

**CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION**

**Notice to Close File**

File No. 144-41-2785

Date: August 30, 2023

To: Chief, Criminal Section

Re: Jewel Haysel Alford (Deceased), Francis M. Barker (Deceased), Harold Pierre “Pete” Carver, Jr. (Deceased), Harry Jack Davis (Deceased), James Donovan “Pat” Davis (Deceased), Louis Calvin Davis (Deceased), Tullie Vandiver Dunn (Deceased), Jasper Homer Ladner (Deceased), James Floren Lee, Sr. (Deceased), James Floren Lee, Jr. (Deceased), Monroe James Lee (Deceased), Pascal “Pack” Lee (Deceased), XXXX (Living), Selman Eugene Redmond (Deceased), George Washington Rester, Jr. (Deceased), Christopher Columbus Reyer (Deceased), Charles Franklin Saucier (Deceased), Herman Schulz (Deceased), Arthur Eugene Smith (Deceased), Holly Talmadge Smith (Deceased), Herbert Morgan Stanford (Deceased), Darlan Stevens (Deceased), Earl Sullivan (Deceased), John P. Walker (Deceased) – Subjects, Mack Charles Parker (Deceased) – Victim  
CIVIL RIGHTS

**CONTAINS GRAND JURY MATERIAL SUBJECT TO FED. R. CRIM. P. 6(E)**

The Department has examined the abduction and murder of Mack Charles Parker pursuant to its authority under the Emmett Till Acts.<sup>1</sup> As set forth more fully below, the statute of limitations has run on all federal civil rights charges. The government has carefully examined whether the case could be prosecuted as a federal kidnapping case and has concluded that insurmountable legal and factual hurdles exist to such a prosecution. Moreover, because key witnesses are deceased and because there is very little evidence linking the surviving subject to the crime, no prosecution on state charges would be viable. The case is thus being closed without referral to state authorities.<sup>2</sup>

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David N. Reese  
Trial Attorney

To: Records Section  
Office of Legal Administration

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<sup>1</sup> Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act of 2007, Pub. L. No. 110-344, 122 Stat. 3934 (Oct. 7, 2008) and the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Reauthorization Act of 2016, Public Law No: 114-325 (Dec. 16, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> We attempted to meet with Mr. Parker’s next-of-kin to inform them of the findings of our investigation, but were not successful. If Mr. Parker’s immediate family members would like to meet with the Division, they may contact the Civil Rights Division’s Cold Case Unit at [ColdCase.CivilRights@usdoj.gov](mailto:ColdCase.CivilRights@usdoj.gov).

The above numbered file has been closed as of this date.

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Date

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Barbara K. Bosserman  
Deputy Chief, Cold Case Unit, Criminal Section

FORMERLY CVR-3 FORM CL-3

**Case Synopsis**

Late in the evening on Friday, April 24, 1959, between twenty and thirty men met on a road outside Poplarville, Mississippi, where they conspired to abduct Mack Charles Parker from the Pearl River County Jail for the purpose of murdering him. Parker, a young Black man, stood accused of raping XXX, a white woman. He was held in the Pearl River County jail and was scheduled to be tried three days later. The citizens of Poplarville anticipated that Black attorneys would represent Parker at trial and that these Black men would cross-examine the white woman who was Parker's alleged victim.<sup>3</sup>

The men who had participated in the meeting left in a caravan of cars and headed to the jail, which was in the back of the county courthouse. Several men parked around the jail and served as lookouts. Using keys provided by Pearl River County Sheriff's Deputy Jewel Alford, who served as the jailer, eight to ten masked or hooded men entered the jail, where they beat Parker, dragged him from the jail, and shoved him into a waiting Oldsmobile. The Oldsmobile and a second car sped westward toward the Louisiana border. After crossing the Pearl River Bridge and into Louisiana,<sup>4</sup> the Oldsmobile turned around and drove back onto the Pearl River Bridge. The evidence indicates that Parker was likely shot and killed on the bridge. His body then was thrown into the river.

These events took place without interference from the town's marshals, B. F. Orr and Harold Pierre "Pete" Carver, Jr., or from the Pearl River County Sheriff, W. Osborne ("W.O.") Moody. Carver, warned in advance of the planned lynching, roused Orr from his bed about thirty minutes before the mob abducted Parker. Determined not to intervene, Orr and Carver retreated to a service station and sat drinking coffee as Parker was seized from the jail. There is insufficient evidence to show that Sheriff W.O. Moody had advance knowledge of the plot or was otherwise involved. However, Moody was curiously slow to respond when called and told that something was happening at the jail. Moreover, it was Moody's brother-in-law, Deputy Jewel

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<sup>3</sup> While the FBI investigation was focused on Parker's murder, and not on whether Parker committed the alleged rape, the FBI investigative file provides reason to doubt Parker's guilt: the alleged victim (according to XXXX) could not identify Parker as the rapist, was not sure that Parker was the man who had raped her, and at one time described her assailant as middle-aged and of light complexion—while Parker was young and had a darker complexion.

<sup>4</sup> As discussed further below, the conspirators had planned to throw Parker from the bridge. However, cars headed east at the time likely prevented the Oldsmobile from stopping on the bridge as it traveled westward, forcing the Oldsmobile to continue into Louisiana before turning back and driving onto the bridge via the eastbound lane.

Alford, who furnished the keys that the mob used to enter the jail.

Parker's abduction from the jail drew national attention even before his death was confirmed. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover dispatched scores of agents to Pearl River County. On May 4, 1959, a team of FBI agents and Mississippi highway patrolmen found Parker's battered corpse in the Pearl River. A coroner's jury found that Parker had died from two gunshot wounds.

Soon after, the FBI obtained confessions from two of the conspirators: Christopher Columbus ("C.C." or "Crip") Reyer and his nephew, Arthur Eugene Smith. Reyer and Smith admitted that they had participated in a meeting in which a large group of men planned to abduct Parker from the jail. Reyer told the FBI that the mob had used his Oldsmobile to transport Parker from the jail. Smith, meanwhile, admitted that he and three other men had been in the car that followed the Oldsmobile as it carried Parker across the Pearl River Bridge.

From this information, the FBI soon identified a number of "known or suspected participants" in Parker's lynching. On May 25, 1959, the FBI delivered to Mississippi Governor J.P. Coleman a summary report concerning the Parker murder, which identified 19 subjects.<sup>5</sup> However, on the same date, the Department of Justice ("DOJ") and the FBI withdrew from Poplarville,<sup>6</sup> announcing that the FBI's investigation had established that those responsible for Parker's death had not violated the federal kidnapping statute.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The FBI's list of subjects continued to evolve. A subsequent FBI report dated May 28, 1959, identified 28 subjects. A final 370-page summary report, completed in July 1959, identified 23 subjects. It, too, was provided to Governor Coleman.

<sup>6</sup> A July 1, 1959, internal DOJ memorandum noted that by late May 1959, the FBI, having been met with stone-faced resistance from the citizens of Poplarville and its surrounds, had achieved all it could: "There is little doubt that at the time the FBI investigation was terminated, the investigation had reached and indeed exceeded . . . the point of diminishing returns. Unjustified though it undoubtedly was, the public furor over the presence of the agents, the unfounded charges of improper conduct, and the increasing tendency of those possessed of information to decline to be questioned, to say nothing of the outright opposition and open hostility of those closest to the criminal actors, rendered the withdrawal of the FBI desirable if the reputation of the Bureau was not to be tarnished unnecessarily."

<sup>7</sup> News reports from the Jackson, Mississippi *Clarion-Ledger* dated May 26, 1959, quoted Attorney General Rogers as saying that the FBI's investigation had "clearly established that the persons responsible for the death of Parker had not violated the federal kidnapping statutes and no other federal prosecution could be maintained." As explained more fully below, at the time of the offense, the only way a defendant could be guilty of federal kidnapping was if the defendant crossed state lines with a living kidnapping victim.

Because the evidence suggests that the victim was in fact transported across state lines, it appears that this legal conclusion may have been incorrect. However, an internal DOJ memorandum dated May 25, 1959, determined that "any federal criminal prosecution would encounter serious difficulties," citing, among other issues, that there was no direct evidence that "Parker was actually in Reyer's car at the exact time that it allegedly crossed into Louisiana"; that it had not been established that the Oldsmobile carrying Parker actually crossed the Louisiana-Mississippi *state line* (after crossing the Pearl River bridge); and the absence of evidence concerning the time and place of the murder, such that it was impossible to determine whether Parker was in fact alive at the time the car carrying him crossed the Pearl River bridge. The memo concluded that "a federal criminal prosecution based upon the facts available would not be successful."

In November 1959, a state grand jury convened. However, District Attorney Vernon Broome called no FBI agents to testify, even though agents had made themselves available to testify without a subpoena. It appears unlikely that the District Attorney provided reports of the FBI's investigation to the grand jury, even though Governor Coleman provided them to DA Broome. The grand jury returned no indictments.<sup>8</sup> News reports state that the grand jury "simply ignored the lynch case during its two-day deliberations." *Jackson Daily News*, November 4, 1959; Cliff Sessions (UPI) "Feds Could Revive Case."

In response,<sup>9</sup> the DOJ determined to prosecute the matter pursuant to then-existing federal civil rights and conspiracy statutes.<sup>10</sup> However, the federal grand jury also failed to return indictments.<sup>11</sup> Afterward, the DOJ considered charging (through Information) some of the conspirators with misdemeanor violations of federal civil rights and conspiracy statutes,<sup>12</sup> but ultimately it took no additional action during that timeframe.

The FBI briefly reopened its investigation in 1989 and, again, in 1997. The matter was again opened in 2008, pursuant to the DOJ Cold Case Initiative. As part of the 2008 investigation, the FBI reviewed its entire investigative file, interviewed additional witnesses, and XX. DOJ attorneys also reviewed the original 1959-1960 DOJ casefile at the National Archives and Records

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These conclusions notwithstanding, the statements of subject Arthur Smith, discussed below, strongly indicate that the Oldsmobile carrying Parker in fact crossed the Louisiana state line before returning to the Pearl River Bridge and suggest that Parker probably was alive when the Oldsmobile crossed into Louisiana.

<sup>8</sup> According to Pearl River County Sheriff W.O. Moody, DA Broome had decided not to subpoena anyone but said he would allow agents to testify if they made themselves available. According to Moody, Broome said that he had decided not to push the case because it would ruin his political career, and that it would make no difference if he subpoenaed anyone, because no indictments would be returned. Moody further reported that he had been contacted by several individuals who wanted to serve on the grand jury, in order to prevent indictments from being returned.

DA Broome's disinterest in pursuing Parker's killers was echoed by Pearl River County attorney William H. Stewart, who was to have conducted Parker's trial. On April 29, 1959, Stewart told the Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's New Orleans office that "he had promised the public that if Parker was convicted" and the conviction was later reversed by a federal court, he would release Parker rather than retry him. The FBI investigative file notes that Stewart "volunteered that he would be one of the first ones to do something about it and that it would be the fault of the Federal judge. In obscene language, he stated that if they cut [Parker's] testicles out and sent them to the Federal judge it would be all right with him." Despite Stewart's expressions of sympathy for such vigilantism, the FBI investigative file gives no indication that the FBI considered Stewart a subject.

<sup>9</sup> In an Associated Press report dated November 18, 1959, Attorney General Rogers announced that the Pearl River County grand jury's "failure to call witnesses was as flagrant and calculated a miscarriage of justice as I know of."

**<sup>10</sup> The investigation took place before any federal hate crime laws existed. Thus, the civil rights statutes available to federal prosecutors were 18 U.S.C. §§ 241, 242, and 371.**

<sup>11</sup> XX.

<sup>12</sup> Specifically, 18 U.S.C. §§ 242 and 371.

Administration to determine whether it might yield any additional investigative leads.

The FBI's investigations revealed evidence implicating 24 potential subjects in the conspiracy to lynch Parker. In its July 1959 final summary report, the FBI identified 23 "known or suspected participants" in the lynch mob: Christopher Columbus ("C.C.") Reyer; Arthur Eugene Smith; Jewel Haysel Alford; Francis M. Barker; James Floren Lee, Sr.; John P. ("J.P.") Walker; Jasper Homer Ladner; Louis Calvin ("L.C.") Davis; James Floren Lee, Jr.; George W. Rester, Jr.; Darlan Stevens; James Donovan "Pat" Davis; Monroe James Lee; Holly Talmadge Smith; Herman Schulz; Herbert Morgan Stanford, Jr.; Selman Eugene Redmond; Tullie Vandiver Dunn; "XXX"; Harry Jack Davis; Earl Sullivan; Charles Franklin Saucier; and Pascal "Pack" Lee. In 1960, the DOJ determined that Harold Pierre "Pete" Carver, Jr. was also a subject, and sought to indict him as a co-conspirator.

At this time, all but "XXX" are known to be deceased. No additional subjects were identified in 1990 and 1997. Following the re-opening of the matter in 2008, the assigned agents and DOJ attorneys identified 35 "persons of interest" whom the FBI did not ultimately identify as a subject, or as to whom the FBI had not developed sufficient information to identify as subjects. Our investigation determined that all of these persons also are deceased or cannot be identified. Our investigation has identified no other subjects or viable leads that could lead to living subjects. The case is thus being closed.

