stop strikebreaking, in part because of the treatment scabs received from the mine operators.[20] In some mines, Kelly noted, the scabs went on strike for the treatment they received or for total isolation from the UMW.[21] Kelly pointed out, however, that the hardest job of getting rid of the strikebreakers was providing them with food and transportation out of the coalfields.[22]

Kelly's most important point was his statement that as the strike continued into early 1921, the patience of the UMW was beginning to wear thin. The UMW began to realize they probably would not gain new converts from the scabs.[23] Frustration began to set in, Kelly said, and the UMW saw that "the conviction that those remaining at work had

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[19] Kelly, 173.
[20] Ibid, 181-82.
[21] Ibid, 182-83.
[22] Ibid, 183.
[23] Ibid, 184.

consciously chosen to side with the operators."[24] Van Bittner, the strike coordinator for the UMW said he got tired of the scabs not listening to the UMW and its calls to join the union. Bittner declared, "The scabs had been given sufficient warning," which could only mean that violence would ensue to rid the coal companies of the strikebreakers.

Kelly also wrote that black and white union workers had little sympathy and patience for the northern Alabama white farmers who became strikebreakers in December 1920 and January 1921. Kelly also strongly emphasized that race had little or nothing to do with the strikes. It was worse, in the union's perspective, to not be a part of the union than to be black. [25]

Kelly also mentioned a few newspapers that published articles, editorials, and advertisements arguing both sides of the strike. These included the Manufacturers' Record (Birmingham), the Birmingham Age-Herald, the Workmen's Chronicle (Birmingham), the Advance (Birmingham), the Birmingham Reporter, and the Birmingham Labor Advocate. Kelly did not discuss these newspapers in depth, and also did not list the page of the newspaper on which the articles, reports, editorials, and advertisements occurred.[26]

Kelly wrote that Oscar Adams, a "leading race leader," had a profound effect and influence on the Birmingham Reporter. The newspaper "kept up a steady denunciation of

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[24] Kelly, 184.
[25] Noah Parker was a white farmer who became a strikebreaker in January 1921. He more than likely disappeared (and was murdered) because of the sentiment felt by both black and white union workers as described here by Kelly. See Epilogue; also see Kelly, 185.
[26] Kelly, 164, 165-166, 170, 171-72, 174-75, 178, 184, 190, 192, 193, 194, 198, 199.

the UMW, accompanied by glowing accounts of conditions in the coal camps and reports that black strikebreakers were 'breaking all records in coal production.'"[27]

A newspaper loyal to the union, however, was the Advance, a small newspaper in the region. In December of 1920, it detailed ways to persuade a scab from working in a mine, and described success stories in different mining fields and camps.[28]

Brown and Davis (1999) utilized essays by various scholars to create a chronological look at the past 100 years of the United Mine Workers and how they affected the mines and miners in Alabama. Five essays by Daniel Letwin, Brian M. Kelly, Peter Alexander, Glenn Feldman, and Robert H. Woodrum, key scholars in the area of labor advocacy, describe the tumultuous years of the UMW and its rise and fall. The essays cover the early years of miner organization beginning in 1878, Alabama coal operators search for easy labor from 1908 to 1921, Alabama coal miners' rise from the ashes from 1921 to 1941, coal miners during war and peace from 1942 to 1975, and "Wildcats, Caravans, and Dynamite: Alabama Miners and the 1977-1978 Coal Strike."[29]

Brian M. Kelly's essay in Brown and Davis, concerning the Alabama coal operators search for docile labor, is the most relevant essay because of its inclusion of the years 1908-1921. Kelly discussed the two major strikes during this time period, in 1908 and September 1920 to February 1921.[30]

Kelly wrote that between these two major strikes, the Alabama coal operators attempted to rebuild district labor relations. They wanted to do away with organized

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[27] Kelly, 174.
[28] Ibid, 184.
[29] Edwin L. Brown & Colin J. Davis, Eds., It is Union and Liberty: Alabama Coal Miners and the UMW. (Tuscaloosa & London: University of Alabama Press), 1999.
[30] Ibid, 38-61.

labor and the UMW. Kelly pointed out that the strike of 1908 got rid of the UMW in District 20, the district in and around Birmingham. The Alabama Coal Operators Association, or ACOA, would try over the next dozen years to rid the area of the union completely. The ACOA contracted with the Austin-Robbins detective agency shortly after the strike in 1908 to determine which miners were loyal to the mines and not the union. However, due to strict control over the miners, the mine operators soon discovered that their iron fist was forcing many skilled workers to leave the area in droves in search of better work environments. Kelly noted that one witness described the operators' situation as "capital seeking labor supply."[31] In late 1920 strikes again broke out across the district. The ACOA persuaded Alabama Gov. Thomas Kilby to send state troops to the coal mines to force down the strike.[32]

Kelly also stated that the Ku Klux Klan was used to intimidate strikers. Miners, both white and black, were victims of lynchings, usually ordered by military officials and operators against the union. Kelly said that the coal operators frequently attempted to split the miners along racial lines. He also noted that when the strike in the fall of 1920 occurred, it did so not as a "murderous showdown between whites and blacks," but as an interracial stance against the coal operators.[33] This, said Kelly, "is a testament to the UMW's ability to discipline its ranks against racial provocation and to direct the miners' anger at the operators instead."[34]

Glenn Feldman (1999) provided an in-depth look at the Ku Klux Klan in Alabama for the years 1915 to 1949, with particular focus on politics and society. Feldman discussed

[31] Brown & Davis, 39.
[32] Ibid, 58.
[33] Ibid, 59.
[34] Ibid, 59.

such aspects as origins of the Klan during Reconstruction, the Klan's civic, educational, moral, religious, racist, and nativist involvement.

Feldman also discussed the KKK's political influence during the time period. He points out that the Klan highly pressured and influenced political leaders, such as Kilby and Alabama Sen. J. Thomas Heflin. Many individuals and groups, such as northern newspaper editors, "pressed Governor Thomas Kilby for a formal condemnation [of the Klan]."[35] Kilby, unlike many politicians at the time, was not a member of the Klan. But, Feldman said, "...he [Kilby] still wished to avoid alienating the powerful organization."[36]

The KKK was involved in the coal strikes in Alabama in 1920-21, not only by harassing and threatening political leaders and others in influential positions, but also by "championing," them as well, such as in the case of Heflin.[37] Heflin, a member of the Klan, was a strong racist and "religious demagogue," who was supported and defended many times throughout the 1920s and 1930s by the KKK.[38]

Rogers et al. (1994) discuss a history of Alabama as a Deep South state. The first part of the section dealing with the 1920s through the 1990s, written by Wayne Flynt, has the most relevance to the coal strikes in 1920-21. Rogers et al. discussed much of the same information as can be found in Kelly's (2001) work. They noted when Kilby sent in the Alabama National Guard, they remained for almost six months, disturbed meetings of the UMW, "harassed organizers, and generally sided with management." Rogers et al. pointed out that one reason the National Guard favored the coal company managers was

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[35] Glenn Feldman, Politics, Society, and the Klan in Alabama, 1915-1949. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press), 1999, 66.
[36] Ibid, 66.
[37] Ibid, 66.
[38] Ibid, 66.

because the guardsmen's' salaries and other expenses were paid by the mining companies.[39]

W. M. Adamson (1933) created a vivid picture of the industrial activity in Alabama from 1913 to 1932. He explored different areas of industry including coal, cotton, electricity, pig iron, and steel ingot. His report introduced the industry, examined its growth, seasonal variation, cyclical and random fluctuations, the composite index of industrial activity, and comparison with other lines of activity. The study documents a definite decrease in production for the year 1921, when the bloodiest of strikes were occurring in Alabama.

This decrease was reflected for both production in Alabama and the United States. Also, according to Adamson, Alabama did not retain its "position among the other coal producing areas during the last years of the growth period, 1914 to 1930, despite the recent decline in the total output of all districts."[40] Adamson also examined the seasonal variation of coal production in Alabama. He concluded that coal production was not affected in Alabama by the seasons as much as it was in the nation as a whole.

Adamson's assessment of the cyclical fluctuations also helped determine coal production in Alabama. Cyclical fluctuations demonstrated general business activity, but random fluctuations emerged as deviations from normal between 1919 and 1922. Adamson found that the coal strikes caused, as expected, complications in coal production. He noted that during the economic depression in Alabama in 1921, coal production varied at a lower rate than production for the nation. Therefore, Adamson

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[39] William Warren Rogers et al., Alabama: The History of a Deep South State. (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press), 1994, 419. Also see Chapter I: Coal Strikes: The Issue.
[40] W.M. Adamson, Industrial Activity in Alabama 1913-1932. (Tuscaloosa: Bureau of Business Research, University of Alabama), 1933, 17.

concluded, coal production is "proportionately more curtailed in Alabama than throughout the country during the years of general business depression."[41] He also claimed that the irregular variations in the 1910s and early 1920s were a direct result of the labor disputes. The drop in coal production in late 1919 is a direct reflection of the strike in October of that year.

