



The Lynching of Manly McCauley in 1898 near Chapel Hill

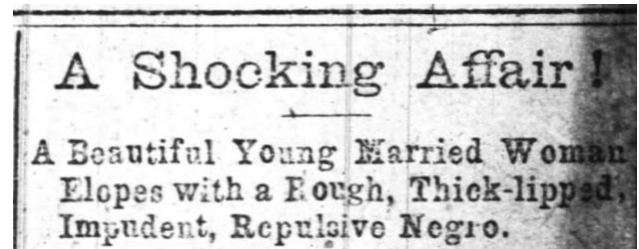
When the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) opened the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, in 2018, it included monuments for every county where EJI had documented a racial terror lynching between 1877 and 1950. Orange County's monument has one name: Manly McCauley. Beyond Mr. McCauley, more victims were identified, either outside that time frame, or whose stories were preserved through oral history. The Orange County Community Remembrance Coalition (OCCRC) has formed to educate and engage the public in conversations on the history of racial

terror lynching and its impact on society in the 21st century. Mr. McCauley's story is described below.

Manly McCauley was 18 and a farmhand for a white family a few miles west of Chapel Hill when he and the farmer's wife eloped. Mr. McCauley and Maggie Lloyd Brewer traveled two counties south, about 40 miles away, to be together, but her husband, Milton, formed a posse of as many as 30 men and went in pursuit. Four days after the couple had left, they were captured by the posse, in Lemon Springs, just past Jonesboro.

The posse was comprised of men from the Brewers' farming community in Bingham Township. Mr. McCauley had been born there in March of 1880, and his parents and ancestors likely were enslaved there by members of the white McCauley family who'd been original land donors at the founding of the University of North Carolina.

When the posse arrived back home on October 30, 1898, a portion of the men took Mr. McCauley into some open woods a couple of hundred yards from the public road. They tied a rope around his neck, bent down a branch of a dogwood tree, tied the other end of the rope to the branch, and let go, slinging Mr. McCauley into the air and breaking his neck. The site was near the present-day intersection of Old Greensboro Road and Hatch Road. Mr. McCauley's body hung there for 10 days.



These events were matters of great intrigue across the state and beyond. But outrage centered on the scandal that was a married white woman's affair with a black man, rather than the lynching. It was just before the pivotal election of 1898, and the affair was used as propaganda to convince white men to vote in favor of "white supremacy," in the form of the Democratic ticket of the day. The Wilmington Massacre occurred the same day Mr. McCauley's body was finally cut down by a coroner.

Four men were arrested and charged for Mr. McCauley's murder: Milton Brewer, Jesse King, Reldue Lloyd, and Walter Neville. But they were promptly acquitted of murder. Surely more participated. OCCRC has worked to document the details of the events, locate the approximate site of the lynching described as three miles west of Chapel Hill in contemporary newspaper accounts, and uncover information about the lives of Manly McCauley, his parents, Maggie and Milton Brewer, and the men who lynched Mr. McCauley. —MIKE OGLE

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