## **Federal Review**

### **1. The 1959 FBI Investigation**

The initial FBI investigation began on April 25, 1959, the day after the murder, and continued until May 25, 1959. The investigation was extensive. Scores of federal agents collected physical evidence, combed the area for Parker's body, and conducted hundreds of interviews in Poplarville, its surrounding communities, and in nearby Bogalusa, Louisiana. In less than a month, agents identified the persons at the core of the conspiracy and prepared a series of detailed reports setting forth their findings.

#### **a. Investigation at the Scene**

Interviews with prisoners at the Pearl River County Jail at the time of Parker's abduction revealed that the abduction began when eight to ten men entered the jail and inquired as to Parker's location. The men, who wore white gloves, and masks or hoods, used keys to unlock the door to the jail and open Parker's cell block. These men forcibly removed Parker from his cell block, beating him with sticks or clubs when he resisted. Inmates reported that they saw a car (described as a red and white Dodge or Oldsmobile) head west from the jail on West Pearl Street. Witnesses saw another car travel north on South Julia Street behind the jail and saw a third vehicle (described as an International pickup) speed south.

Agents also interviewed staff and visitors at the Pearl River Hospital, which sat across the

street from the jail. Nurse Forrest Burge reported that she heard a voice calling from the jail for help, and she telephoned Pearl River County Sheriff W. O. Moody. John Reyer, a visitor at the hospital (and the second cousin of subject C.C. Reyer), reported seeing eight or ten masked men (whom he insisted that he could not identify) quickly carrying a bloodied and struggling Black man from the south door of the Pearl River County Courthouse and throwing him in the back seat of a four-door automobile parked nearby. Frank Wheat, another hospital visitor, was standing at the front door of the hospital and heard commotion at the jail, including calls for help and a “slapping” noise coming from the jail. He saw an automobile parked on the south side of West Pearl Street speed east, while a car parked behind shrubbery near the south entrance of the courthouse left hurriedly, traveling west. Wheat estimated that the incident lasted no more than 20 minutes. Cecil Dedeaux, who also was at the hospital,<sup>13</sup> reported hearing loud talking by six to eight persons along the south side of the courthouse. When he began walking toward the noise, he heard two or three cars leave in a hurry.<sup>14</sup>

Additional interviews established that, within minutes of Parker’s abduction, Poplarville Marshals B.F. Orr (who worked days) and Harold Pierre “Pete” Carver, Jr. (who worked nights) arrived on the scene, accompanied by two other men, Terrence Goodwin “Andy” Stringfellow and Robert James “R.J.” Wheat. Even though the abduction had just happened, Orr and Carver did nothing to try to locate or apprehend the kidnappers. Instead, they waited passively in their car for Sheriff Moody to arrive.

Sheriff Moody—after some fifteen minutes had passed—arrived at the courthouse (followed later by his son, Deputy Sheriff George Vaught Moody). The Sheriff, Marshals Orr and Carver, and several others entered the courthouse and the jail. They found a blood trail leading from the jail, through the courthouse, and down to the curb beside the south entrance of the courthouse. Together, the men searched for the keys to the courthouse, which were found by Marshal Orr on the steps outside the south entrance to the courthouse. Sheriff Moody called District Attorney Vernon Broome, Judge Sebe Dale, Governor J.P. Coleman, and FBI Special Agent William F. Dukes, and told them that Parker had been abducted. Members of the Mississippi Highway Patrol arrived and, with the assistance of Sheriff Moody, his deputies, and citizen volunteers, fruitlessly searched local roads for the perpetrators. Curiously, Sheriff Moody ordered the courthouse janitors, Hubert and Houston Amacker, to clean up the blood on the scene.<sup>15</sup> By the time FBI agents responded to the courthouse, most of the blood on the scene had

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<sup>13</sup> XXX later told the FBI that Dedeaux may have been involved in the conspiracy. See “Other Persons of Interest,” below.

<sup>14</sup> Frank Wheat observed Dedeaux proceed toward the south entrance of the courthouse accompanied by John Reyer—where, presumably, he would have been able to see what Reyer saw. Dedeaux denied doing so and denied knowing any of the persons whose voices he heard outside the courthouse.

<sup>15</sup> Although the FBI never identified Sheriff Moody as a subject, the FBI investigative file and the 1959-1960 DOJ casefile are careful to note inconsistencies and discrepancies in Moody’s statements to the FBI. Sheriff Moody told the FBI that the week before the murder, he had become concerned for Parker’s safety, and had for several days ordered subject Deputy Jewel Alford, the jailer (and Moody’s brother-in-law), to take the jail keys home at night as a precautionary measure. Despite these concerns, Moody told the FBI that when nurses at the hospital called him to

already been cleaned up.<sup>16</sup> Agents were able to take scrapings of the remaining blood for analysis, but they proved to be of no help in identifying Parker's abductors.<sup>17</sup>

### **b. Parker's Body is Found**

FBI agents and officers of the Mississippi Highway State Patrol combed the area for Parker's body, conducting an extensive terrain search. On May 4, 1959, at 10:50 a.m., Parker's body was found in driftwood about fifty feet from the Mississippi side of the Pearl River, approximately two and a half miles downstream from the Highway 26 bridge over the Pearl River.<sup>18</sup> Parker was identified by his fingerprints. William F. Stringer, a Poplarville doctor, performed an autopsy.<sup>19</sup> Based on Dr. Stringer's examination, the coroner's jury found the cause

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tell him something was happening at the jail, he supposed there was a fight in the jail and "had no reason to hurry[,] so he did not put his clothes on in a big rush," and "took his time" about driving to the jail. The 1959-1960 DOJ casefile notes that, if Sheriff Moody had left his house immediately after being alerted, the car carrying Parker would have passed him on the road. The DOJ casefile further notes that, according to inmate XXX, when Moody arrived on the scene and entered the jail, he asked the prisoners, "Did they get the right one?" Additionally, although Moody quickly called his son, Deputy Sheriff George Vaught Moody, to report to the courthouse, Moody did not call subject Jewel Alford (who had given the mob the jail keys) until around 2:30 a.m., approximately 2.5 hours after Moody arrived on the scene.

Notwithstanding Sheriff Moody's curious behavior, the FBI investigative file and the 1959-1960 DOJ casefile show that the FBI developed no information identifying Sheriff Moody's son, Deputy George Moody, as a subject. Deputy Moody attended a dance at the local junior college on the night of the murder, and afterward entertained visitors at his home until around midnight.

<sup>16</sup> The FBI casefile notes that the cleaning "remov[ed] most of the blood left at the crime scene by the abductors." Sheriff W.O. Moody told the FBI that he had ordered the janitors, Houston and Hubert Amacker, to "have the blood scrubbed up prior to the arrival of the female employees of the Courthouse." As discussed further below, on the night of the murder, one of the janitors—Houston Amacker—was in the company of subjects J.P. Walker and Francis Barker.

<sup>17</sup> Agents did not attempt to recover fingerprints from the crime scene. The FBI investigative file notes, "Investigation to locate latent fingerprints at the Sheriff's Office and in the jail area, . . . was not made inasmuch as Sheriff W.O. Moody, Deputy Sheriff George Moody, and Day Marshal B.F. Orr, all advised that following the abduction numerous persons were milling around this area and further because the subjects were known to be wearing gloves."

<sup>18</sup> Attorney notes from the 1959-1960 DOJ casefile state:

On April 24-25 the Pearl River was exceedingly high. The FBI indicated that the land on both sides of the river was marshy, consequently, if Parker's body had been thrown into the river from either bank, the current would not have been sufficiently strong to carry it down stream. Likewise, the water would not have been sufficiently deep to have floated the body away from the bank. The assumption would follow that Parker's body must have been pitched into the river from the Highway 26 bridge.

<sup>19</sup> As discussed below, percipient witness XXX, who was an inmate at the Pearl River County Jail at the time of Parker's abduction, told the FBI that Stringer resembled one of the men who entered the jail to abduct Parker, and that Stringer made remarks to XXX suggesting that Stringer knew the identities of Parker's killers. The FBI investigative file notes that Dr. Stringer conducted the autopsy in the presence of an FBI Special Agent and gives no indication that

of death to be by wounds made by two, one-quarter-inch high-speed projectiles, one of which passed through Parker's pulmonary artery.<sup>20</sup>

### **c. Reyer and Smith Confess**

Soon after Parker's body was found, C.C. Reyer and his nephew, Arthur Eugene Smith, admitted to the FBI that they had participated in a meeting where a group of men had planned Parker's abduction. According to Reyer and Smith, the men had gathered in front of the residence of L.C. Davis, east of Poplarville. About ten or fifteen cars were parked on both sides of the road in front of Davis' house. Together, Reyer and Smith identified a number of men present at the meeting, including J.P. Walker, who was running for Sheriff in Pearl River County; Francis Barker, a county government employee; and other area residents, including L.C. Davis, Jasper Homer Ladner, and George W. Rester, Jr. Reyer and Smith estimated that twenty to thirty men participated in the meeting. The mob decided during the meeting that they would use Reyer's Oldsmobile to kidnap Parker from the jail. J.P. Walker volunteered to drive Reyer's car, while Reyer drove elsewhere with Francis Barker. Smith rode with three other men in the car that followed the Oldsmobile as it transported Parker across the Pearl River Bridge.

On May 9, 1959, Reyer escorted FBI agents to the site of the meeting. Agents searched the area along the gravel road near L.C. Davis's property and located a slip of paper with the handwritten name "L.C. Davis," with a line drawn under the name and the initial "M" located under the name; and a slip of paper of about the same size bearing the name "Monroe J. Lee," with a line drawn beneath the name and an illegible initial or mark below the line. Agents also found a label and price tag bearing the words "Brown Top Jersey Glove," and a cellophane wrapper bearing the words "Red Bird Handkerchief."<sup>21</sup> FBI agents conducted a second, broader search of the area on May 11, 1959. They found, among other things, several sheets of "what appeared to be pencil tablet paper," and another slip of paper with "L.C. Davis" written on it, also with an illegible initial or mark below the line.<sup>22</sup> Agents also found numerous cigarette butts, gum wrappers, cellophane wrappers, and similar items.

### **d. The FBI Report Identifies 23 Subjects**

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the FBI believed the autopsy to be deficient.

<sup>20</sup> Stringer concluded that Parker's wounds were caused by jacketed bullets fired from a rifle or a target-type pistol and opined that the angle of the wounds indicated that they were inflicted while Parker was prone. Stringer noted that Parker's lungs had no water in them, indicating that Parker had not died by drowning, but instead likely had died before his body entered the water. The autopsy notes that the body had not been mutilated.

<sup>21</sup> FBI agents determined from codes on the gloves' price tag that the gloves may have come from a drug store. Agents contacted numerous drug, grocery, and mercantile stores in the Poplarville, Lumberton, and Hattiesburg areas, but were unable to identify the store that sold the gloves.

<sup>22</sup> Subsequent examination by the FBI revealed that the initials below the written names "Monroe J. Lee" and "L.C. Davis" may have been the initials "S.N." No individual identified in any of the FBI reports—whether as a witness or a subject—has these initials.



Relying on the information provided by Reyer, Smith, and others, the FBI's May 25, 1959, report identified the following men as known or suspected participants in the conspiracy to murder Parker. The following summarizes the evidence and information gathered in the FBI's 1959 investigation indicating that these individuals may have participated in Parker's murder.

**Christopher Columbus ("C.C.") Reyer (deceased):** The FBI spoke with Reyer, a farmer and part-time barber, at least six times between May 8 and May 16, 1959. During those interviews, Reyer generally admitted that there had been a planning meeting to abduct Parker from the jail but claimed to be unable to identify fellow conspirators.<sup>23</sup> Specifically, Reyer admitted to the FBI that he was contacted by subject Francis Barker on the afternoon of April 24. Barker told Reyer that there was to be a meeting that night about abducting Parker. Reyer passed this information on to his nephew, subject Arthur Eugene Smith. The two men agreed to go to the meeting in Reyer's Oldsmobile.

Later that night, at around 9:30 p.m., Reyer and Arthur Smith drove to the planning meeting, which was held on Wiggins Road near Poplarville. Reyer variously estimated that there were between 15-18 men present. Reyer reported hearing someone say that other men were still expected to attend. Shortly after arriving at the meeting place, Reyer returned to Poplarville accompanied by Smith and subject L.C. Davis and stopped at the Star Café. Reyer went inside for a cup of coffee, while Smith stayed in the car with Davis. As Reyer walked back to the car, he saw Marshal Pete Carver.<sup>24</sup> Carver came over and sat down in the back seat. Reyer asked Carver whether he knew about the Parker meeting. Carver said he did not, and he got out of the car.