Adamson said coal production in Alabama was affected until late 1920, when it returned to normal for only a few months before dropping again due to further labor disputes. He claimed that a second strike, in 1922, reduced national coal production to less than half the norm during the 1920s. At this same time, however, the state of Alabama increased its coal production. Alabama accomplished this, Adamson said, only because the strike in 1922 was successful in union mines. The unions' power in Alabama had been shattered during the "prolonged adjustment" during the strike in 1920-21.[42]

Marjorie Longenecker White's (1981) work provided a guide to the communities surrounding Birmingham. It also included a guide to the industrial activity in and around Birmingham. There was much discussion by White of the geology, geography, history, and industry, including mining. The book was divided into the different industries in the Birmingham area, including iron, copper, and mining. Several towns and cities were described in each of these industry areas.[43]

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[41] Adamson, 22.
[42] Ibid, 24.
[43] Marjorie Longenecker White, The Birmingham District: An Industrial History and Guide. (Birmingham: Birmingham Historical Society), 1981.

There was a two-page history of Warrior, Alabama in this guide. It detailed the beginnings of the small mining town in 1871, as well as the continued progress and success into the 20th century.[44]

White also described the mining industry and general mineral resources in the area in and surrounding Birmingham. White briefly discussed the impact World War I had on the coal industry in Alabama between 1917 and 1920, and the emergence of several coke by-products plants in the Birmingham area.[45]

The Southern Railway System (1972) issued a collection of reports on the coal industry in Alabama during the late 1960s to early 1970s. These reports described the current and future coal reserves that are served by Southern Railway System in Alabama. The report gave general information on the coalfields in Alabama and details about the physical and chemical properties of coal. The report noted that the Warrior Coal Field was the most productive of the coalfields. It noted that it was approximately 3,500 square miles and covered eight counties. The report included descriptions of the dominant coal seams and the seven coal groups serving the Warrior Coal Field.[46]

Although this work was a collection of reports based on information gathered in the 1960s and 1970s, the general information on coal and the region remains relevant to and gives vital background information on coal in the area for the research topic of the coal strikes in north-central Alabama in 1920-21.

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[44] White, 296-97. Noah Parker went to Warrior (about 30 miles north of Birmingham) from Cullman, Alabama (about 25 miles north of Warrior) to work in the Warrior-Black Creek Coal mines in January 1921. See Epilogue.
[45] White, 233-51.
[46] Southern Railway System, Coal Reserves of Alabama. (Southern Railway System of Alabama), February 1972.

There has been no previous research on newspaper coverage of coal strikes in Cullman, Jefferson, and Walker counties in north central Alabama for January and February 1921. As noted, the most important secondary source is Kelly's (2001) Race, Class, and Power in the Alabama Coalfields, 1908-21. His work examined in important detail the strikes and the events and issues surrounding the decisions made by the UMW, the government and mine operators. He also touched, without specific citations to newspapers, on several instances of the influence on local and regional newspapers by the UMW and the prominent black leaders of the time.

The other major work relevant to the research topic is Kelly's essay in Brown's and Davis' (1999) It Is Union and Liberty: Alabama Coal Miners and the UMW. This work also described in detail the struggles faced by the UMW during the strikes in 1920-21. Also important are Rogers et al. (1994) and Feldman's (1999) works. Rogers et al. took a broader look at Alabama and its history over time as a state in the Deep South, with brief mention of the coal strikes and struggles by the UMW against Governor Kilby in 1920-21. Feldman (1999) is important because it described in detail the influence and nature of the KKK in Alabama, with brief discussion of its relevancy during the coal strikes in 1920 and 1921.

Adamson's (1933), White's (1981), and the Southern Railway System's (1972) works are all excellent resources for general background information on the coal reserves in Alabama, the coal industry, and the cities involved in industry surrounding Birmingham.

Newspaper coverage, however, can be determined only from original newspapers and the brief information given by Kelly's (2001) work. Analysis of the strikes in and surrounding Birmingham, Cullman, and Jasper and north central Alabama and general

information on the coal industry can be gathered from the previous literature mentioned here.[47]

[47] There were two secondary sources that at first appeared to be pertinent to the topic, but after review were found not to contain much relevant information. The first, John H. M. Laslett's (1996) work, The United Mine Workers of America: A Model of Industrial Solidarity? (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press) was a collection of essays concerning the United Mine Workers in America from its earliest beginnings in the 1890s to recent years. The essays are divided into five categories: Founders and Leaders of the United Mine Workers in Its Heyday, 1890-1960; Work Habits, Miners' Health and Coal Company Paternalism; Strikes, Minorities, and the Role of Female Activists; International Comparisons; Developments Since 1960, and the Struggle for Renewal.

This work gives a somewhat general summary of the history of the UMW in America and abroad. There is nothing in this work that directly discusses the strikes in Alabama in 1920 and 1921. However, there is discussion of the issue of social equality between white and black miners in Alabama from 1880 to 1908, of which the latter year was the first major union miners' strike.

The second work of little relevance was Priscilla Long's (1989) Where the Sun Never Shines: A History of America's Bloody Coal Industry (New York: Paragon House). It was divided into two sections: Coal in America: A History of Work, Values, and Conflict; and Coal in the American West: Catalyst of Conflict and Change. The first section discussed the beginnings of coal in Britain and America, and the turn from the use of wood to coal. Long also described the working conditions and mines, miners, and mine operators in America in the time prior to the Industrial Revolution, 1860-1880, coal miners and the Civil War, and miners and unions, 1880-1900. The second half of the book primarily discussed coal in the western states from 1880-1914 and the bloody coal strike in Colorado from 1913 to 1914. While there is no mention of the strikes in Alabama in 1920-21, there is general mention of the struggles of miners, unions, and blacks and whites in the late 1800s and early 1900s in America.

III. Methodology

Newspapers from Birmingham, Cullman, and Jasper, Alabama were used to conduct this research. The newspapers from Birmingham represent the city perspective on the coal strikes, while the rural view is represented in the Cullman and Jasper newspapers.

The three main newspapers in Birmingham, the Birmingham News, Birmingham Age-Herald, and the Birmingham Post were used for the time period January 1 to February 23, 1921. These dates were selected because of the writer's effort to find out what happened to her great-grandfather Noah Parker. Parker went to work in the coal mines in January 1921 and disappeared in early to mid February 1921. The Cullman newspapers, the Cullman Democrat and the Cullman Tribune, as well as the Jasper newspaper The Mountain Eagle were also examined for the same time period. Examination of the newspapers stopped with February 22 and 23 because these were the days arbitration was reported ended in the newspapers. Only coverage of the trials of the strike leaders occurred after this date.

The Birmingham newspapers were located on microfilm at the Birmingham Public Library, Microforms room in Birmingham, Alabama. The two Cullman newspapers were found on microfilm at Wallace State Community College Library Genealogy department in Hanceville, Alabama near Cullman. The Jasper newspaper was located on microfilm at Samford University, Special Collections department, in Birmingham, Alabama.

Key words were sought when searching through each of these newspapers. Those words or phrases were: strikes; labor; coal; United Mine Workers (UMW); coal strikes; strikes and violence; Cullman; Jasper; Warrior; union; non-union.[48]

After the articles were gathered from all newspapers, they were divided into two stacks. One stack contained articles with general information on the strikes, while the second stack contained articles on the trial of the National Guardsmen and the Baird lynching in Jasper. The articles containing information on the strikes in general were examined and read first. The articles about the National Guardsmen and the Baird lynching were examined but were used only as a reference to where and when the newspapers decided to put those articles, i.e. front-page on Sunday. This is as opposed to where and when articles containing general information on the strikes, or any articles other than that of the trial of the National Guardsmen or the Baird lynching, were placed, i.e. page 19 on Wednesday. The articles were then contrasted and compared in each of the newspapers, except for the Cullman newspapers, which had no information on the strikes in general.

A trip was also made to the Alabama Department of Archives and History in Montgomery, Alabama to possibly locate maps, photographs, or other significant documents related to the coal strikes and coal mines. One photograph of coal miners in Jefferson County, Alabama about 1930 was located.[49]

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[48] The word "Warrior" was sought because this was the small mining town where Noah Parker was working when he disappeared. See Epilogue.
[49] See Appendix, Figure 3.

IV. Findings: Newspaper Coverage January-February 1921

The coal strikes in January and February 1921 were covered in the main newspapers in Birmingham. The three Birmingham newspapers, the Birmingham News, Birmingham Age-Herald, and Birmingham Post, all representing an urban view of the strikes and all daily newspapers, were examined from January 1 to February 22 and 23, 1921.

The strikes were also covered in one of the Cullman newspapers and the Jasper newspaper. One Cullman newspaper had no coverage of the strikes. These three newspapers, representing the rural view of the strikes, the Cullman Democrat, Cullman Tribune, and The Mountain Eagle, were weekly newspapers and were also examined for the time period of January 1 to February 22 and 23, 1921.

There was very little front-page coverage of the strikes in any of these newspapers. Most of the news relating to the strikes in general was buried in the pages of the newspapers. Most of the articles that did appear concerning the strikes, however, were very small.

The front-pages of the newspapers, if they contained information about the strikes, mainly covered the trial of Alabama National Guardsmen who lynched a man after they dragged him out of jail in Jasper, Alabama. This is covered extensively in the Birmingham News, Birmingham Age-Herald, and Birmingham Post.

A man named William Baird was being held in the Jasper, Walker County, Alabama jail on a charge of murdering James Morris, who was a National Guard member.[50] Baird

[50] On December 27, 1920, Morris, along with several other members of the National Guard, killed Baird's father-in-law, Adrian Northcutt. Northcutt was a union miner and minister who lived in the town of Nauvoo, north of Jasper, in Walker County, Alabama. Members of Company M of the Alabama National Guard called Northcutt from his home. His family heard several gunshots outside. Baird, Northcutt's 22-year-old son-in-law went outside and saw Northcutt lying dead on the ground. Words were exchanged

and his lawyer claimed self-defense. But, early on the morning of January 5, 1921, nine Alabama National Guardsmen quietly took over the jail. They grabbed Baird and took him about two and a half miles north of Jasper and shot him, and then left his body by the side of the road. When he was found and taken to the coroner's office, it was discovered that he had died from ten bullet wounds.[51]

The Birmingham Age-Herald did have more overall coverage of the strikes, even though most of the coverage consisted of small articles buried in the newspaper. The Age-Herald also included more photos with its coverage, especially if that coverage was on the front-page. However, coverage other than that of the trial of the National Guardsmen was still not front-page or second-page news.