Reyer, Arthur Smith, and L.C. Davis returned to the meeting at around 10:30 or 10:45 p.m. About 30 men were now present. It was decided, by individuals whom Reyer denied knowing, that the mob would use Reyer's Oldsmobile to take Parker from the jail. Arthur Smith told the FBI that when they arrived at the meeting the second time, Reyer became a spokesman and attempted to organize the meeting to get the job (meaning the abduction and murder of Parker) over with. After handing over the keys to his Oldsmobile, Reyer got into a different car with subject Francis Barker.

Reyer and Barker returned to the Star Café in Poplarville at 11:15 p.m. but found that it was closed. They drove by the courthouse, where Reyer saw his Oldsmobile. J.P. Walker sat

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<sup>23</sup> The FBI approached Reyer after being advised by Poplarville night marshal Pete Carver that Reyer's car was used to remove Parker from the jail.

<sup>24</sup> Reyer told the FBI that this encounter with Marshal Pete Carver took place *before* he first went to the meeting place, when just Reyer and Smith were in Reyer's car. However, it is much more likely that Reyer warned Carver about the plot *after* Reyer's first visit to the meeting place. Carver told the FBI that he spoke with Reyer in Reyer's car on the evening of April 24 outside the Star Café, and that *two* other men were with Reyer in Reyer's car. Additionally, subject Arthur Smith told the FBI that L.C. Davis was with Smith and Reyer when Reyer told Carver about the imminent abduction.

inside the Oldsmobile, with three men whom Reyer claimed he could not identify. Reyer saw another car, with four men inside, parked nearby. (Reyer claimed that he could not identify these men either.) Reyer asked the men whether they had secured the keys to the jail. They said that they had not. While the rest of the mob waited in their vehicles, Reyer and L.C. Davis walked over to the courthouse windows, but they discovered that the windows were locked.

Reyer and Davis returned to their cars. Reyer drove off in Barker's car, accompanied by Barker.<sup>25</sup> They went to a service station to get a cup of coffee. There, Reyer said he ran into Poplarville Marshals Pete Carver and B.F. Orr, along with Carver's friends Andy Stringfellow and R.J. Wheat.<sup>26</sup> Carver and his group left the service station at 12:10 a.m. Five minutes later, Reyer and Barker left the station.

Reyer and Barker drove to the courthouse, where they saw an open door. Based on this, Reyer believed Parker had already been abducted. Reyer accordingly drove to the location where, according to a pre-arranged plan, his car would be returned to him. At around 12:35 a.m., Reyer's Oldsmobile arrived, driven by a man Reyer claimed he could not identify, along with several other men. The only person in the car that Reyer admitted that he could identify was his nephew, Arthur Smith. Reyer joined Smith in Reyer's car, and the men in Reyer's car joined Barker in Barker's car. Reyer and Smith then drove home in Reyer's Oldsmobile.

Reyer admitted that, when he checked his Oldsmobile the following morning, he found blood both in and on the car. Reyer and Smith washed off the blood.<sup>27</sup>

When the FBI asked Reyer what role he played in the lynching, he said, "I reckon it was to be look-out."

Reyer died on August 28, 1998.

**Arthur Eugene Smith (deceased):** Smith, who was interviewed multiple times by the FBI, corroborated many of Reyer's statements, including describing the plan to abduct and lynch Parker and describing removing blood from Reyer's Oldsmobile. Specifically, Smith admitted that he met Reyer at Reyer's barber shop at around 6:30 p.m. on the day of Parker's murder. Reyer told Smith that they were going to Poplarville where Parker "would be taken out of jail and gotten rid of."<sup>28</sup> Smith and Reyer drove in Reyer's Oldsmobile to the meeting place. Smith

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<sup>25</sup> According to the FBI file, Barker, L.C. Davis, J.F. Lee, Sr., and J.P. Walker drove to the home of Sheriff's Deputy Jewel Alford, where they demanded the keys to the jail.

<sup>26</sup> Although Stringfellow and Wheat were not sworn law enforcement officers, they were known to ride with Carver during his evening rounds.

<sup>27</sup> On May 8, 1959, the FBI searched Reyer's Oldsmobile with Reyer's consent. Agents took fingerprints and scrapings from the car. Most—but not all—of the fingerprints were identified as Reyer's; the scrapings were identified as human blood.

<sup>28</sup> Smith told the FBI that "there had been talk" that Parker "would be turned loose"—that is, released following his

corroborated Reyer's description of their travels to and from the Davis property and the coffee shop. He also agreed that Reyer had asked Marshal Pete Carver if Carver knew about "getting the n[egro] out of jail tonight," and that Carver had said that he did not know about it. Reyer, Smith, and Davis then drove back to the meeting. Smith told the FBI that thereafter, Reyer "acted more or less as a spokesman," and organized the meeting so that they could "get it over." Unidentified men at the meeting said that Reyer's car would be used to carry Parker.

Smith identified subjects Francis Barker, C.C. Reyer, J.P. Walker, and "Jasper Lee" (later identified as subject Jasper Ladner) as individuals he recognized at the meeting where the mob planned Parker's abduction. Smith recalled that Reyer mildly objected to the use of his car because "the color was too light." After the group decided to use Reyer's car, a man whom Smith claimed that he could not identify told him to get into a 1955 or 1956 black Chevrolet. Two men sat in the front. Smith described the driver only as a young man in his twenties, who was married to a girl from Mill Creek, Mississippi. He described the passenger as having dark-colored hair.<sup>29</sup> Smith got in the back, where he saw a young man, perhaps 18 years old, with light-colored hair. Smith, who was thirty-one at the time, thought that the young man looked like a "XXX."

The group drove to Poplarville, where they parked near the courthouse, with Reyer's Oldsmobile in sight. Smith said that they were to serve as lookouts and to keep anyone else from entering the courthouse. From this vantage point, Smith saw a group of unknown persons placing another person—Parker—in the back seat of Reyer's Oldsmobile. A man Smith claimed he did not know then ran from Reyer's Oldsmobile to the Chevrolet where Smith was sitting and got in the right front door. The Chevrolet followed Reyer's Oldsmobile from the courthouse. The two cars drove down the highway and across the Pearl River Bridge, which ended near the Louisiana-Mississippi border. Reyer's Oldsmobile turned around "in front of the Legion club" and headed back onto the bridge.<sup>30</sup> The Chevrolet, carrying Smith, continued into Louisiana.<sup>31</sup> Once the Chevrolet reached Bogalusa, Louisiana, it turned around and returned to Mississippi. Smith claimed that at no point did he see the Oldsmobile stop on the bridge "at any time" and that he "never did see . . . what happened to" Parker.

The Chevrolet traveled to the meeting spot in Crossroads, Mississippi, about 2.5 miles from the Pearl River bridge, where the men in the Chevrolet met the Oldsmobile, driven by subject J.P.

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conviction—because there were no Blacks on Parker's jury.

<sup>29</sup> As discussed below, information developed by the FBI indicates that the driver was Darlan Stevens, though Smith later said that Stevens may have been the man in the *back* seat. Smith identified the passenger in the front seat as George Rester, Jr.

<sup>30</sup> Of note, the "Legion club" referred to by Smith appears to be American Legion Post 24 in Bogalusa, which presently is located 0.3 miles across the Louisiana border. If the American Legion building was in the same place in 1959, and the Oldsmobile carrying Parker turned around at that location, it would strongly suggest that Parker in fact was transported across state lines.

<sup>31</sup> Smith said that the original plan had been to throw Parker into the river from the Pearl River Bridge and claimed to know of no plan to kill Parker first. Smith surmised to the FBI that eastbound traffic on the bridge had caused the Oldsmobile to continue over the river and then double back once the traffic had passed.

Walker. Inside was subject L.C. Davis, along with several other men Smith claimed he could not identify. Smith left the Chevrolet and got into the Oldsmobile. The Oldsmobile drove east toward Poplarville, meeting subject Francis Barker's car (which carried Barker and C.C. Reyer) traveling west on Highway 26. The Oldsmobile turned around and followed Barker's car back to Crossroads. At this point, the occupants of the Oldsmobile got into Barker's car, Smith got into the front seat of the Oldsmobile, and he and Reyer drove off. Smith told the FBI that he saw blood on the white top of the Oldsmobile.

The following Sunday, April 26, 1959, Reyer asked Smith to help him clean out the car. They used soap and water to clean blood stains from the back seat of the Oldsmobile.

Smith died on October 13, 1980.

**Jewel Haysel Alford (deceased):** A Pearl County Deputy Sheriff, jailer for the Pearl River County Jail, and brother-in-law of Sheriff George Moody, Alford gave the FBI an oral statement of events but refused to sign a written account of his summary. Alford told the FBI that, under duress, he provided the conspirators keys to Parker's jail cell. Specifically, Alford stated that Francis M. Barker came to Alford's home between 11:00 and 11:30 p.m. on the evening of Parker's abduction and murder, while Alford was home watching television with his wife.<sup>32</sup> According to Alford, Barker lured Alford outside and shoved him into a car where three other men sat—subjects J.P. Walker, L.C. Davis, and J.F. Lee, Sr. According to Alford, using slurs, one of the men said, "We've come after the n[egro] and want the keys." Another said, "Jewel, we don't want any trouble. We just want the keys." Fearing retaliation, Alford agreed that he would go to the Sheriff's Office, find the keys, and leave them on the Sheriff's desk.

Alford told the FBI that he then drove to the courthouse, found the keys, left them on the Sheriff's desk, and returned home. He did not provide an explanation of why he did not immediately report this to the sheriff or other law enforcement. Alford denied any further involvement with the abduction and murder of Parker. However, XXX, who was a XXX in the jail and was present when Parker was taken, said that he recognized Alford as one of the five masked men that came into the jail and removed Parker. XXX claimed that he recognized Alford's voice, gun, glasses, and shoes. XXX also told the FBI that Alford had told him several times that if anybody came for Parker, XXX should point Parker out to them and "make sure that they got the right Negro." However, inmate XXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX did not see Alford among the men who entered the jail to take Parker.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Although Alford claimed that subject Francis Barker came to his home, the FBI investigative file notes that subject C.C. Reyer (as discussed above) "steadfastly maintained that [Barker] remained in [Reyer's] presence" from 10:30 p.m. until 12:30 a.m. on the night of the murder, and that neither he nor Barker had anything to do with getting the jail keys from Alford.

<sup>33</sup> An internal DOJ memorandum dated July 1, 1959, stated that "it is exceedingly doubtful that Alford has told an entirely truthful story," and speculated that "[i]t is possible . . . that Alford's involvement may have gone much further than simply laying out the keys to the jail." The memo noted that, while XXX claimed to have seen Alford enter the jail and remove Parker, "more corroboration would be required before reliance could be placed" on XXX. A draft indictment in the 1959-1960 DOJ casefile alleged that Alford in fact entered the jail.

Alford died on May 26, 1997.

**Francis M. Barker (deceased):** Barker was never interviewed by FBI agents, likely because he died just six days after Parker's death. Information from other witnesses indicates that Barker had been involved in the murder. Subject C.C. Reyer told the FBI that Barker, a rabies control officer for the Mississippi State Board of Health, approached him on the afternoon of the lynching and told him about the meeting near L.C. Davis's house. As noted above, both Reyer and subject Arthur Smith saw Barker at this meeting. Reyer left the meeting with Barker in Barker's car. The two were together until around 12:30 a.m. on April 25, 1959, when subject J.P. Walker returned Reyer's car to him at the meeting place in Crossroads, Mississippi. Additionally, subject Jewel Alford told the FBI that around 11:30 p.m. Barker—along with J.F. Lee, Sr., J.P. Walker, and L.C. Davis—came to his home and demanded the keys to the jail.

Barker died in Picayune, Mississippi, on April 30, 1959, six days after Parker was lynched.

**James Floren Lee, Sr. (deceased):** A farmer and minister at the Slade Missionary Baptist Church in the Pistol Ridge community, Lee, Sr. spoke to the FBI at least four times. Lee implied he had an alibi by claiming that he was erecting a building on the day of Parker's murder, but he refused to tell agents where he was on the evening of the murder. Lee stated that, "if a hearing was held in the Parker matter, that then he would furnish his own witnesses to establish his whereabouts on April 24, 1959, and not prior thereto."

Considerable evidence demonstrates that Lee, Sr. was involved in the murder. Subject Jewel Alford identified Lee as one of the four men who came to his home the night of the murder and demanded the keys to the jail. Additionally, subject Arthur Smith told the FBI that Lee attended the April 24 meeting in which conspirators planned to abduct and murder Parker. Witness XXX, one of the prisoners from the jail interviewed by the FBI at the start of the investigation, identified Lee as one of the men who entered the jail and abducted Parker. According to XXX, Lee helped drag Parker from the jail, pulling the victim by his left leg. XXX noticed that Lee appeared to be favoring his left arm, and XXX believed that Lee may have been hit by Parker when the mob first accosted the victim. However, inmate XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX did not see Lee, Sr. or anyone resembling Lee, Sr. among the men who entered the jail to take Parker.

Another witness, Dr. Warren Dale, of Lumberton, told the FBI that Lee, Sr. came to him for treatment on April 23 and 25, 1959, the day before and the day after Parker's murder. During the April 23 visit, Lee complained of chest pains after doing carpentry work, and told Dale that the men Lee had been working with "were discussing a "[N]egro raping a white woman and indicated that this may have been bothering him." Lee also told Dale that he had at one time "been chased by a group of [N]egroes." During the April 25 visit, which occurred the day after the abduction, Lee complained of a small wound behind his left ear, and three scratches on the

back of his left hand, which injuries Lee claimed to have sustained from being hit by a falling piece of lumber on April 24. Lee also complained to Dale of a weakness in his left arm. At Lee's request, he was hospitalized at the Citizen's Hospital in Lumberton, Mississippi, and was discharged on May 1, 1959.

Lee, Sr. died on August 5, 1984.

**John P. Walker (deceased):** Walker, the owner of Walker's Body Shop in Picayune and a former Pearl River County Deputy Sheriff, was interviewed by the FBI several times. Walker denied having anything to do with, or any knowledge of, Parker's lynching. Walker claimed that he had spent the evening campaigning for Sheriff in Pearl River County, accompanied by subject Francis Barker, and driving Barker's Chevrolet.<sup>34</sup> During an April 30, 1959, interview with the FBI, Walker said that, although he had not participated in the abduction himself, "he had heard several reasons of the reason why Parker may have been taken, the most prominent one . . . being that Parker had retained Negro attorneys," who likely would "subject the rape victim, a white woman, to extensive cross-examination," which was "a situation considered most intolerable by many people."

Other evidence, however, indicates that Walker was directly involved in the abduction. As noted above, subject C.C. Reyer told the FBI that he saw J.P. Walker in Reyer's Oldsmobile; the car was parked outside the Pearl River County courthouse immediately before Parker was lynched. Additionally, subject Jewel Alford stated that Walker, Barker, and others came to his house to get the keys to the jail. Witness XXX, an inmate at the jail, told the FBI that Walker was one of the men who snatched Parker from the jail. Another XXX reported that Walker was upset about the fact that Parker had Black attorneys. That XXX told the FBI that Walker was in the courtroom at the time Parker was arraigned, closely watched Parker's Black attorneys, and said that if either of Parker's attorneys attempted to drink from the courtroom water fountain, he would knock the attorney down. Finally, subject Arthur Smith identified Walker as one of the men in attendance at the meeting in which the lynching was plotted, and Smith also identified Walker as the man who drove Reyer's car when the mob regrouped after the lynching.

Additionally, inmate XXX, who had been present in the jail when the mob came to take Parker, told the FBI in December 1959 that subject J.P. Walker told him several times that "if he ever told the FBI anything about the Parker case, he had better not come back to XXX [Mississippi, XXX's hometown]."

Walker died on August 29, 1977.

**Jasper Homer Ladner (deceased):** Ladner told the FBI that he was not involved in Parker's murder and gave, as an alibi, that he visited Ross Landrum's house until 10:00 p.m. on the evening of Parker's murder, returned home, and stayed at home for the rest of the night. However, other evidence suggests that Ladner was involved in the lynching. Subject Arthur

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<sup>34</sup> XXX, a resident of nearby XXX, told the FBI that Walker's "open hostility to Negroes" and his sympathy with Parker's murderers was helping him "gain[] strength as a candidate" among "a certain element of the people."

Smith told the FBI that Ladner attended the meeting at which Parker's lynching was plotted. Additionally, night marshal Pete Carver told the FBI that Ladner was a member of the mob who removed Parker from the jail.

There is also evidence that Ladner made inquiries about Parker in the weeks leading up to the murder, which could have been designed to assist the lynch mob. County Attorney William H. Stewart identified Ladner as one of two men (the other man was subject Selman Redmond) who, a week before the murder, asked him whether Parker was in jail. This statement was partially corroborated by a statement of Sheriff W.O. Moody, who recalled that two men (one of whom he identified as "a boy named Redmond") asked Stewart if Parker was in the jail, and whether Stewart had a photograph of Parker. Ladner admitted to the FBI that he and Redmond had visited the courthouse and discussed Parker's rape trial, but he denied speaking to Stewart or Moody about Parker.

Ladner died on April 15, 2006.

**Louis C. ("L.C.") Davis (deceased):** When the FBI interviewed L.C. Davis, he refused to provide any information about Parker's murder. There is, however, evidence that he participated in it. Specifically, subjects Smith and Reyer told the FBI that the meeting at which the conspirators plotted Parker's murder was held on a gravel road in front of L.C. Davis' house.<sup>35</sup> Subject Jewel Alford told the FBI that Davis was one of the men who came to his house on the night of the murder and demanded the keys to the jail. Both C.C. Reyer and Arthur Smith identified Davis as the man who left the meeting with them when they briefly returned to Poplarville and encountered Pete Carver, the night marshal.<sup>36</sup> Reyer further said that later that night, immediately before the abduction of Parker, he saw Davis attempt to open the window to the Sheriff's Office at the Pearl River County Courthouse.

Arthur Smith also reported that he saw L.C. Davis in Reyer's Oldsmobile when the conspirators regrouped after the lynching. According to Smith, Davis was riding in the back seat of the Oldsmobile when it arrived at the meeting place.

When the FBI interviewed Davis, Davis refused to discuss whether he was involved in Parker's murder. Davis told the FBI that he had indirectly received threats to burn his house and shoot him.<sup>37</sup> When asked to give a signed statement, Davis said, "take my knife, you might just

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<sup>35</sup> As noted previously, a May 9, 1959, FBI search of the meeting site found, among other things, a label and price tag bearing the words "Brown Top Jersey Glove," a slip of paper with the handwritten name "L.C. Davis" with a line drawn under Davis's name and the initial "M" underneath the line, a cellophane wrapper bearing the words "Red Bird Handkerchief," and a slip of paper with the name "Monroe J. Lee," with a line drawn beneath Lee's name. A second search on May 11, 1959, of the entire road in front of L.C. Davis's house found, among other things, several sheets of paper, and another slip of paper with "L.C. Davis" written on it. Agents also found numerous cigarette butts, gum wrappers, cellophane wrappers, and the like, indicative of a gathering of numerous persons.

<sup>36</sup> Carver identified Davis as one of the men with Reyer.

<sup>37</sup> The FBI investigative file notes that Davis "declined to furnish any information as to the possible source of the

as well cut my throat”—apparently admitting that giving a statement would be tantamount to a death sentence for him. Davis also told the FBI that a person could be electrocuted for taking part in a murder.

Davis died on January 16, 2006.

**James Floren Lee, Jr. (deceased) and Tullie Vandiver Dunn (deceased):** Lee, Jr. and Dunn (Lee, Jr.’s brother-in-law) each admitted to the FBI that he had been with conspirators on the night of the murder but neither confessed to participating in the crime. Additionally, inmate XXX identified Lee, Jr. as one of the men who entered the jail to abduct Parker. Other evidence indicates that both Lee, Jr. and Dunn may have participated in the crime.

James Walters, XXXXX, told the FBI that he was contacted by two men at his workplace in Hattiesburg at 11:00 a.m. on the day of the murder. The men drove a light blue or green 1957 Chevrolet. The men asked Walters if he wanted to participate in removing Parker from the jail in Poplarville. Walters told the FBI that he refused the men and told the men that they should not go, especially since XXXX had not identified Parker as the man who had raped her and was not sure that Parker was the right subject. Walters viewed Lee, Jr. on May 5, 1959, and identified him as the man who was driving the light-colored Chevrolet.<sup>38</sup> Walters also identified Dunn as the man who accompanied Lee, Jr.

William Lowell Mooney, a mechanic in Hattiesburg, admitted to the FBI that he had introduced witness Walters to the two men, and told the FBI that the pair had invited Walters to attend a meeting east of Poplarville on the night of April 24, 1959. Mooney identified Dunn as one of the individuals who contacted Walters on the day Parker was abducted.

Witness XXX, an employee of XXX in Hattiesburg, told the FBI that two men riding in a light-colored 1956 Chevrolet had told him that they were going to “have some fun at the Poplarville Jail that night and that they had been assured that the keys to the jail would not be hard to find.” On May 5, 1959, XXX identified these men as Lee, Jr. and Dunn. XXXXXXXXXXXXX, XXX said that Lee, Jr. and Dunn asked him, “You boys going down to see the fun?” and said that they were going to “take that n[egro] up.”

Lee, Jr. admitted to the FBI that he drove his Chevrolet to Hattiesburg, Mississippi about 9:00 or 10:00 a.m. on the day of the murder to pick up Dunn, and that he left Hattiesburg for home at 3:00 p.m. He denied contacting anyone with a proposal to abduct Parker. Dunn, in a signed statement dated May 7, 1959, admitted that Lee, Jr. came to his house about 10:30 a.m. in Hattiesburg, and that Mooney visited his (Dunn’s) house while Lee, Jr. was there. Dunn also admitted that he and Lee, Jr. had driven together in Hattiesburg, returning to Dunn’s house around

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threats other than to state he did not believe that they came from local people.”

<sup>38</sup> XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, Walters said that, while he was positive that Dunn was one of the two men who came to see him, he was not certain of his identification of Lee, Jr.



1:00 or 1:30 p.m. Dunn denied that Lee, Jr. had mentioned anything to him about a meeting, or about abducting Parker.

Lee, Jr. died on July 29, 2000. Dunn died on May 20, 1995.

**George Washington Rester, Jr. (deceased):** Although George W. Rester denied to the FBI that he participated in Parker’s murder, other witness testimony suggests that he may have been a participant. During the investigation, subject Arthur Smith identified Rester as one of the two men sitting in the front seat of the 1955 or 1956 black Chevrolet in which Smith rode when his group followed Reyer’s Oldsmobile from the courthouse. Smith told the FBI that as they sped away from the courthouse, “the car took a terrific jolt when it hit a bump in the road.” The vehicle described by Smith—namely, a 1955 or 1956 black Chevrolet—does not match the description of Rester’s car, a two-tone green 1958 Ford Fairlane 500 with a gold stripe on its side, and when shown Rester’s car, Smith “stated quite definitely that this was not the vehicle he had ridden in” on the night of the murder.<sup>39</sup>

Nonetheless, several jail inmates described a car that looked somewhat like Rester’s leaving the scene of the abduction. Delos Howard, a prisoner in the jail at the time Parker was abducted, told the FBI that he saw two cars leaving the area of the jail at approximately the time he heard someone yelling for help. He described one of these cars as a light green or dark green Ford, with a gold stripe on the side. Howard stated that as he observed the car cross the intersection, he heard a sound indicating that the car’s bumpers had scraped the pavement.<sup>40</sup> XXX, another prisoner, told the FBI that he saw a two-tone *blue* 1958 Ford parked near the courthouse, and that he saw the car drive away in a northerly direction shortly after Parker was removed from the jail. XXX, another prisoner, told the FBI that he saw three men get in a two-tone *blue* 1958 Ford sedan parked at the southwest corner of the courthouse square. He said that these men entered the car shortly after Parker had been removed, and that the car drove north on the street running behind the courthouse.

The FBI interviewed Rester twice near the time of the murder. Rester told the FBI that on the night of the murder, he and XXX were visiting friends— (specifically, subject Darlan Stevens and his XXX) until around 10:30 p.m., when they came home and went to bed.<sup>41</sup> During the interview, Rester permitted the FBI to inspect his Ford. Agents saw that the car’s rear bumper was bent and that the bottom of the car’s gas tank bore deep scratches—damage roughly consistent

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<sup>39</sup> The 1959-1960 DOJ casefile notes that although Smith “categorically denied that Rester’s Ford was the car in which he was riding,” prisoners at the jail identified a Ford as “speeding from [the] location where Smith said he was parked.” Since “Rester owned the Ford, [and] was in the same car as Smith, . . . it would seem a safe assumption that [Rester] was driving his own car.” The FBI did not further identify the black Chevrolet described by Smith.

<sup>40</sup> Howard XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXX retracted these statements, claiming that at the time he made these statements to the FBI, he was scared and made a false statement to the FBI to “get them off his back.”

<sup>41</sup> As discussed below, Stevens confirmed to the FBI that he and Rester and their XXX were together on the evening of the murder.

with subject Arthur Smith's statement that the vehicle he rode in hit a significant bump in the road as the mob made its escape. The damage was photographed, and samples scraped from the damaged parts (and from the street where Smith said the getaway car hit the bump) were submitted to the FBI Laboratory. However, the FBI Laboratory reported that the scrapings from Rester's Ford did not match the samples from the street.

Rester died on August 23, 2008.

**Darlan Stevens (deceased):** Darlan Stevens was interviewed by the FBI as a possible suspect because he fit the description Arthur Smith gave to the FBI about the driver of the car in which Smith rode on the evening of April 24. Smith had told the FBI that the car was driven by a man in his twenties who was married to a girl from Mill Creek, Mississippi. When interviewed by the FBI, Darlan Stevens admitted that XXX was formerly from XXX, Mississippi, but stated that on the evening of the lynching he and XXX were in Poplarville with subject George Rester, Jr. and Rester's family; that the Stevenses and the Resters returned to Stevens's home around 10:00 p.m.; and that he and XXX remained home for the remainder of the night. Stevens declined to provide the FBI with a signed statement, and he was antagonistic during an attempted re-interview by the FBI.