The Birmingham Age-Herald was examined from January 1 to February 23, 1921. The first major article concerning the strikes was on January 3, 1921 on page five that said, "Phil Painter is Badly Beaten Up By Austin's Men." Phil Painter was the publisher of the pro-labor newspaper The Advance. The law enforcement officers charged Painter with writing an offensive anonymous letter to Governor Kilby concerning the coal strikes.[52] The next day's edition of the Age-Herald on page two printed a follow-up to the incident that said Conrad Austin, Alabama's State Law Enforcement Chief, spoke directly to Kilby concerning the Painter beating.[53]

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between Baird and Private Morris. Baird shot and killed Morris. Baird ran into the woods, but later turned himself into the local authorities, who arrested him and put him in jail. See Kelly, 196.

[51] The Birmingham News, Thursday, January 13, 1921, page 1.

[52] Birmingham Age-Herald, January 3, 1921, page 5.

[53] Birmingham Age-Herald, January 4, 1921, page 2.

The January 13, 1921 edition of the Age-Herald had an article that declared there had been "No Disorder At Pratt City."[54] The story of the disorder appeared in the Birmingham News January 12, 1921 newspaper. It said the National Guardsmen stationed at Pratt City ordered a crowd from a restaurant because they had been told to disperse people congregating together to avoid trouble.[55] The Age-Herald, however, said a small crowd at the restaurant was told to leave, but that "no clash occurred." This article reported a statement by General R. E. Steiner of the Alabama National Guard.

On January 16, 1921 the Age-Herald published a front-page article with a large bold headline that read, "Troops Remain Till Strike Is Settled-- Kilby."[56] An editorial the next day followed up supporting the governor in his decision to keep the National Guard in the strike zone.[57]

The January 18, 1921 edition of the Age-Herald had an article on page five that said the miners on strike were taking their case to federal court. Their case concerned the effort to establish constitutional rights for members of the United Mine Workers.[58]

On page five of the January 28, 1921 Age-Herald, an article declared that the Alabama Supreme Court ruled coal companies had a right to evict striking miners from company housing.[59]

The front-page of the February 10, 1921 Age-Herald had a bold headline about Kilby asking the public for its opinion on how the strike should be settled. A smaller sub-

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[54] Birmingham Age-Herald, January 13, 1921, page 4.
[55] Birmingham News, January 12, 1921, page 19.
[56] Birmingham Age-Herald, January 16, 1921, page 1.
[57] Ibid, January 17, 1921, page 6.
[58] Ibid, January 18, 1921, page 5.
[59] Ibid, January 28, 1921, page 5.

headline said the strike was already ended, but the labor leaders could not accept that fact.[60]

On February 11, 1921, the Age-Herald had a couple of articles on page five about the strikes. The first article said that Kilby's views on ending the strike had been accepted by people in Birmingham, and they believed that Van Bittner should leave. A sub-headline read, "Men of Affairs Here Discuss Coal Strike Situation and Say They Are Tired of Whole Thing." A second article on the same page said that a non-union worker told the Age-Herald that 20,000 miners were "Fed-Up" with the strike and that this non-union miner was upset with some of Kilby's plans for settling the strike.[61]

An editorial published in the Age-Herald on February 16, 1921 on page six was called "A Strike Against the State." This editorial said that all "loyal Alabamian[s]" needed to "stand by the Governor" during the strike. The editorial went on to say, "An attack on the state government is an attack on all the people of the state," meaning if someone supported the UMW and not the Governor, then it was disloyal and unpatriotic.[62]

On February 21, 1921 the Age-Herald published an article on page five that said the coal miners' strike would end that week.[63] On February 23, 1921, the newspaper published four articles on the top-half of page five that declared the "Coal Mine Strike in Alabama Officially Comes To Its End." On page six of the February 23, 1921 edition, an editorial was published that said the coal strike was over, and now everyone could "stop petty bickerings" and "all get to work."[64]

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[60] Birmingham Age-Herald, February 10, 1921, page 1.
[61] Ibid, February 11, 1921, page 5.
[62] Ibid, February 16, 1921, page 6.
[63] Ibid, February 21, 1921, page 5.
[64] Ibid, February 23, 1921, page 5, 6.

The Birmingham News had less coverage of the strikes in general, and only limited photos. Neither the Birmingham News nor the Birmingham Age-Herald had bold headlines of the strikes until arbitration ended and was reported on February 22 and 23, 1921. However, all of the newspapers, except the Cullman Democrat, had bold headlines either daily or weekly, depending on newspaper frequency, in coverage of the trial of the National Guardsmen in the Baird lynching.

The Birmingham News first had coverage of the strikes of 1921 on January 9. On page three of this newspaper a small article appeared that said a settlement of the strike had been planned.[65] In the January 10, 1921 Birmingham News, a long article appeared on page four about the assurance of a tax to aid the coal mine strike.

The January 12, 1921 Birmingham News ran an article on page 19 about National Guardsmen at Pratt Station in a confrontation with people in a restaurant. The National Guardsmen had been given orders to not allow citizens to congregate during the strike, and they considered those eating in the restaurant to be congregating. A clash broke out between the two groups, but order was quickly restored by the troops.[66]

Many articles appeared in the Birmingham News about the trial of the National Guardsmen in the Baird lynching. These articles almost always made front-page news. Several other articles concerning the coal strikes in general, such as the issue of the eviction of striking miners from company housing and the migration to tent colonies, Kilby refusing U.S. military help in the strike, the case against Conrad Austin for harassing UMW officials, and Kilby asking for help from the public to force a decision in

[65] Birmingham News, January 9, 1921, page 3.
[66] Ibid, January 12, 1921, page 19.

the strike in order to save money for the state of Alabama also appeared in the Birmingham News, but not always on the front-page.[67]

More articles concerning the coal strikes appeared in the Birmingham News in February 1921. On February 10, 1921, the newspaper ran an article that said federal officials were going to discuss the coal strike in Alabama and the various solutions to ending it.[68] The February 13, 1921 edition of the Birmingham News said that many people in Alabama had been writing to Governor Kilby to convince him to settle the strike soon.[69] Van Bittner, in an article written in the February 16, 1921 Birmingham News, said that he proposed to settle the coal strike through arbitration.[70]

The February 17, 1921 Birmingham News had an article on the front-page that said the UMW would not stop the strike in Alabama, according to a "high official."[71] However, the February 18, 1921 Birmingham News had an article on the front-page that declared the strike had ended and that through resolutions to UMW officials, members of an Anniston, Alabama civic club wanted a statement of admission of defeat from miners and union organizers.[72]

The February 21, 1921 edition of the Birmingham News had four photographs on the front-page of evicted striking miners and their families living in tent colonies. These photographs were very large and are in the top center of the front-page.[73]

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[67] Birmingham News, January 18, 1921, page 1; Ibid, January 28, 1921, page 1; Ibid, February 2, 1921, page 1; Ibid, February 4, 1921, page 1; I bid, February 9, 1921, page 1.
[68] Ibid, February 10, 1921, page 1.
[69] Ibid, February 13, 1921, page 1.
[70] Ibid, February 16, 1921, page 1.
[71] Ibid, February 17, 1921, page 1.
[72] Ibid, February 18, 1921, page 1.
[73] Ibid, February 19, 1921, page 1.

The strike was declared ended on February 22, 1921 in the Birmingham News. A large bold headline at the top of the front-page read, "Coal Strike Called Off." A box running across the top of the front-page under this headline said,

"Victor H. Hanson, Publisher of the Birmingham News, Representing the People of Alabama, at the Request of a Committee of Prominent Birmingham Citizens, Undertook the Task of Finding a Way to End the Coal Strike. Mr. Hanson Has Delivered to Gov. Kilby Signed Agreements From the Coal Operators and the Mine Workers' Officials, Each Agreeing to Any Basis of Settlement the Governor Might Designate and Each Side Pledging Unreservedly to Abide By the Decision."[74]

This statement revealed that the publisher of the Birmingham News, one of the two largest newspapers in Birmingham, was the mediator in ending the coal strike. Below this declaration was also an article that said Governor Kilby was ordering the National Guard out of the strike zone.[75] Page two of this same edition of the Birmingham News had a copy of the signed agreement between the coal operators and UMW officials.[76]

The Birmingham Post had more coverage of the strikes in general than the Birmingham News or the Birmingham Age-Herald. However, the Birmingham Post had no mention of the strikes until January 21, 1921. The article concerning the strikes on this date was about a court ruling involving evicted miners who were still using coal company housing. This article appeared on page five and was very small.[77]

Several articles of this nature were in the Birmingham Post, which only discussed issues concerning the coal strikes and not that of the trial of the Alabama National Guardsmen. However, there were more articles, especially on the front-page, about the trial than about the coal strikes, and those articles concerning the trial were generally

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[74] Birmingham News, February 22, 1921, page 1.
[75] Ibid, page 1.
[76] Ibid, page 2.
[77] The Birmingham Post, January 21, 1921, page 5.

larger and were accompanied by photographs. Articles about the coal strikes were on the front-page in the Birmingham Post more than they were in the other two Birmingham newspapers. However, these articles did not appear as often on the front-page as coverage of the trial of the Alabama National Guardsmen.