Stevens died on August 29, 2000.

**James Donovan "Pat" Davis (deceased):** The FBI interviewed James Donovan "Pat" Davis as a possible suspect because XXX told the FBI that, on the night of Parker's death, at about 10:00 p.m., Pat Davis came to the home of Harry Lavender Davis ("Harry L. Davis") and asked that Harry join a group intending to abduct Parker from the jail. According to XXX, Harry refused to join the group. However, when interviewed by the FBI, Harry denied that Pat Davis had come to his house on the night of the murder. Harry L. Davis did state that several days prior to the murder, James Davis had come to his house and related a rumor that unnamed persons were going to abduct "the Negro" from the jail that evening. According to Harry, subject James Davis did not ask Harry to participate, and did not indicate that he was going to participate himself.

When James Davis was interviewed by the FBI, he denied that he tried to recruit Harry L. Davis to join the mob on the night of Parker's murder or at any other time. He denied any involvement in the abduction and murder of Parker.

Davis died on May 18, 1969.

**Monroe James Lee (deceased):** The FBI interviewed Lee (the brother of subject L.F. Lee, Sr.) after finding a slip of paper with Lee's name on it when searching the roadway near subject L.C. Davis' house where the planning meeting took place. As noted previously, the FBI searched the site and found a slip of paper with the name "Monroe James Lee" written on it. When interviewed by the FBI, Lee claimed that he was in the woods cutting timber on the day of the murder and that later in the afternoon he and his wife picked up their toddler from L.C. Davis's house (the child stayed with the L.C. Davis family during the day). Lee further claimed that he did not leave his residence after 5:30 p.m. on the night of the lynching, and he denied any knowledge of the planning meeting or of the subsequent abduction and murder of Parker. Lee

then terminated the interview—supposedly on the advice of his attorney, whom Lee refused to identify.

Lee died on July 4, 1983.

**Holly Talmadge Smith (deceased):** The FBI interviewed Holly Talmadge Smith as a possible suspect based on information provided to the FBI by night marshal Pete Carver. Carver told the FBI that some members of the mob had used a cream- or tan-colored 1959 International pickup truck and referred the FBI to subject Holly Smith. Smith, a farmer and truck driver, admitted that he had an off-white 1959 International pickup truck, and that the truck had a “stake-type body.” Smith denied participating in the lynching, stating that on the evening of the murder, he had exercised his dog near Alligator Creek, and returned home about 11:45 p.m. that night.

Subject C.C. Reyer told the FBI that as he was leaving the planning meeting held in front of L.C. Davis’s house, he saw Smith’s truck. Reyer said he thought he recognized Smith’s voice as the truck drove by. Reyer also claimed that Smith had one or two dogs in the truck at this time. In a subsequent interview with the FBI, Reyer retracted his statement that he had seen a dog in Smith’s truck but said that the truck had a “stock rack” on it.

Smith died on September 4, 1989.

**Herman Schulz (deceased):** The FBI interviewed Schultz—a business partner of subject Jewel Alford—based on information provided by prisoners at the Pearl River Jail, who stated that Schultz was involved in the abduction.<sup>42</sup> Specifically, XXX, who had been a prisoner in the Pearl River County Jail at the time of the abduction, provided the FBI with a signed statement alleging that an individual named “Homer”—last name believed to be “Schulz”—was involved. XXX claimed that Schulz operated a garage near the courthouse and was one of the men who entered the jail when Parker was abducted. XXX stated that XXX had seen this man on a number of occasions, and that he had been in the company of subject Jewel Alford.

XXX, XXX, also submitted a signed statement alleging that Schulz was one of the men who entered the jail when Parker was taken. XXX stated that he recognized Schulz, the operator of Schulz’s Body Shop in Poplarville, because he was personally acquainted with Schulz and had been in the shop on numerous occasions. He also said that he had seen Schulz accompany Alford into the jail’s cell block during mealtimes. XXX further identified Schulz by Schulz’s broken right index finger. However, inmate XXX XXXXX that he did not see Schulz or anyone resembling Schulz among the men who entered the jail to take Parker.

The FBI interviewed Schulz, who provided the FBI with a signed statement that he was at home with his family on the night of Parker’s murder. However, Schulz acknowledged that his

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<sup>42</sup> A review of the 1959-1960 DOJ casefile indicates that DOJ attorneys believed that Schulz went with J.P. Walker, L.C. Davis, and Francis Barker to Deputy Jewel Alford’s house to get the jail keys. The DOJ attorneys further concluded that Schulz was one of the persons who entered the jail to abduct Parker. Attorneys believed that, afterwards, Schulz either jumped in the car that Arthur Smith was riding in or that Smith traveled in Reyer’s car to the scene of Parker’s murder. The 1959-1960 DOJ casefile does not include the bases for these conclusions.

right ring finger had been broken during a scuffle with XXX, who, as a XXX, worked at Schulz's body shop. Schulz claimed that the finger had been broken after the night of the murder. Schulz's treating physician, Dr. Joe Powell, told the FBI that Schulz had been treated for a fractured right ring finger on April 23, 1959, the day before the murder.

Schulz died on March 14, 1997.

**Herbert Morgan Stanford, Jr. (deceased):** Stanford, Jr., who often loitered at the courthouse, served process papers for the special venire for Parker's trial on the afternoon of Parker's murder, and probably would have known the routine of the jail. Deputy Sheriff George Moody told the FBI that he suspected Stanford's involvement in the lynching on the basis that he was "generally suspicious" of Stanford, and that Stanford had contacted him daily since the lynching seeking information as to the progress of the investigation.

The FBI interviewed Stanford's estranged wife, Stella Gibson Stanford, and was advised that, in the two weeks prior to the couple's separation on May 1 or 2, 1959, subject Stanford was frequently out late at night, and refused to tell her of his activities away from home.<sup>43</sup> Stella Stanford also said that Herbert Stanford came home very late on the night of the lynching, and that on the same night Stanford asked her where he could find the ammunition for his .38 caliber revolver, and for a .30-30 caliber rifle. The FBI file notes that subject Stanford had borrowed subject Jewel Alford's rifle around April 20-23, 1959.

When interviewed by the FBI, Stanford acknowledged that he owned a .38-caliber revolver, and that he had borrowed Alford's rifle on or around April 24-25, 1959. Stanford explained that he was considering buying the rifle from Alford to kill dogs or hogs that were disturbing his cattle. Stanford told the FBI that he was with his girlfriend, Maeola Lindsay, on the evening of Parker's murder. He claimed that he returned her to her apartment between 10:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. on the night of the murder, and that he arrived home between 10:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. Lindsay partially corroborated Stanford's alibi, claiming that she was out with Stanford until between 11:00 and midnight on the night of Parker's death. Lindsay's roommate told the FBI that, late on the night of the murder, Stanford returned Lindsay to her apartment after the roommate had gone to sleep.

Stanford told the FBI that he had no information concerning possible suspects and stated that he definitely did not believe they came from Pearl River County. Stanford said that the NAACP may have taken Parker from the jail "because they had everything to gain while Mississippi was hurt."

Stanford died on August 4, 1975.

**Selman Eugene Redmond (deceased):** Pete Carver, the Poplarville night Marshal, told investigators that he had "heard secondhand" that Redmond was involved in Parker's abduction. Days before Parker was murdered, Redmond, a sawmill operator, and subject Jasper Ladner

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<sup>43</sup> Of note, Stella Stanford identified Pearl River County Attorney William H. Stewart as one of Stanford's closest associates.

reportedly approached County Attorney William Stewart and asked Stewart whether Parker was in jail. Stewart told the FBI that he showed Redmond and Ladner a photograph of Parker he had just taken with a Polaroid camera.

When interviewed by the FBI, Redmond “denied emphatically” that he had visited the courthouse or inquired as to whether Parker was in the jail. Redmond told the FBI that on April 24, the night of the murder, he worked at his sawmill with Harry Jack Davis (identified by Redmond only as “Jack Davis”), his hired hand, until 6:00 p.m. The pair left the mill for supper and thereafter returned and worked until 11:00 p.m. Redmond claimed that he spent the rest of the night at home and that Davis stayed at his house because of the lateness of the hour. Redmond denied participating in, or knowing about, Parker’s abduction.

Redmond died on February 1, 2008.

**Pascal “Pack” Lee (deceased) and Charles Franklin Saucier (deceased):** XXXX identified in the FBI file as “XXX” reported to the FBI that Pascal “Pack” Lee and Charles Franklin Saucier had publicly expressed the view that Parker was not entitled to a trial but should be “mobbed,” a euphemism for a lynching. XXX recalled Lee stating that, if it had been his own father who had committed the rape of which Parker was accused, Lee would be ready to help lynch his own father. XXX further stated that immediately after news broke of XXX’ rape, Saucier stated that he thought the people of the community should take care of Parker, and that Saucier would be glad to help. Soon after, Saucier stated that he had been to Poplarville and learned that it was not yet time to take care of Parker, but he was ready any time “they” got ready. Additionally, XXX stated that on April 24, 1959, Saucier asked Lee if he was “ready,” and Lee replied, “Yes, I’m ready for any goddam thing.” Lee told Saucier that he had to take XXXX to a dance in Poplarville that night, but he would have plenty of time. XXX further advised that the two men spent a great deal of time talking together during the day of Parker’s murder, and on Monday, April 27, three days after the murder. The FBI presented photos of Pascal Lee to subjects C.C. Reyer and Albert Smith. Reyer and Smith denied knowing Lee, and said they had no information indicating that Lee had participated in any way in Parker’s abduction and murder.

When interviewed by the FBI, Saucier declined to furnish a signed statement, but said that on the afternoon and early evening of the murder, he visited a woman near Lumberton. Saucier told the FBI that he returned to his home around 9:00 p.m. and stayed there for the remainder of the evening. Saucier said that Pascal Lee was a work acquaintance and that the two had never visited after working hours. Saucier admitted to the FBI that he had told coworkers before the murder that Parker should be taken out of jail and “done away with,” and that, after the murder, he told coworkers that Parker had gotten what he deserved. Saucier insisted that, while he had no information about who had murdered Parker, he would have liked to have been “in on it but was not invited to participate.”

The FBI interviewed Pascal Lee twice. Lee told the FBI that, on the night of the murder, he was at home, did not leave, and had no visitors. He stated that he knew nothing about the incident and emphatically denied being involved in any way. The FBI attempted to re-interview

Lee a third time, but Lee refused, saying that he had told the agents all he knew, and that the prior interviews had upset him so much that he wished not to be contacted again.

Charles Franklin Saucier died on March 16, 1996. Pascal “Pack” Lee died on December 18, 1989.

**“XXX”:** Subject Arthur Smith told the FBI that on the night of Parker’s death, he rode in a Chevrolet with several other persons from the meeting place near L.C. Davis’s home to the Pearl River County Jail. Thereafter, these same persons, in the same car, followed the Oldsmobile that carried M.C. Parker from the jail toward Bogalusa, Louisiana. Smith said that in the back seat next to him was a young man of about eighteen years old, with light brown hair, whom Smith described as “small” and “quite young.” Smith referred to this individual as a “XXX,” but said he could not say for sure whether the young man belonged to the XXX XXX. Smith later tentatively identified subject Darlan Stevens as the man referred to as a “member of the XXX XXX,” but noted that “the facial features did not seem to be identical.”

DOJ has been unable to conclusively determine the identity of this individual. The FBI identified James Floren Lee, Sr., and his namesake, James Floren Lee, Jr., as conspirators. Lee, Sr. appears to have played a central role in organizing the mob and may have ridden in Reyer’s Oldsmobile with Parker after Parker was abducted from the jail and taken into Louisiana. At the time of the lynching, Lee, Jr. was 32 years old, and XXXX: Charles L. Lee (age 33); Milton Ervin Lee (age 30); Harold Lee (age 28); Bobby Joe Lee (age 26); XXX (age XX); XXX (age XX); Jerry Lee (age 15); and XXX (age XX).

The FBI file indicates that, at the time of the original investigation, agents looked for, but could not locate, XXX, who was closest XXX to the description Smith offered. Agents spoke to XXX, XXX for XXX’s XXX. XXX described XXX as having light brown hair and a slender build but denied any knowledge of XXX’s whereabouts and refused to provide XXX’s XXXX picture. The FBI file indicates that agents also consulted with the Poplarville Selective Service Board for information concerning XXX. The Board advised that XXX was a white male, recently turned 20 years old, 6’2”, 155 lbs., with brown hair.

**Harry Jack Davis (deceased):** Harry Jack Davis, who worked for subject Selman Redmond, was alleged by XXX, XXX, to have shot Parker. The FBI file indicates that on May 23, 1959, XXX told the FBI that Davis shot Parker on the Pearl River Bridge.<sup>44</sup> XXX said that

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<sup>44</sup> The FBI file states that XXX was intoxicated during the interview, and uncharitably describes XXX as “rambl[ing] incoherently during a large portion of the interview.” The next day XXX contacted the FBI and said that XXX did *not* “go along in the car that took [Parker] out of Poplarville.” Notwithstanding the FBI’s characterization of XXX—whose cooperation with the FBI put XXX at considerable personal risk and doubtless caused XXX enormous stress—the FBI file indicates that XXX on multiple occasions provided the FBI with credible information. XXX correctly identified three other subjects: James Donovan “Pat” Davis, J.F. Lee, Jr., and J.F. Lee, Sr. As noted above, XXX further correctly identified Lee, Sr. and L.C. Davis as being in the car that transported Parker from Poplarville and provided the FBI with correct information exculpating Johnny Loveless (discussed below) that showed that Loveless was out of town on the night of the murder.

XXX had no information as to whether Parker had been taken into Louisiana before he was shot and dumped into the river. XXX said that XXX told XXX that he did not want to shoot Parker, but was forced to by J.P. Walker, who had been driving the car that carried Parker from Poplarville. XXX further reported that James Floren Lee, Sr. and L.C. Davis were in the car that carried Parker from Poplarville, but XXX refused to identify the source of the information.

When the FBI interviewed him, Davis denied knowing anything about the abduction of Parker, and said that on the night of the lynching he and subject Selman Redmond worked at Redmond's sawmill until 11 p.m., at which point he and Redmond returned to Redmond's house and remained there for the evening.<sup>45</sup>

Harry Jack Davis died on July 18, 1991.

**Earl Sullivan (deceased):** XXX, an inmate at the Pearl River County Jail, was present when the mob came to take Parker and told the FBI that he thought he heard Earl Sullivan's voice among the members of the mob. When interviewed by the FBI, Sullivan denied having any part in Parker's lynching, and claimed to have been home on the night of the crime. The FBI file indicates that agents discounted this report upon interviewing Sullivan. Sheriff W.O. Moody told the FBI that he would not, under any circumstances, consider Sullivan a likely suspect in Parker's murder, as Sullivan was known to be harmless and was usually either drunk or seeking a drink.

Earl Sullivan died on February 2, 1970.

#### e. **DOJ Identifies Marshal Pete Carver as a Subject**

The investigative file indicates that, following the completion of the FBI's investigation in May 1959, the DOJ identified Poplarville Marshal **Harold Pierre "Pete" Carver, Jr.** as a possible conspirator. Carver told a series of accounts to the FBI, some of which he later admitted were false. It was reported that, in the days and months after the murder, he provided detailed factual accounts to others in the town.

The FBI interviewed Carver at least seven times during the 1959 investigation. While he initially denied having advance knowledge of Parker's lynching, Carver eventually admitted that at around 9:30 p.m. on the night of Parker's death, he had encountered subject C.C. Reyer at the Star Cafe in Poplarville. Using slurs, Reyer told Carver that someone was likely to be killed on Monday "with them n[egro] lawyers" being in the courtroom.<sup>46</sup> Carver told Reyer not to tell him anything about it. Reyer also said they were thinking about taking "that n[egro]" out of the jail. Carver claimed that, upon hearing this, he got out of Reyer's car and ended the conversation.

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<sup>45</sup> Redmond similarly relied on Davis as his alibi, claiming that he was home with Davis on the evening of Parker's murder.

<sup>46</sup> Parker's trial was set to start on Monday, April 27. It was reported to the FBI that some members of the community were outraged by the prospect that Parker's attorneys, both of whom were Black, might cross-examine the alleged victim at trial.

Carver told the FBI he didn't take Reyer's remark seriously, and that he did not believe Reyer was involved in the plan to remove Parker from the jail.

Carver then made his rounds through Poplarville. At around 11:00 p.m., he picked up his friends R.J. Wheat and Andy Stringfellow, and they drove through Poplarville.<sup>47</sup> Soon after, Carver went to the home of B.F. Orr, the City Marshal. Carver picked Orr up and the four men drove to the Amoco service station, north of Poplarville. Carver offered the FBI a shifting series of explanations as to why he had picked up Orr. At one point, Carver claimed that he picked up Orr because he saw two women on the street, and he thought that they might be connected to a series of thefts. At another point, Carver told the FBI that he had gotten Orr because he saw two men behind the Star Café. Regardless, Carver and Orr did not follow up on these alleged reports, but instead went to the Amoco service station, where they drank coffee and talked until after midnight.

Around midnight, at the service station, Carver saw Reyer again. Reyer entered the station with subject Francis Barker and talked to Carver for five or ten minutes. Carver said that, looking back in hindsight, he believed that Reyer had talked to him in order to delay his return to his night rounds, so that he would not be at the jail at the time of Parker's abduction.<sup>48</sup>

Driving back into Poplarville, Carver, Orr, Stringfellow, and Wheat passed the Star Café, where they were flagged down by a waitress who told them that someone had called and asked them to come to the jail.<sup>49</sup> They drove to the jail and arrived around 12:15 a.m. Although Carver and Orr saw potential witnesses outside the courthouse, they sat in their car and did nothing until the sheriff arrived about fifteen minutes later.

In subsequent interviews with the FBI, Carver offered information regarding certain members of the lynch mob.<sup>50</sup> It is unclear how he obtained this information. Carver requested at least once that the FBI not identify him as a source. Carver also told the FBI that he personally deplored the murder and felt very strongly that Parker should have gotten a fair trial. However, Carver added that, had Parker been convicted and then later released as a result of a reversal of his conviction, Carver "might feel that some drastic action should be taken to punish Parker."

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<sup>47</sup> As noted previously, Wheat and Stringfellow were friends of Carver's. Both taught night classes at the local junior college and frequently rode with Carver on his evening rounds for their own amusement.

<sup>48</sup> This was not the story Carver initially told the FBI. Carver first told the FBI that they delayed at the Amoco café because Carver's car stalled. Carver later admitted to the FBI that this was a lie.

<sup>49</sup> The Star Café served as Carver's de facto office as he made his rounds. Poplarville citizens would reach Carver by calling the Star Café and leaving a message with whoever was working at the café that night.

<sup>50</sup> Carver alerted the FBI that C.C. Reyer's car was used to remove Parker from the jail. Carver also told the FBI that some members of the mob had used a cream- or tan-colored 1959 International pickup truck and referred the FBI to subject Holly Smith.





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## **2. The 1989 and 1997 FBI Investigations**

After the DOJ's failure to obtain indictments in 1960, the case lay dormant for nearly thirty years. However, in 1989, XXX informed the FBI that a counselor at Camp Ridgecrest for Boys, Ridgecrest, North Carolina, with whom XXX served at the camp, had information concerning Parker's lynching. The FBI re-opened the matter and contacted the counselor in February 1990. The counselor informed the FBI that he had no firsthand information concerning the murder and had only learned of the incident through the news media, and through rumor.

The matter was again closed, only to be reopened in 1997, when XXX who had XXX with **George Rester, Jr.** told the FBI that Rester and **Selman Redmond** had been involved in Parker's murder.<sup>53</sup> XXX, XXX, told the FBI that XXX XXX with subject George Rester, Jr. for about XXX years, and that Rester gradually had begun to confide in XXX regarding the Parker matter. Rester told XXX that he and four other individuals went to the Pearl River County jail, removed Parker from jail, and killed him. Rester also said that before throwing Parker in the water, they removed Parker's teeth, castrated him, and split his stomach open so that he would sink in the water more efficiently.<sup>54</sup> Rester also told XXX that he had gotten rid of his 1958 Chevrolet because the FBI had spotted blood in it during the initial investigation. Finally, XXX told the FBI that in 1994, subject Selman Redmond told XXX that Rester was one of the men who had dragged Parker from the jail. According to XXX, the "chief of police" during the Parker lynching did not attempt to stop the lynching and knew who was involved.

As in 1959, however, the case was met with disinterest by state and local law enforcement. On April 10, 1998, the FBI contacted 15<sup>th</sup> District Attorney Richard Douglas in Columbia, Mississippi, and told him that they had received information implicating Redmond and Rester in Parker's murder. Douglas declined to take any action on the matter, refused to review the complaint file, and stated that he believed that the federal government should use its greater resources to investigate the case. The case was once again closed.

## **3. The 2008 FBI Investigation and DOJ Review**

### **a. Initial Review, Interviews, and Identification of Deceased Subjects**

On April 6, 2008, the FBI initiated a review of Parker's murder pursuant to the DOJ Cold Case Initiative and the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act of 2007, Pub. L. No. 110-

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<sup>53</sup> As noted previously, both Rester and Redmond have since passed away.

<sup>54</sup> As discussed above, this account is inconsistent with the autopsy of Parker's remains, which found that Parker's body had not been mutilated.

344, 122 Stat. 3934 (2007) and its 2016 reauthorization. The Till Acts authorize DOJ to investigate violations of criminal civil rights statutes that occurred before 1980 whenever such violation resulted in the victim's death. As part of the renewed investigation, the FBI conducted records checks on the persons identified by the FBI as subjects in 1959. All the known subjects (excepting Marshal Pete Carver and, perhaps, "XXX") were determined to be deceased. Despite the fact that the subjects were deceased, the FBI conducted a series of interviews of the subjects' family and friends in an attempt to develop additional information about the subjects' possible culpability:

XXX, XXX of subject John P. Walker, told the FBI that Walker did not discuss the Parker murder XXX. Not long after the Parker murder, Walker was audited by the IRS. XXX claimed that the stress of Walker's encounters with the IRS caused the heart attack that killed him.

XXX, who had contacted the FBI and advised them that XXX had information concerning Parker's murder, advised the FBI that, some time after the murder, XXX moved to the Poplarville area, where XXX met subject Selman Redmond. Redmond told XXX that he had been investigated by the FBI for Parker's murder. However, Redmond vehemently denied to XXX that he was involved in the killing and claimed that subject Jasper Ladner, among others, had committed the crime.

XXX, XXX of Marvin Beall (who was a cousin of subject James Donovan "Pat" Davis),<sup>55</sup> told the FBI that Beall was housed at the Pearl River County Nursing Home and was cogent only some of the time. XXX did not think Beall would be able to provide any information about whether Davis had any role in Parker's murder.

Joyce Ann Davis, the daughter of subject L.C. Davis, insisted that the Parker matter not be discussed in her house. She was upset that the matter would "just not go away."

Finally, the FBI reviewed a book entitled, "Blood Justice: the Lynching of Mack Charles Parker." Smead, Howard (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Following a review of this information, the FBI consulted with prosecutors with the DOJ's Civil Rights Division. They determined that the lynching of Parker was potentially a federal crime pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1201, the federal kidnapping statute, because the subjects (according to the statements of subject Arthur Smith) may have transported Parker across state lines. Civil Rights Division prosecutors further concluded that, because the evidence indicated that Parker's lynching was a "conspiracy to kidnap resulting in death," it was possible that prosecution of the subjects' co-conspirators might not be barred by a statute of limitations.

#### **b. Additional Investigative Steps and XXXXXXXX**

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<sup>55</sup> Beall appeared to have been a person of interest to the FBI and is further discussed below.

Federal investigators renewed their efforts in early 2013, when they learned that subject Pete Carver was still alive. In addition, investigators still hoped to find “XXX”—the “XXX,” who witnesses stated was involved in the murder. Thus, DOJ conducted further investigation to identify any remaining leads and determine whether Carver or XXX could be prosecuted on federal kidnapping charges.<sup>56</sup> The FBI and Civil Rights Division prosecutors conducted an exhaustive review of the investigation file to identify any potential investigative avenues, to see whether the identity of “XXX” could be established, and to determine whether sufficient evidence was available to establish that the subjects had transported Parker across state lines. Additionally, a DOJ attorney met on January 10, 2013, with Howard Smead, author of *Blood Justice*, but the meeting resulted in no additional leads. The FBI also attempted to locate and interview several persons who had been interviewed in the course of the 1959 investigation, in the hope that they might provide additional information, given the passage of time.<sup>57</sup>

### 1. Interviews of XXXXX

As part of their renewed efforts to identify “XXX,” federal investigators interviewed

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<sup>56</sup> The FBI also confirmed that XXXXX were still alive in 2013: Milton Ervin Lee, XXXX, and XXX, and XXX.. The remaining XXX had since passed away: Charles Lee died on September 15, 1996; Harold Lee died on August 30, 2011; Bobby Lee died on September 26, 2002; and Jerry Lee died on October 12, 1970.

<sup>57</sup> As might be expected, most of these persons were deceased, including Harry Lavander Davis, who cooperated with the 1959 FBI investigation; Shirley Karr Lee, a nephew of subject Monroe Lee and a cousin of subject J.F. Lee, who appeared to be on the verge of cooperating with the FBI in 1959 but stopped talking when subject Monroe Lee arrived; Braxton Davis, the brother-in-law of subject James Davis, who was with Davis for most of the day on April 24; Woodrow Wilson Spiers, the nephew of subject Francis Barker, whom Barker and subject J.P. Walker tasked with driving Walker’s Oldsmobile to Mobile, Alabama, late in the evening on the night of Parker’s death to pick up a relative of Barker’s; and Andy Stringfellow and R.J. Wheat, who rode in Pete Carver’s car on the night Carver picked up B.F. Orr and drove away from the courthouse. Harry L. Davis died on March 1, 1976; Shirley Karr Lee died on May 6, 1979; Braxton Davis died on February 10, 1995; Woodrow Wilson Spiers died on November 24, 1992; Andy Stringfellow died on January 10, 2013; and R.J. Wheat died on December 25, 1960.