There were also a few articles about coal strikes at the time in other areas, such as West Virginia. In the January 24, 1921 edition of the Birmingham Post, page three had an article about the trials of coal miners in West Virginia who had gone on strike. Two other articles on this same page concerned the coal strikes locally in Alabama. One article was about a black man who was killed by members of the Alabama National Guard after he tried to attack some of the Guardsmen. The final article on this page was about a striking miner who murdered a non-union miner.[78]

Many articles in the Birmingham Post also described obstacles faced by the striking union miners. In the January 27, 1921 edition, page one had an article that said the Alabama Supreme Court had ordered striking miners to vacate coal company housing. The article in the center of the front-page said these evicted families would have to move to tent colonies provided by the United Mine Workers.[79] In the following day's edition, an article appeared on page two that said the striking miners would appeal the eviction decision by the Alabama Supreme Court.[80]

The January 29, 1921 Birmingham Post ran an article on page four that said Conrad Austin, the Alabama State Law Enforcement Chief, had ordered his men to follow union

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[78] Birmingham Post, January 24, 1921, page 3.
[79] Ibid, January 27, 1921, page 1.
[80] Ibid, January 28, 1921, page 2.

organizers around.[81] After this article appeared, there was no other mention of the strikes, other than that of the trial of the National Guardsmen, until February 2, 1921. On this day, the Birmingham Post ran an article on page one that said a union official filed a suit against Conrad Austin and his men to prevent them from following him and other union officials and organizers around.[82]

The front-page of the February 7, 1921 edition of the Birmingham Post had a large article about the mistrial in the Lancaster case. Lancaster was on of the nine National Guardsmen put on trial in the Baird lynching case. This article also had photographs of all nine of the accused Guardsmen on the front-page. However, below this article and the photograph was a smaller article about the suit brought against Conrad Austin by W. L. Harrison, the UMW official. The article simply said the injunction proceedings would be heard later that week.[83]

After the February 7, 1921 Birmingham Post, one or two articles ran almost daily in the newspaper concerning the coal strikes, with such issues as the previously mentioned Austin vs. UMW officials case, plus Kilby speaking out against the strike and declaring that the National Guard would not be withdrawn from the strike zone until the strike has been settled.[84]

As reported in the February 15, 1921 Birmingham Post, several residents of Blocton, Alabama sent a signed letter to the editor that said "We the undersigned citizens of Blocton declare there is no disorder in this community and oppose Gov. Kilby's plan of settling the miners' strike." The letter continued, "A letter to Gov. Kilby from The

[81] Birmingham Post, January 29, 1921, page 4.
[82] Ibid, February 2, 1921, page 1.
[83] Ibid, February 7, 1921, page 1.
[84] Ibid, February 10, 1921, page 1, 7; Ibid, February 12, 1921, page 1; Ibid, February 14, 1921, page 1, 7.

Trafford local of the union was also given out. It declared they were well satisfied with Vann A. Bittner, International official in charge of the strike. 'We desire to have them remain with us, and continue to manage our affairs in the future as in the past,' the statements says."[85]

In the February 17, 1921 Birmingham Post, however, was a letter from a group of citizens of Pratt City, Alabama. It said, "We the undersigned citizens of Pratt City, Ala. do want the strike settled. But it must be settled in a fair and legitimate way to the workers of Alabama when settled..."[86]

The February 21, 1921 Birmingham Post had an article on page one that denied the strike was about to be settled, as claimed by authorities handling the situation.[87] But, on February 22, 1921, as in many of the other newspapers examined, the strike was declared ended. A large bold headline on the front-page of that day's edition declared "Coal Strike Ends in Arbitration." A smaller sub-headline read "Miners Win Their Contention When Operators Accept."[88]

The rural newspapers, the Cullman Democrat, Cullman Tribune, and The Mountain Eagle, all weekly newspapers, were each unique in coverage of the coal strikes. The Cullman Democrat had no coverage of the strikes from January 6, the first edition of 1921, to February 22, 1921, the end of the strikes. There was no mention of the strikes or of the trial of the National Guardsmen in the Baird lynching. There were many articles, however, about society, club, and church activities. The Cullman Democrat also had

[85] Birmingham Post, February 15, 1921, page 7.
[86] Ibid, February 17, 1921, page 7.
[87] Ibid, February 21, 1921, page 1.
[88] Ibid, February 22, 1921, page 1.

generally the same ads and articles as the Cullman Tribune, but no articles about the coal strikes.

The Cullman Tribune was examined for January 3 to February 22, 1921. There was no coverage of the coal strikes, except coverage of the trial of the National Guardsmen involved in the Baird lynching. Three articles ran in the Cullman Tribune about the trial of the National Guardsmen between January 20 and February 10, 1921. Only one of these articles made the front-page, and that was on January 27, 1921 when the nine members of the Alabama National Guard were fired. Otherwise, there was no other news concerning the coal strikes, even when the strikes ended in late February 1921.[89]

The Mountain Eagle, in Jasper, Walker County, Alabama was a weekly newspaper. It was examined from January 5 to February 23, 1921. It had a few articles concerning the coal strikes, but it also ran articles about the trial of the National Guardsmen.

The January 5, 1921 edition of The Mountain Eagle had an article on page two that said National Guard troops had been ordered to the mines at Glen Mary Coal Company in Haleyville, Alabama. They were ordered there because of an explosion destroying the hoisting machinery and a nearby house. The article went on to say, "The mines have been closed for a week on account of a strike which has been in force for that length of time."[90]

On January 19, 1921, The Mountain Eagle published an editorial criticizing the Birmingham Age-Herald and the Montgomery Advertiser because it said they had "fanned the flames by coming out with similar editorial propaganda charging the

[89] Cullman Tribune, January 20, 1921, page 3; Ibid, January 27, 1921, page 1; Ibid, February 10, 1921, page 8.
[90] The Mountain Eagle, January 5, 1921, page 2.

lynching [of Baird] was the result of a miners' meeting in Birmingham." The Mountain Eagle editorial reported that at this miners' meeting, according to the other two newspapers, the crowd cheered when Private Morris' name was mentioned. The editorial continued, "If any irresponsible person cheered the death of Private Morris (which is denied) or any person killed in Walker he should be deported, but daily newspapers should not play up the matter in time of intense excitement."[91]

The February 4, 1921 edition of The Mountain Eagle ran an editorial condemning the murders in Walker County. The paper was also upset with Alabamians taking one side or the other in the strike, that of the labor faction versus the capital faction. The editorial also was angry with the Tuskegee News for giving a biased opinion about the Baird lynching. The newspaper did not denounce the lynching and called the National Guardsmen involved "mere boys" when most of them, according to The Mountain Eagle, were in their twenties.[92]

In the February 16, 1921 edition of The Mountain Eagle, an article appeared saying many miners, especially those from the Gamble Mines, were going north to the Kentucky coal mines. The article said, "Most of the miners are not organized where they are working [in Kentucky]."[93]

A story about the end of the strike was announced in the February 23, 1921 edition of The Mountain Eagle. The article appeared on the top-half of the front-page. The bold headline read, "Miners Strike is Called Off- Gov. Kilby Recalls Guardsmen-Demobilization This Week." Below this headline a smaller sub-headline read, "The

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[91] The Mountain Eagle, January 19, 1921, page 4.
[92] Ibid, February 9, 1921, page 4.
[93] Ibid, February 16, page 7.

strike was brought to a close through the medium of Mr. Victor Hanson, publisher of the *Birmingham News*, acting for a committee of Birmingham citizens."[94]

Also in The Mountain Eagle on February 23, 1921 was an editorial calling the people of Walker County law-abiding. The newspaper said it was proud of the citizens of Walker County for not making the coal strike situation worse. The editorial thanked "strikers, anti-strikers and the public at large" for remaining tolerant and patient throughout the strike.[95]

One would assume that the end of the strikes would make front-page news. This, however, was not always the case. On Monday, February 21, 1921, the Birmingham Age-Herald reported on page five that the "Coal Miners' Strike Is to End This Week."[96] This article was not long, just three short paragraphs. The headline was in bold print, but it was halfway down the page on page five. The coverage of the end of the strikes is more puzzling than when the strikes occurred. The Birmingham News reported on Tuesday, February 22, 1921 on the front-page that the "Coal Strike" was "Called Off."[97] The first half of the front-page contains articles about the end of the strike or the case of the National Guardsmen in Jasper. Also, The Mountain Eagle reported on February 23, 1921 on the front-page that the "Miners Strike is Called Off."[98] The Birmingham Post also reported on the front-page on February 22, 1921 that the strike had ended in arbitration.[99] The Birmingham Age-Herald, however, had no front-page coverage of the end of the strikes on February 22 or 23, 1921. Even on Wednesday, February 23, 1921,

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[94] The Mountain Eagle, February 23, 1921, page 1.
[95] Ibid, February 23, 1921, page 4.
[96] Birmingham Age-Herald, Monday, February 21, 1921, page 5.
[97] Birmingham News, Tuesday, February 22, 1921, page 1.
[98] The Mountain Eagle, February 23, 1921, page 1.
[99] Birmingham Post, February 22, 1921, page 1.

the day after the Birmingham News had run front-page descriptions and articles detailing the end of arbitration, the Age-Herald had only four small articles on the top-half of page five, but no articles concerning the end of the coal strikes on the front page.[100]

The striking miners and the UMW received nothing they had fought so bitterly for from September 1920 to February 1921. Van Bittner, the strike coordinator for the UMW, submitted the strike to Kilby on February 22, 1921. Kilby arbitrated for nearly a month, before issuing his ruling on the strike on March 21, 1921. Kilby decided that the UMW would be held completely responsible for the strike and for the outcome of the strike. There was no compromise made between the coal operators and striking miners. Kilby called the strike "illegal and immoral." Kilby also declared that the UMW would be fully responsible for providing necessities such as food and shelter to the miners and their families. The coal operators were not forced to rehire the striking miners, unless there were job vacancies.[101]

[100] Birmingham Age-Herald, Wednesday, February 23, 1921, page 5.
[101] Kelly, 197.