However, the investigation failed to locate or confirm the death of XXX, XXX, who had XXX assisted the FBI in its investigation, and whose XXX to the FBI identified a number of persons ultimately named by the FBI as subjects. Local sources contacted by the FBI in 2013 referred to XXX by a variety of names, including “XXX” and “XXX.” The FBI thereafter contacted the Mississippi Bureau of Vital Statistics but was unable to locate any records pertaining to the names “XXX,” “XXX,” “XXX,” “XXX,” or “XXX.” On October 26, 2015, the FBI spoke with Harry L. Davis’s XXX, who advised that Davis XXX following the death of his first wife in 1952. On December 28, 2015, XXX described to the FBI a woman named “XXX” who was associated with Harry L. Davis and was known to live with men for short periods of time. According to XXX, XXX was older than Ladner (who himself was 75 years old at the time he spoke with the FBI in 2015). XXX recalled hearing many years ago that XXX had talked about the Parker murder, but that, given XXX’s reputation, XXX likely was running XXX mouth to make XXX look important, and that it was difficult to believe anything XXX said. When interviewed on March 4, 2016, XXX, who previously had been interviewed by the FBI, said that a XXX known to XXX as “XXX” or “XXX” moved in with Harry L. Davis following the death of Davis’s first wife. The FBI determined that a XXX named “XXX,” who was born on June 9, 1919, and who was linked to a number of Mississippi addresses, including several Poplarville addresses, died on August 29, 2009, at the age of 90. The investigation further identified a XXX named “XXX” who was born on August 25, 1911; who lived in nearby Wiggins, MS, and who died on March 2, 2004. The investigation produced no further information as to the identity or location of XXX.

XXXXX. In 2013, the FBI interviewed XXX at his home in XXX, Mississippi. XXX denied any knowledge of or participation in Parker's abduction and stated that he likely was home on the evening of Parker's abduction, because he "never went anywhere." XXX said that he did not know why the FBI did not interview him in 1959, as he could have easily been interviewed at his residence. XXX claimed that XXX never said anything about the Parker matter to him or any of XXX, and that it would be hard for him to believe that XXX was involved in the incident. XXX also said that XXX never said or did anything to suggest that he had been involved in Parker's murder. XXX said that he believed what had happened to Parker was wrong, and that the guilty parties should be brought to justice. Finally, XXX told the FBI that when he was young, he had dark brown hair—in contrast with subject Arthur Smith's statement to the FBI in 1959 that "XXX" had "light brown hair."

The FBI also interviewed Milton Ervin and XXX in 2013. Milton Ervin Lee was the son of subject J.F. Lee, Sr., and the brother of subject J.F. Lee, Jr. Milton Lee stated that he did not know if his father was involved in Parker's murder and that he had never discussed it with his father. He stated that he did not know where XXX was on the evening of the murder, but he said that he had no reason to believe that his father, J.F. Lee, Jr., or XXX were connected with Parker's murder. He also stated that he believed that Parker had gotten what he deserved. XXX provided no additional information useful to the investigation and said that XXX believed it best to "let a sleeping dog lie." Milton Ervin Lee died on January 13, 2015.

In June 2014, the FBI interviewed XXX, XXX. XXX was XXX years old in XXX of 1959 and is XXXXX. XXX stated that he knew nothing about Parker's murder and was never told anything about it by XXXX. XXX confirmed that subject Selman Redmond and Jack Davis were close associates before each man died, and that the man known to XXX as Jack Davis drowned in 1993 or 1994. XXX provided no additional information useful to the investigation.

In 2015, the FBI attempted to interview XXX by telephone. The FBI spoke with XXX, XXX, who advised that XXX was, at the time of the call, under the care of a psychiatrist and required extensive care. XXX further advised that, because of the nature of the interview, he would not allow the FBI to speak with XXX absent a court order. He stated that he did not think XXX knew anything about the circumstances surrounding Parker's murder; that he had no reason to believe XXX was involved in the Parker murder; and that, if any XXX had been involved, they would not have disclosed their involvement to XXX. XXX was able to provide no other information pertinent to the investigation.

## 2. Other Interviews

As part of its effort to identify any additional investigative leads, the FBI conducted additional interviews to determine if any other witnesses could provide information concerning the murder. The FBI re-interviewed Poplarville residents XXX and Lora Kirkland, who had previously been interviewed during the FBI's 1959 investigation and had told the FBI that they had attended a rodeo in Bogalusa, Louisiana, on the night of the crime, returning home around midnight. When re-interviewed, Lora Kirkland stated that as they returned home on the evening of Parker's abduction, they passed the area where Parker's murder had taken place "about the time

it [Parker's murder] happened." Kirkland said that she and XXX had seen "a bunch of cars" traveling opposite them on the road, but did not know the reason for the cars, and could not provide any identifying information as to the cars or their occupants. XXXX did not provide any additional information useful to the investigation.

The FBI also re-interviewed **XXX**. XXX was married to XXXX at the time of Parker's murder, and was present at Reyer's house when Reyer and Smith stopped by before heading to the meeting where the mob planned Parker's murder.<sup>58</sup> When re-interviewed by the FBI, XXX told the FBI that he did not know anything about the murder of Parker, and claimed that on the night of the crime, he was at Reyer's house watching television with XXXXX. XXX and XXXX "30-something years ago," and that there had been no talk within the Reyer family about the incident before XXX. When asked who would know anything about the event, XXX stated, "Everyone who would know is dead." XXX explained that he had secured counsel in May 1959 after the FBI broke into XXX's house with his family present, "Gestapo style," while XXX was attending school in New Orleans.

The FBI also re-interviewed **Joyce Ann Davis**, the widow of John Loveless and daughter of subject L.C. Davis. Davis claimed that she and her parents were home on the evening of Parker's murder, and that there were no cars, no people, and no meeting at her house that night. Davis also said that her father stayed home that night and that her husband, John Loveless, was working on the Mississippi coast on the night of Parker's murder. Davis offered no additional information useful to the investigation.

The FBI also re-contacted **XXXX of George Rester, Jr.**, to whom the FBI had spoken in 1997. The FBI contacted this person in the hope that the individual might be more forthcoming, given that Rester was now dead. The individual provided no new information.

The FBI also spoke with **an individual who asked not to be identified** who worked as a part-time employee at the Pearl River County Sheriff's Office in 1959. Following Parker's arrest in Lumberton, Mississippi, for the rape of XXX, the individual helped Deputy George Moody transport Parker from Lumberton to Poplarville. The individual did not know of any living persons who may have information about Parker's abduction or killing but speculated that some living persons might have information. The individual also related that XXX had heard that Pete Carver and B.F. Orr were involved in Parker's murder but claimed to know of no details.

The FBI interviewed **XXX**, XXX, who in 1959 worked as a nurse at the Pearl River County Hospital but was not on duty on the night that Parker was abducted. XXX stated that Nell Dedeaux was deceased and had said nothing to XXX as to who may have been responsible for Parker's murder. Upon learning that the FBI was inquiring into Parker's murder, XXX stated that XXX once had spoken with **XXX**, an employee at the White Funeral Home in Lumberton, Mississippi. According to **XXX**, XXX told XXX that XXX had gone coon hunting on the night

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<sup>58</sup> XXX had been non-cooperative during the FBI's first interview attempt. XXX refused to speak to the FBI and immediately contacted his attorney. After XXX's attorney arrived, XXX advised the FBI that he had served as a XXXX and provided his serial number but gave no information as to his whereabouts on the evening of Parker's abduction.



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#### 4. Attempted Sale of Diary

On September 19, 2013, the FBI received a telephone call from an individual who only identified himself by a single name and refused to provide any further information. The caller advised that he had inherited a diary which contained details pertaining to the death of Mack Charles Parker. The caller further advised that he worked on a tugboat for 30 days at a time and that the telephone he was calling from was a “Tracphone” which the tugboat captain provided for the use of the crew. The caller said that he had just begun his thirty-day tour of duty and promised that he would contact the FBI after he returned home to negotiate the sale of the diary to the FBI. The caller did not call the FBI as promised and attempts by the FBI to contact the caller were unsuccessful. A subpoena of the cellular service provider produced no additional information as to the location or identity of the caller.

##### c. Other Persons of Interest

Federal investigators also considered whether 35 other “persons of interest” who were not ultimately named as subjects in the 1959 investigation may nonetheless have been involved with the conspiracy. The FBI and DOJ prosecutors evaluated the information in the FBI investigative file, the 1959-1960 DOJ casefile, and in the book *Blood Justice* concerning these persons to determine whether a predicate existed for further inquiries. The FBI and DOJ prosecutors also conducted records checks concerning each person and determined that nearly all such persons are deceased, and that the remainder cannot be identified.

**Cecil Beach and Victor Williamson (deceased):** Beach and Williamson owned a furniture store in Poplarville.<sup>63</sup> It was reported to the FBI that Beach and Williamson told another man, James Woodrow Howard, in advance that Parker was to be lynched. When interviewed, however, Howard denied that anyone had spoken to him in advance about the lynching. Another man reported that Beach and Williamson had approached him and asked him to join the mob, but the man refused. Both Beach and Williamson were interviewed by the FBI on May 4, 1959. Both denied having any information pertaining to the lynching. Beach stated that he was home the entire evening of April 24. In a signed statement given to the FBI, however, Beach wrote, “I wish to state that if that Parker Negro raped that woman, then he got justice if he was killed, but if they didn’t kill him after they took him out of jail, then in my opinion, he didn’t get justice.” Williamson stated that he had attended a rodeo in nearby Bogalusa, Louisiana, and returned home

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<sup>62</sup> XXX.

<sup>63</sup> The FBI identified Beach and Williamson as subjects in a report dated May 19, 1959, but did not identify them as subjects in any of its later reports.



around 11:20 that night.<sup>64</sup> Williamson acknowledged that, upon first hearing the news of the lynching, he was glad that Parker had been lynched.

Cecil Beach died on March 27, 1971. Victor Williamson died on July 22, 1999.

**James Woodrow Howard (deceased):** A source reported to the FBI that Howard, an employee at the nearby Pearl River Junior College, was told by Cecil Beach and Victor Williamson that Parker was to be murdered.<sup>65</sup> Howard was interviewed by the FBI on May 1 and 5, 1959. Howard appeared “very nervous and hesitant” during the interview and denied knowing anything about the lynching and denied that anyone had spoken to him in advance about it.

James Howard died on May 24, 1987.

**Marvin Augustus Beall (deceased):** XXX (who identified subject Harry Jack Davis to the FBI) also initially named Marvin Augustus Beall as a conspirator.<sup>66</sup> On May 7, 1959, XXX contacted the FBI and reported that a meeting had been held in L.C. Davis’s yard at about 10:30 p.m. on the night of the lynching to plan the abduction of Parker. XXX named, among others, Pat Davis; Marvin Beall; J.F. Lee, Jr.; and J.F. Lee, Sr. as being involved with the abduction. XXX further alleged that Beall and subject Pat Davis came to XXX at about 10:00 p.m. on the night of the crime and attempted to recruit XXX, Harry Lavander Davis, to go with them to Poplarville to lynch Parker. When interviewed by the FBI on May 13, 1959, Harry Lavander Davis initially denied that Beall and Davis had approached him, but then admitted that several days before Parker’s abduction Pat Davis had stopped at XXX at around 9:00 p.m. and told Harry Lavander Davis that he had heard some people were going to get “that n[egro] out of jail.” Harry Lavander Davis denied that anyone had asked him to become involved in Parker’s abduction. In a written statement provided to the FBI on May 9, Beall flatly denied participating in Parker’s abduction, or asking anyone to so participate. On May 10, 1959, Harry Lavander Davis told the FBI he was “firmly of the opinion” that Beall had not participated in the murder, having accepted Harry Lavander Davis’s advice not to go. On May 11, 1959, XXX contacted the FBI and advised them that XXX had since learned that Beall “definitely did not” participate in Parker’s abduction.

Marvin Beall died on May 27, 2009.

**Acy Alexander Hartfield (deceased):** XXX also told the FBI that XXX had heard, but was not sure, that Acy Alexander Hartfield had also attended the meeting at which Parker’s abduction was planned.<sup>67</sup> When interviewed by the FBI on May 10, 1959, Hartfield told the FBI

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<sup>64</sup> The FBI was able to corroborate Williamson’s account as to his whereabouts up to 11:20 p.m. on the evening of the lynching.

<sup>65</sup> The FBI identified Howard as a subject in a report dated May 19, 1959, but did not identify him as a subject in any of its later reports.