V. Discussion and Analysis of Newspaper Coverage

The mood and other events in the U.S. during the coal strikes in Alabama must be understood to know why the newspapers had very little or sometimes no coverage of the strikes. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 was still fresh in many American minds in 1921. The Socialist Labor Party in America influenced Lenin when he led his small band of Bolsheviks in a coup that ended the czarist government in Russia. This party and its leading figure, Daniel DeLeon, wanted industrial unions to have socialist intentions, as well as abolish the government as soon as the party gained power.

The Bolshevik Revolution frightened many Americans. When the strikes broke out in Alabama in September 1920, Alabamians no doubt felt the fear of Bolshevism. A small group overthrew the government in Russia and Alabama citizens knew that over 13,000 coal miners on strike could possibly do the same. After several bombings and bomb threats, Attorney-General Palmer's raids on radical foreign immigrants during 1919 and into 1920 also fueled Alabamians' fear of revolt and violence. With half of Alabama's coal miners on strike, the state's citizens knew that lawlessness and revolution could occur. Many did not want to see what happened in Russia happen to Alabama or the U.S. The Red Scare began to wear off by summer 1920, but memories of radicals and revolutionists were recent in citizens' minds.

In the context of these events, as well as an attempt to prevent widespread violence, newspapers in Birmingham, Cullman, and Jasper minimized coverage of the coal strikes. However, there was coverage of the lynching of William Baird and the subsequent trial of the Alabama National Guardsmen, but one would assume this would be covered because of the atypical nature of the crime and its participants.

The coal strikes in January and February 1921 were covered differently among the main newspapers in Birmingham and in the rural Cullman and Jasper newspapers. The newspapers within Birmingham covered the strikes differently from each other, as did the newspapers from Cullman and Jasper, the rural areas.

The Birmingham Age-Herald covered the strikes more frequently than the Birmingham News. However, the Age-Herald was most attentive to coverage of the trial of the National Guardsmen in the lynching of William Baird. These lynching trial articles tended to appear more on the front-page than articles concerning the strikes in general. The Age-Herald also had more photographs to accompany these articles.

The Age-Herald often ran articles that contradicted the articles published in the Birmingham News. Such was the case in the article about a clash between National Guardsmen and citizens in a restaurant at Pratt City, Alabama. The Birmingham News article on January 12, 1921 said the Guardsmen dispersed a crowd at the restaurant because they were congregating and there was fear trouble would arise.[102] The Age-Herald, on the following day ran an article declaring there had been no clash or disorder at Pratt City.[103] This was the first article concerning the problem at Pratt City to run in the Age-Herald.

The editorial in the Age-Herald published on February 16, 1921 called the coal strike "A Strike Against the State."[104] This editorial clearly showed who the Age-Herald sided with during the strikes. The newspaper said every person loyal to the state of Alabama should stand by Kilby during the strikes and not the strikers and UMW. This suggests

[102] Birmingham News, January 12, 1921, page 19.
[103] Birmingham Age-Herald, January 13, 1921, page 4.
[104] Ibid, February 16, 1921, page 6.

that the newspaper supported the governor and thus the coal operators during the strike, and anyone who did not do the same was disloyal and unpatriotic. This statement is a good example of coal company rationale and suggests the newspapers, especially in Birmingham, supported the coal industry and Alabama government, rather than the workers on strike for better treatment.

The Birmingham News did not cover the strikes as extensively as the Age-Herald, and it also did not have as many photographs. The Birmingham News had many articles about the Baird lynching and the trial of the National Guardsmen, and these articles were always on the front-page. The Birmingham News had several articles about the settlement of the strike in February 1921. One article declared that a civic club in Anniston, Alabama had proclaimed the strike over and wanted an admission of defeat from the UMW.[105] This showed that some organizations were upset with the strike and were taking matters into their own hands in attempting to settle it.

On February 22, 1921, the Birmingham News declared the strike was officially over.[106] It must be assumed that the Birmingham News had the first shot at this story because under the headline declaring the strike ended on this day was a box that said Victor H. Hanson, publisher of the Birmingham News, was the mediator in the settlement of the strike between the UMW officials and the coal operators. The Mountain Eagle in Jasper also noted that Hanson helped end the strike through mediation. However, these two newspapers were the only ones to specifically point out Hanson as the mediator.[107]

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[105] Birmingham News, February 18, 1921, page 1.
[106] Ibid, February 22, 1921, page 1.
[107] Victor Hanson, who wrote for and supported the industrialists and planters, had much political and social influence in Alabama prior to and during the strikes. Hanson was the president of and owned the Birmingham News, Birmingham Age-Herald, and Montgomery Advertiser, and also sat on a number of

Hanson's position as mediator may well have contributed to biased coverage of the strikes in the Birmingham News and Age-Herald, two newspapers he published. His position also gave the newspapers the first chance at printing the end of arbitration in the strikes.

The Birmingham Post had far more coverage of the strikes in general than the Age-Herald or the Birmingham News. The Birmingham Post, however, did not have coverage of the strikes until the end of January. But as in the other two Birmingham newspapers, the Birmingham Post also had more coverage, especially on the front-page concerning the trial of the National Guardsmen than of the coal strikes in general.

Articles about the strikes appeared more on the front-page in the Birmingham Post than in the Age-Herald or the Birmingham News. The articles were still outdistanced by

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company boards. However, Hanson gained more power after he was mediator in the settlement of the strike. Neither Hanson nor Gov. Kilby were members of the KKK.

In May 1922 the Jefferson County health inspector, J.D. Dowling, was abducted, beaten, and left bleeding. Many Alabamians believed the KKK was behind the attack. But Dowling was an upstanding member of society, a physician, and belonged to many civic and social clubs in Birmingham. In the year after his attack, nine dairymen and plumbers, none of whom were members of the KKK, were arrested for the flogging. Immediately after the crime, the newspapers in Birmingham spoke out against the KKK after the Dowling incident, even though it appeared the Klan had nothing to do with the attack since Dowling was an elite member of society and not a usual Klan target of black, Jew, poor white, Catholic, or recent immigrant. Victor Hanson's Birmingham News said the Dowling flogging was "an unspeakable crime...the most dastardly outrage in the history of the city." The newspaper even offered a $250 reward. Hanson's Birmingham News and Montgomery Advertiser said "there was a fundamental distinction between the attack on Dowling and previous Klan attacks on 'helpless Negroes and a few whites of no standing...people of no special importance.'"

Hanson and Gov. Kilby were also delegates to the Democratic National Convention in June 1924 at Madison Square Garden in New York City. It was here where they both voted for an anti-Klan plank for the Democratic platform. A fight broke out on the floor of the convention between Klan members and several Alabama delegates. The plank failed by a single vote.

When the Klan swept the elections of governor, senators, and officials in November 1926, Hanson was one of the most outspoken members for reform. This opposition began with Hanson, along with his friend and colleague Grover Hall, editor of the Montgomery Advertiser who later won a Pulitzer Prize for his articles on the corrupt Klan in Alabama. From Hanson and Hall, calls for reform spread throughout the state and nation. Hanson, through newspaper editorials and indirect accusations, had eventually convinced most people that the Klan threatened law and order in Alabama.

See Glenn Feldman, Politics, Society, and the Klan in Alabama, 1915-1949. (Tuscaloosa & London: University of Alabama Press), 1999, 67-68, 71, 114-15, 121-26.

coverage of the lynching trial, but the Birmingham Post chose to put articles about the coal strikes on the front-page rather than the back pages, as in the other two papers in Birmingham.

The Birmingham Post also differed from the Age-Herald and the Birmingham News in that its coverage appeared less biased, and it published some letters disagreeing with the official position on the strikes. In the February 15, 1921 edition, a letter was sent to the newspaper from the citizens of Blocton, Alabama that said there were no problems in their community, and that they did not agree with Kilby's plan for settlement of the strike.[108] A letter supporting Kilby and calling for the end of the strike appeared in the February 17, 1921 Birmingham Post from the citizens of Pratt City. Neither the Age-Herald nor the Birmingham News provided coverage of both sides or opinions of the strike.[109] This could be one reason why Hanson, who owned both the Birmingham News and the Age-Herald, became the mediator in the settlement of the strike. Alternatively, Hanson's knowledge that he would be the mediator may have led to his instructing his newspapers to soft-pedal reporting on the strike. Hanson was a friend and political supporter of Governor Kilby.

Examination of the rural newspapers brings up some intriguing questions. The Cullman Democrat had no coverage of the strikes in January and February 1921. There was no coverage of the trial of the National Guardsmen in the Baird lynching. One might expect that a Cullman newspaper would have coverage of the strikes and the trial since

[108] Birmingham Post, February 15, 1921, page 7.
[109] Ibid, February 17, 1921, page 7.

Cullman was in the midst of the strikes and a neighboring county to Walker County, where Baird was lynched.

Why was there no coverage in the Cullman Democrat? Perhaps the Democrat assumed the Cullman Tribune would cover the strikes and the lynching trial. However, the Tribune did not have coverage of the strikes in January and February 1921. It did, between January 20 and February 10, 1921, have three short articles about the lynching trial, but this was the only coverage. The strangest omission was that neither Cullman newspaper reported the end of the strikes. It seems logical that a newspaper in the heart of the coal strikes would publish an article declaring that the coal strikes had ended in arbitration. One would assume that the Cullman newspapers would have covered the strikes and the trial in more depth than what was found to have been published. But the Cullman Democrat had numerous articles about church and social activities, as well as other societal news. The Cullman Democrat was a society newspaper and reflected the magnolia society, or antebellum mindset, of the time. Both the Cullman newspapers assumed an ostrich-like position about this important and violent local news event.

The Mountain Eagle in Jasper, Alabama did have more coverage of the strikes than the two newspapers in Cullman, but still far less coverage than any of the Birmingham newspapers. There were, though, only four or five articles concerning the coal strikes in The Mountain Eagle for January and February 1921.

The Mountain Eagle published three editorials between January 19 and February 23, 1921 that clarify the sentiment felt by citizens, or at least the newspaper, in Walker County. Two of the editorials are the best examples of the attitude of citizens, or the newspaper, towards the strikes at the time.

The editorial on January 19, 1921 criticized the Birmingham Age-Herald and the Montgomery Advertiser because they had "fanned the flames" and sensationalized occurrences in Walker County. The Mountain Eagle defended its county and discreetly told the Age-Herald and the Montgomery Advertiser they were wrong to "play up the matter in time of intense excitement." This is one of the most convincing reasons why the newspapers, such as the Cullman Democrat, Cullman Tribune, and also The Mountain Eagle, did not print many stories about the strikes and violence that occurred in the areas. Ostensibly, they were attempting to downplay the situation and not encourage or sensationalize the violent and brutal acts by citizens on both sides of the coal strikes.

The second editorial appeared on February 23, 1921 in The Mountain Eagle. This was the day after the strike was officially ended. The editorial thanked the citizens of Walker County for remaining law-abiding throughout the strike. It said that without the willingness of people to cooperate with law enforcement and exercise moral right, there would have been more violence and bloodshed. This editorial puts into words what some citizens, or at least the newspaper, must have felt throughout the strike.

The news of the strikes did not always make the front-page. This is troubling for a couple of reasons. First, Kelly and other secondary sources imply that the strikes were major news in central Alabama. One would assume that every newspaper in Birmingham, one of the largest, if not the largest industrial city in the state, would have front-page coverage every day or week of the strikes. They didn't.

Secondly, most of the strikes were in rural towns. After examining the Birmingham newspapers one would assume that they did not cover the strikes as much perhaps because they were not concerned with the goings-on in the small outlying areas

surrounding the city. However, the rural newspapers in Cullman and Jasper did not cover the strikes in great detail either. This could be because of a fear of inciting violence, memories of the Bolshevik Revolution, Red Scare, and Palmer raids, or attempts to remain unbiased by not printing any news about the strikes. Also, in the Birmingham newspapers, there was much talk about cotton as a crop and an investment. Cotton was a rich man's crop, and coal was a poor man's work. Perhaps the city dwellers did not want to burden themselves with the labor strains of the coal industry when they had their own labor strains in cotton to deal with. Coal strikes were just not that important to readers in Birmingham, especially if the newspapers downplayed them. If it did not concern readers in Birmingham, then they were not interested, except in the case of the National Guardsmen on trial in the Baird lynching, which is likely because of the sensational nature of the incident.

There was vast coverage in all of the Birmingham newspapers of the Baird lynching trial. This can be attributed to humans responding to brutality of other humans, and to the irony that National Guardsmen, those who were supposed to protect the public, committed the crime. Even when the coal strikes ended, the Birmingham Age-Herald decided to run stories about this trial on its front page, rather than what seemed to be the more important story of the coal strike ending, which was instead printed on page five.

Another revealing fact is that coverage of the end of the strikes did not make front-page news in Hanson's Birmingham Age-Herald. It was also not until the day after Hanson's other leading newspaper in Birmingham, the Birmingham News, ran the story on its front-page that the Age-Herald ran four short articles about the end of the strikes,

but these appeared on page five, not page one.[110] The Mountain Eagle also had front-page coverage of the strikes on February 23, 1921.[111] The Age-Herald considered the case of the National Guardsmen of more importance than the end of arbitration. It either believed the end of the strikes was not that important, that nothing would come of it, or that it would not sell as many papers as a front-page story of the trial of National Guardsmen.

In reading Brian Kelly's (2001) work, a picture forms of chaos, rioting, beatings, lynchings, murders, and total disaster. Kelly discussed the union mobs and KKK members who would harass and even kill those who crossed union lines to work as strikebreakers. He also describes how Kilby sent in the National Guard to try to maintain peace during the strikes.[112] Kelly even detailed the hardships striking miners and strikebreakers had to endure during the long strike from September 1920 through February and into March of 1921.[113] He also told of the harsh winter and worsening strike conditions of January and February 1921.[114]

All of this was accounted for in the newspaper coverage in the Birmingham Age-Herald, Birmingham News, Birmingham Post, The Mountain Eagle, and the Cullman Tribune. However, the coverage is not so extensive as to lead one to believe that the entire state of Alabama was in total chaos due to the strikes. On the contrary, it appears that citizens, or at least the newspapers, in Birmingham, Cullman, and Jasper did not care much about what happened to the striking miners, or the strikebreakers. They were

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[110] Birmingham News, February 22, 1921, page 1; Birmingham Age-Herald, February 23, 1921, page 5.
[111] The Mountain Eagle, February 23, 1921, page 1.
[112] Kelly, 184, 194-95.
[113] Ibid, 182-86, 194-97.
[114] Ibid, 196-97.

mainly concerned about the lynching of William Baird and the subsequent trial of the National Guardsmen. In fact, the newspapers in Birmingham, Cullman, and Jasper often had more society and sports coverage and concerns than news about the strikes or even general news concerns.

The coal mine strikes in 1920 and 1921 were some of the most deadly in Alabama's history. Many innocent people were beaten, lynched, harassed, and killed. Strikebreakers, or scabs, were abused, regardless of race. However, white scabs were treated more harshly than black scabs. It was especially worse for the white northern Alabama farmers who went to the mines searching for better work.

More than half of the 26,000 miners in the state of Alabama were on strike by the end of 1920. The state did not recognize the UMW. Governor Kilby and other authorities supported the mine operators and the strikebreakers. Noah Parker, a white farmer from Cullman, Alabama disappeared in early February 1921 while working in the coal mines in Warrior, Alabama. If Parker worked as a scab, he was more than likely killed during this violent time in the strikes.[115] Nothing would have been done about his murder because this violence was common and no one wanted to call someone out for murder to the authorities for fear of their own life.

Newspaper coverage of the strikes was in all three of the newspapers in urban Birmingham: the Birmingham Age-Herald, Birmingham News, and the Birmingham Post. The weekly newspapers in rural Cullman and Jasper had some coverage of the strikes, but not as much as the coverage of the daily Birmingham newspapers. The Cullman Democrat had no coverage of the strikes or of the trial of the National

[115] See Epilogue.

Guardsmen, while the Cullman Tribune only had a few articles concerning the trial, but not the strikes. The Mountain Eagle had coverage of both the strikes and the trial, but it was extremely limited in coverage of both. Thus, coverage of the strikes was different in the urban and rural areas of central Alabama.

The citizens and newspapers in the urban city of Birmingham apparently did not care a great deal about the coal strikes. They read front-page coverage of the trials of the National Guardsmen in the Baird lynching, while most of the coverage of the strikes in general was placed deep within the newspapers.

The rural residents of Cullman and Jasper, however, also did not find much about the strikes in the newspapers. The best evidence for this reason is the editorial in The Mountain Eagle from Jasper that was critical of the Age-Herald and Montgomery Advertiser. It claimed both newspapers "fanned the flames" and sensationalized the stories of the Baird lynching, and other atrocities in Walker county and other areas.[116]

For whatever reasons, there was very little coverage of the Alabama coal strikes in January and February 1921 in Alabama's newspapers closest to those events. Perhaps the strikes were somehow too dangerous, with a distasteful odor of class warfare bringing to mind then-recent developments in Russia, as well as the Palmer raids and deportations and the American Red Scare. The newspapers generally aligned themselves with management and the political hierarchy, minimizing violence and occasional murders of strikers and strikebreakers. The press was hardly a tribune of the people, but more an economic creature (in the old Southern expression) "gettin' along by goin' along."

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[116] The Mountain Eagle, January 19, 1921, page 4.

VI. Suggestions for Further Research

Future research about the coal strikes in Alabama in January and February 1921 could be expanded to include newspapers from all across the state of Alabama. How did the other areas of the state cover the strikes? Also, regional and national coverage of strikes could be compared to Alabama to try to understand the national context. Also, more needs to be known and examined about the influences and interrelationships among newspapers, coal operators, the governor, the UMW, the KKK, and others. It would also be of help to examine and compare labor newspapers to mainstream newspapers. A more thorough magazine journal search might also prove beneficial for information about the strikes in the coal fields of Alabama in the early 1920s.

A search for and examination of labor history records of the UMW would also be helpful. A look into the United States Department of Mines safety records might shed light on other issues not mentioned here.

Epilogue

William Noah Parker, the son of the Rev. Samuel D. V. and Nancy Russell Parker, was born in 1898 in Cullman, Cullman County, Alabama. He married Rutha Freeman, daughter of William Newton and Henrietta Collins Freeman, October 7, 1917 and worked for the L & N Railroad from about 1917 to January 1921. They rented a farm in Cullman, which is about 40 miles north of Birmingham.[117] They had two sons, Kermit and Lewis, born in 1919 and 1920, respectively.

In January 1921 Parker left the railroad and his family and moved south about 25 miles from Cullman to Warrior, in Jefferson County, Alabama in search of better work. He wrote Rutha that he was working in the Black Creek Coal Mines in Warrior. He said he was paid $6 a day and suggested that Rutha's father come down to work, too, since the pay was so good. The letter is dated January 29, 1921.[118]

After a few weeks went by and no other word came from Parker, his father, Samuel and father-in-law, William, went to Warrior to look for him. They found the woman who ran the boarding house where Parker was staying and she informed them that she had packed Noah's lunch before work one morning. She said he left for work and never came back. Samuel and William discovered his clothes and other belongings were still in the house. A few weeks later, Noah's family hired a private detective. He also found no trace of Noah Parker. The Black Creek mine operator also told Samuel and William that

[117] 1920 Alabama Census, Cullman County.
[118] Noah Parker, letter to Ruthie Parker, January 29, 1921, from family collection. See Appendix, Figure 1.

Noah never made it to work the day he disappeared.[119] There was no sign of him anywhere. The family never heard from him again. He had simply vanished.

Noah Parker was my maternal great-grandfather and his son Lewis, who died in 1993, was my grandfather. A family legend assumes that Noah probably was killed in a mining accident and his body was disposed of without informing the family. However, when looking for a history of mining accidents in Alabama for the early 1920s, I discovered a kind of conspiracy of silence in the written record. Strikes were rampant at coal mines in those days before Workmen's Compensation in Alabama, the bloodiest periods being the strikes of 1908 and 1920-1921. The strikes were not the front-page news I had imagined, but were downplayed in the press of that time and place. This was true even in Central Alabama, the heartland of those atrocities, the Central Alabama where Noah Parker lived and worked. He evidently wound up in the wrong place at the wrong time, seeking to get steady work to support his family.

Within a year of Noah's disappearance, Rutha's family, the Freemans, uprooted and moved to Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, while the Parkers remained in Cullman County, Alabama. The descendants of the Parkers and Freemans now believe Rutha's family moved because they were threatened as too many questions were asked about Noah and what really happened at the Black Creek Coal Mines in Warrior, Alabama.

It was hoped that through examination of the newspapers in Birmingham, Cullman, and Jasper, Alabama that Noah Parker could at last be found. But this was not the case. William Noah Parker has been missing for 83 years as of February 2004. He was a miner

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[119] Per Asa B. Freeman, Noah Parker's brother-in-law, Freeman/Parker Family Reunion, Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, July 18, 2004.

in the heart of the turmoil during the brutal strikes of January and February 1921. It wasn't thought that much would be found concerning Noah or the Parkers in this research. However, more was discovered about Noah's family than anyone, even his son, Kermit, ever knew.

While searching for the Cullman and Jasper newspapers at Wallace State Community College in Hanceville, Cullman County, Alabama, I convinced my mother to make take a detour to the Cullman County courthouse. A wealth of information was discovered. Some probate, marriage, land, and other records in the courthouse were discovered that are pertinent in providing insights into Noah Parker's family and his life.

Noah Parker's birth date of 1898 was previously known. His family already knew his wife's name and had much information about her family, the Freemans. All that was known about Noah's father was that he was called "Preacher Parker." What a glorious sight it was when, opening up the marriage index for Cullman County from 1877 to 1940, Noah Parker had married Rutha Freeman in Cullman County in 1917. The most thrilling surprise was the man who signed for Noah and Rutha to marry: The Rev. Samuel D. V. Parker. It was "Preacher Parker."

This led us to probate records downstairs and to the discovery that Samuel's second wife, Roxie, sued the L & N Railroad after Samuel was struck and killed by a train while checking the tracks on May 6, 1928 in Cullman. This further led us to try to find newspaper coverage of Samuel's death in the Cullman Democrat.[120] It was hoped that by finding Samuel's obituary, it would lead to further clues about Noah. But sadly, there was no mention of Noah in Samuel's obituary.

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[120] Cullman Democrat, May 10, 1921, page 1.

After reading Brian Kelly's book, which mentioned several men in newspaper articles who were victims and wrongdoers for lynchings, murders, and other atrocities, there was a strong hope that Noah Parker would be found.[121] It cannot be definitively determined through this research exactly what happened to Noah Parker. However, assumptions can be made.

In Noah's letter to his wife, his words do not sound like a man who would leave his family. In the letter Noah tells his wife Rutha that he is

"at Black Creek working at the mines. Im [sic] making about six dollars a day. I will send you some money whin [sic] I get a pay day. So, I don't know just whin [sic] I will get to come home. I can't turn my job a loose. Kiss my babies for me and if you all get sick let me know at once. Tell your father to come down here and get him a job. He can make good money here. Tell him if he..."[122]

Noah was making exceptional money for his day and time. This further indicates that he was probably a strikebreaker working at the Black Creek coal mines in Warrior, Alabama. He would not have gone to Warrior to the coal mines if he had been working at the mines anyway and making that kind of money. It is only logical to assume that he was a strikebreaker.

Noah's father, Samuel, and father-in-law, William, both searched for Noah after he disappeared. They discovered that his clothes and other belongings were still in the boarding house in the coal camp. This was a sign that he had not left for good. The landlady at the boarding house said she had packed his lunch one morning and that he left for work but never came back. Samuel and William also talked with the coal operator

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[121] Brian Kelly, Race, Class, and Power in the Alabama Coalfields, 1908-1921. (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 2001.
[122] Remaining part of letter missing. See Appendix, Figure 1.

that day and he said Noah never came to work that morning. Something happened to him suddenly and with the situation as it was with the strikes, it is only reasonable to assume he was killed on his way to work.

There were too many other non-union miners who were beaten, who disappeared, or who were killed for strikebreaking throughout the strike period. As Kelly said many union miners, both black and white, had little use for the white northern Alabama farmers coming to the mines as strikebreakers.[123] Noah was a white northern Alabama farmer who went to the mines at Black Creek in Warrior. Noah's fate can help shed light on what possibly happened to other miners of the time period. His situation is a window on other strikebreakers, or scabs, who also disappeared and were never heard from again.

Noah Parker might not have been found through this research, but a better understanding of the coal strikes was gained and the discovery of Noah's family was made. Perhaps this research can open new doors and provide insight as to what happened to other individuals in the coal mines who disappeared during this same time. It is hoped that through future research Noah can one day be found and give his only living closest relative, his son, Kermit Parker, a sense of understanding and a peace of mind.

[123] Kelly, 185.

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Photographs

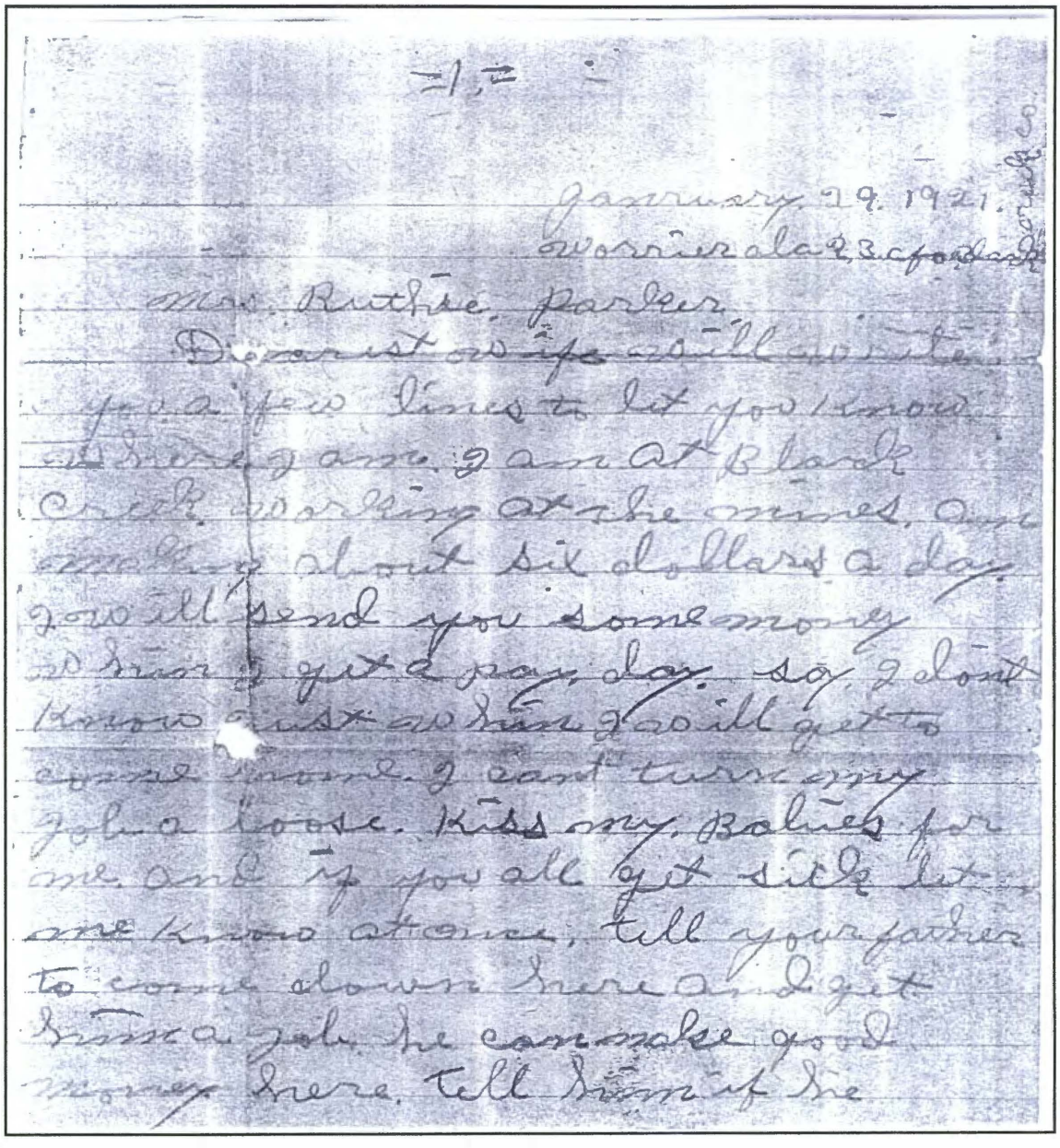
"Jefferson County, Alabama Coal Miners in line with lunch pails, circa 1930." Alabama Department of Archives and History, Photographs Collection, Montgomery, Alabama.

"Noah Parker." Mrs. Kermit Parker family photo collection, Houston, Texas.

Maps

"Alabama Counties with Warrior, Jasper, Cullman, and Birmingham in North Central Alabama." The Handybook for Genealogists. Tenth Edition. Draper, Utah: Everton Publishers, 2002.

Appendix



January 29. 1921.

Mrs. Ruthie Parker.

Dearest wife will write you a few lines to let you know where I am. I am at Black Creek working at the mines. And making about six dollars a day. I will send you some money as soon I get a pay day. So I dont know just when I will get to come home. I cant turn any job a loose. Kiss my Babies for me. And if you all get sick let me know at once, tell your father to come down here and I get him a job he can make good money here. Tell him if he

Figure 1. Noah Parker's letter to his wife Rutha

Source: Mrs. Kermit Parker, Houston, Texas.

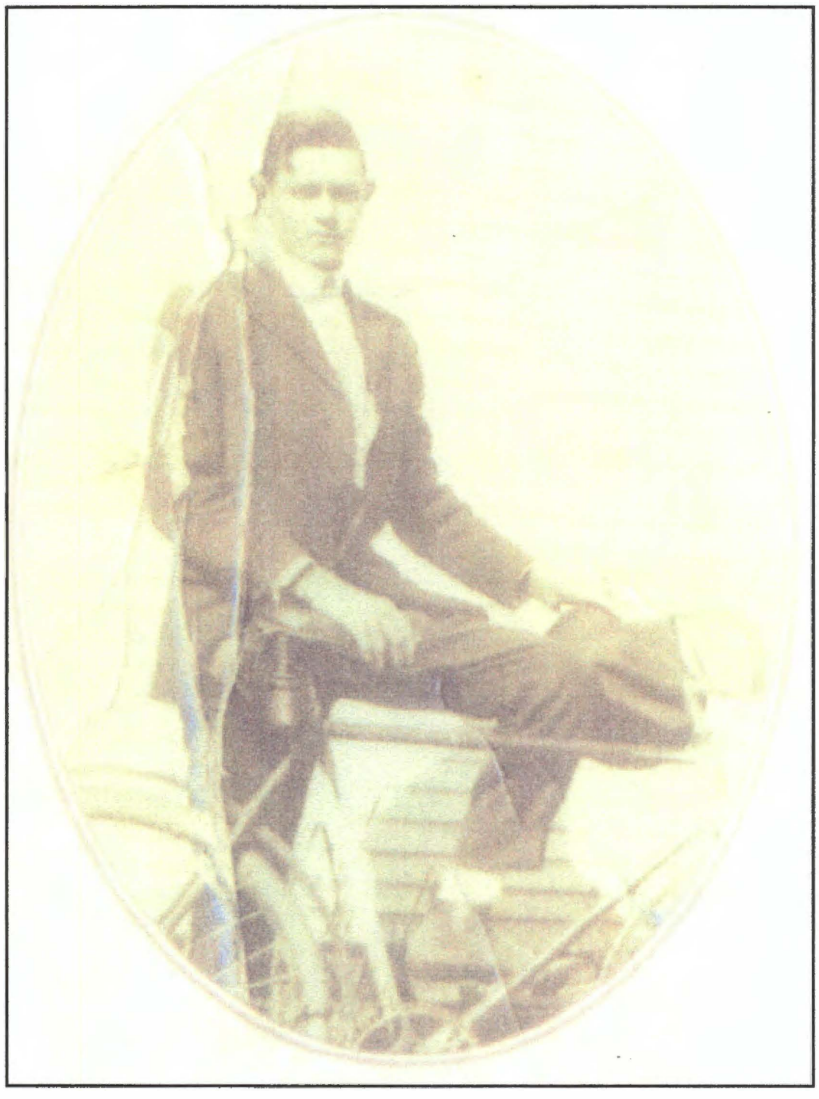


Figure 2. Noah Parker about age 18

Source: Mrs. Kermit Parker, Houston, Texas.

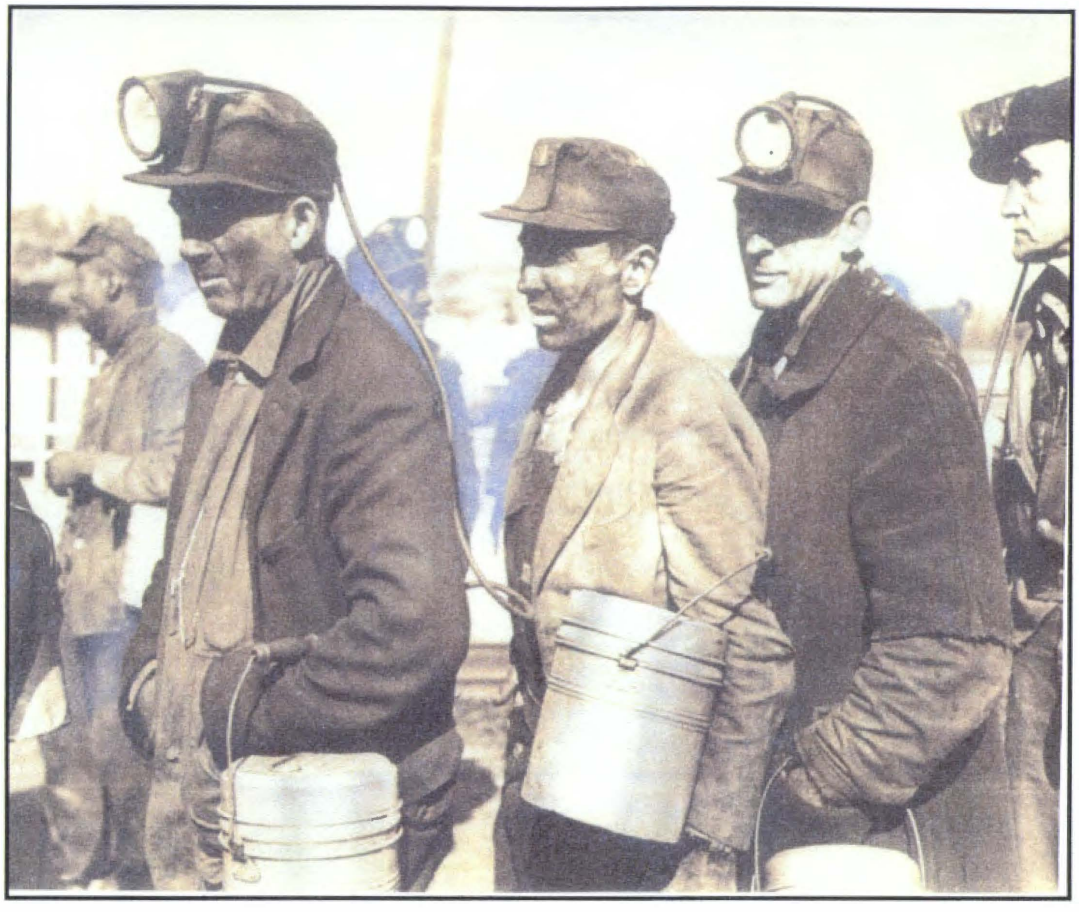


Figure 3. Jefferson County, Alabama Coal Miners in line with lunch pails, circa 1930

Source: Alabama State Archives, Photographs Collection, Montgomery, Alabama.



Figure 4. Alabama Counties with Warrior, Jasper, Cullman, and Birmingham in North Central Alabama

Source: The Handybook for Genealogists, Everton Publishers, Tenth Edition, 2002.

Vita

Alison Patricia Cook was born in Columbia, Maury County, Tennessee on May 8, 1980. She was raised in Lewisburg, Marshall County, Tennessee and attended school at Marshall Elementary, Westhills Elementary, Connelly Middle, and Marshall County High Schools. Cook graduated with honors from Marshall County High School in May 1998. From there, she went to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and received a B.A. in history in May 2002.

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