<sup>66</sup> The FBI identified Beall as a subject in a report dated May 19, 1959, but did not identify him as a subject in any of its later reports.

<sup>67</sup> The FBI identified Hartfield as a subject in a report dated May 19, 1959, and in a second report dated May 28, 1959, but did not identify him as a subject in any of its later reports.

that he had been home sick through the afternoon and evening of April 24. However, one of Hartfield's neighbors told the FBI that he had seen Hartfield in Poplarville on the afternoon of April 24.

Acy Hartfield died on November 30, 1979.

**Oliver Courtney (deceased):** XXX told the FBI that Oliver Courtney, a friend of Pascal "Pack" Lee, may have been involved in the abduction of Parker. According to XXX, several days before Parker's lynching, Courtney had remarked that he was very anxious to attend Parker's trial, and would "lay off" work, if necessary, to do so. XXX further alleged that around 1955, Courtney (a truck driver) was on a trip to New York, where he "became involved in some type of a quarrel with a Negro and reportedly shot the Negro but did not kill him."

Oliver Courtney died on December 26, 1967.

**Ernest Ames Russ (deceased):** Subject Herbert Morgan Stanford told the FBI that around April 29, 1959, he spoke with Ernest Ames Russ, a filling station operator, about Parker's lynching.<sup>68</sup> Russ allegedly told Stanford that Parker was to have been "taken out" of the jail on April 16, 1959 (instead of April 24). Subject C.C. Reyer told the FBI on May 8, 1959, that he visited Russ's service station at 9:15 p.m. on the night of the murder. Russ was interviewed by the FBI on May 4, 1959. He told the FBI that he closed his service station at around 9:00 p.m. on the night of the murder and then came home and went to bed. Russ claimed to have no information about Parker's lynching.

Ernest Russ died on January 26, 1990.

**William Lowell Mooney (deceased):** Two of the conspirators met with XXX XXX, after being introduced to Walters by William Lowell Mooney.<sup>69</sup> James Harrell Walters told the FBI that William Lowell Mooney brought subjects James Floren Lee, Jr. and Tullie Vandiver Dunn to Walters' place of employment, where Lee, Jr. and Dunn told Walters about the plot to murder Parker. Walters said that he refused the men and walked away. As he did so, he heard Mooney tell Dunn that he would see Dunn later that night. In a series of written statements provided to the FBI on May 5, May 6, and May 7, 1959, Mooney admitted that he had been approached by two men (whom Mooney claimed not to know) at a store in Petal, Mississippi, around 1:00 p.m. on the day of the murder. The men asked Mooney if he knew where Walters worked. Mooney drove to Walters' workplace and allowed the men to follow him in their own car. Mooney went inside, got Walters, and brought him out to the car. The men invited Walters and Mooney to a meeting later that night. Dunn told Mooney that the purpose of the meeting was to decide what to do with Parker, that "it had been fixed so that they could get in the jail," and

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<sup>68</sup> The FBI identified Russ as a subject in a report dated May 19, 1959, but did not identify him as a subject in any of its later reports.

<sup>69</sup> The FBI identified Mooney as a subject in a report dated May 19, 1959, but did not identify him as a subject in any of its later reports.



13, 1959, the FBI interviewed Loveless's landlord in Long Beach, Mississippi, on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The landlord confirmed that Loveless was at his cottage in Long Beach around 11:00 p.m. on the night of Parker's death.

John Loveless died on December 25, 2010.

**Emmett Rester (deceased):** Subject Pete Carver XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX heard that Emmett Rester, brother of subject George Rester, Jr., was involved in the lynching of Parker. Emmett Rester died on February 10, 1998.

**Hammond Slade (deceased):** Slade was named in the book *Blood Justice* as having participated in the planning meeting at L.C. Davis's house. The FBI investigative file provides no information indicating that Slade attended the meeting. Hammond Slade died on November 26, 1978.

**James Harrell Walters (deceased):** James Harrell Walters, XXX, was first interviewed by the FBI on April 25, 1959, and said that he spent the evening of April 24, 1959, at home watching a boxing match on television. Walters denied that he had any advance knowledge of the plot to murder Parker. However, when interviewed by the FBI on May 4, 1959, Walters told the FBI that he was contacted at 11:00 a.m. on the day of the murder by two men—later identified as subjects James Floren Lee, Jr. and Tullie Vandiver Dunn. The men asked Walters if he wanted to participate in removing Parker from the jail in Poplarville. Walters told the FBI that he refused to join in the lynching and told the men that they should not go, especially since XXX had not identified Parker as the man who had raped her and was not sure that Parker was the right subject. The FBI reports and DOJ case file indicate that the FBI's investigation developed no information identifying Walters as a conspirator.

James Walters died on March 13, 2013.

**William Edward Walters (deceased):** William Edward Walters, XXX XXX, also was named in the book *Blood Justice* as a participant at the meeting where Parker's murder was planned, as one of the men who entered the jail with subject J.P. Walker, and as warning other conspirators that the FBI was investigating the murder.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, *Blood Justice* cites a September 11, 1980, interview with Walters as the source for a paragraph describing how the mob weighted Parker's body with chains and threw it from the Pearl River Bridge. When interviewed by the FBI on April 26, 1959, Walters admitted that he had traveled from Bogalusa, Louisiana, to Hattiesburg, Mississippi, during the late evening of April 24, arriving in Hattiesburg around midnight.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> This information appears to come from subject Jewel Alford, who, in an interview with the author of *Blood Justice*, apparently "name[d] . . . the other men in the mob inside the courthouse." See *Blood Justice*, p. 48.

<sup>72</sup> Walters admitted passing through Poplarville on his way to Hattiesburg. He told the FBI that he departed for Hattiesburg after finishing work at 10:00 p.m. Poplarville is about 20 miles from Bogalusa, and about 40 miles from Hattiesburg.

William Walters died on June 23, 1993.

**Buford Walker (deceased):** Walker, a former sheriff of Pearl River County, was the brother of subject John P. Walker. While the FBI initially considered Walker a subject until at least May 19, 1959, the final FBI reports do not identify Walker as a subject.

When the FBI approached Buford Walker on May 2, 1959, he joked that he knew his rights, that he knew he had a right to a lawyer, and that he knew he had a right to not make a statement. Buford Walker stated that he did not “condone mob violence.” He admitted to the FBI that, as a former sheriff, he would have known where the jail keys were, and stated that “feeling was high” when it was learned that Parker had retained Black attorneys. Buford Walker further admitted that a week before the lynching, he had spoken to Sheriff Moody about Parker, about the possibility of violence, and about the possibility that venue might be changed. Several witnesses suspected Walker’s involvement. Walker said he spent the night of the murder with a friend in Landon, Mississippi, and did not return to Poplarville until the following morning. The friend confirmed Walker’s alibi to the FBI.

Buford Walker died on January 23, 1964.

**Waveland Dedeaux (deceased):** XXX identified Waveland Dedeaux as a close friend of subject J.F. Lee, Jr., and suggested that if Lee, Jr. was involved in the case, Dedeaux was in all probability involved. XXX, who was familiar with the area where a number of the conspirators lived (and XXX), advised the FBI on May 11, 1959, that in years prior it had been common practice for the Lees and other residents of the area to hold a “meeting” whenever it became necessary to dispose of someone. XXX stated that he personally had attended one or two of the meetings, at which it was decided who would get the job of disposing of the person, and the method to be used. Afterward, the victim would either simply disappear or have an accident of some kind.<sup>73</sup> XXX stated that if a meeting were held in connection with the abduction of Parker, he felt that J.F. Lee, Sr., and J.F. Lee, Jr. would be involved. Waveland Dedeaux submitted a written statement to the FBI on May 13, 1959, in which he denied having any knowledge of, or part in, Parker’s lynching, stating that he remained at home after 8:20 p.m. on the night of the crime.

Waveland Dedeaux died on May 23, 1999.

**Cecil Dedeaux (deceased):** XXX also identified Cecil Dedeaux as a likely attendee at the meeting in which Parker’s abduction was planned. XXX stated that Dedeaux probably attended the meeting prior to the abduction of Parker. Cecil Dedeaux was interviewed by the FBI on April 26 and May 2, 1959. Dedeaux told the FBI that on the evening of April 24, 1959, he was at the Pearl River County Hospital (next to the jail) to visit his father. After hearing the hospital nurses mention a commotion at the jail, Dedeaux walked outside, where he heard loud talking by six or eight persons on the south side of the courthouse, and shortly thereafter heard two or three cars leave in a hurry. Dedeaux said he could not identify any of the persons he had

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<sup>73</sup> The FBI file contains no other references to such meetings, and there is no indication that the FBI corroborated, or attempted to corroborate, the source’s report that the Lees and their neighbors regularly engaged in murder.

heard.<sup>74</sup> He later admitted that he had *seen* seven or eight men standing in the street near the south side of the courthouse. These men “had a n[egro]r” and looked to Dedeaux as if they were attempting to “put a drunk n[egro] in jail.”<sup>75</sup> Dedeaux could offer no descriptions of the men or their dress, nor recall whether they were wearing masks.

Cecil Dedeaux died on November 7, 2002.

**“Shorty” Landrum (deceased):** XXX that informed the FBI of Waveland Dedeaux’s possible involvement in the lynching reported that “Shorty” Landrum, who operated a dairy and lived near Cecil Dedeaux, had also attended past “meetings,” and would likely have attended the meeting at which Parker’s murder was planned. The FBI file provides no indication that the FBI developed this information or further identified “Shorty” Landrum. However, an individual named Herman A. “Shorty” Landrum (who was born on August 7, 1928) died on December 17, 2000, and is buried in Hickory Grove Cemetery in Pearl River County.

**The Amacker Brothers (Hubert, Jeppie, Aubrey, Houston) and George Dudley Warner (deceased):** Three of the Amacker brothers—Hubert, Jeppie (a Poplarville constable), and Aubrey—were drinking beer with their friend George Dudley Warner in the “Negro section” of Poplarville late into the evening of April 24. When interviewed by the FBI, they stated that they finished drinking around midnight, then drove past the courthouse. They recalled the lights being on in the courthouse, but otherwise claimed not to have seen anything unusual.

Hubert Amacker and the fourth Amacker brother, Houston, were janitors in the Pearl River County Jail, and had access to the jail keys. Houston Amacker told the FBI that around 8:00 p.m. on the night of the murder he went with subjects J.P. Walker and Francis Barker to see a house fire, and then returned at about 9:00 p.m. to the Star Café in Poplarville, where he remained before going home at around 9:30 p.m. Houston denied knowing anything about the abduction of Parker. However, given that other members of the mob had been spreading the word all afternoon and evening about the planning meeting near subject L.C. Davis’s house, it is likely that Walker and Barker told Houston Amacker about the planning meeting, given that Barker had also recruited subject C.C. Reyer that same evening. Curiously, on May 8, 1959, Amacker—according to his doctor, Poplarville physician W.F. Stringer—reportedly attempted suicide in the basement of the courthouse by drinking a cleaning solution containing acid. Dr. Stringer told the FBI that Amacker said he had attempted suicide because he was tired of being made fun of for his physical disabilities.<sup>76</sup> Stringer further told the FBI that he “specifically asked Amacker if he

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<sup>74</sup> The FBI interviewed XXX, Dedeaux’s XXX, on April 29, 1959. XXX reported that XXX and XXX were at the Pearl River County Hospital late on the night of Parker’s abduction; that XXX left to retrieve a jacket from XXX car; and that when he returned, he remarked, “They got that n[egro].”

<sup>75</sup> XXX.

<sup>76</sup> Amacker had short, underdeveloped arms and was hard of hearing, and reportedly had been the butt of practical jokes around the courthouse for years.

was concerned over the Parker incident and Amacker stated that nothing in the investigation had caused him the slightest concern and he had not been bothered by the case.”

An internal DOJ memorandum dated July 1, 1959, noted that Jeppie’s only alibi was provided by his brothers Hubert and Aubrey; that Jeppie was seen by subject C.C. Reyer at the Amoco Café between 11:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m. on the night of the murder—around the same time that Orr, Carver, Stringfellow, and Wheat were there; and that no attempt had been made to “determine whether anyone in the Negro quarter observed the Amacker brothers there.”

Hubert Amacker died on October 27, 1961; Jeppie Amacker died on January 23, 1962; Aubrey Amacker died on October 24, 1976; and Houston Amacker died on November 9, 1963. George Dudley Warner died on July 27, 1999.

**Ross Landrum (deceased):** Ross Landrum, a neighbor of subject Jasper Ladner, told the FBI that on the night of Parker’s abduction, Ladner came to his home and “watched the fights” on television until around 10:00 p.m. Landrum claimed that Parker was not mentioned at any time during the evening, nor was the rape case mentioned, and that he did not hear of Parker’s abduction until the next morning, when it was announced on the radio.

Landrum died on November 28, 1969.

**Monroe H. Stuart (deceased):** XXX, another inmate at the Pear River County Jail, also was present when the mob came to take Parker. XXX later told the FBI that a man named Monroe H. Stuart, whom XXX believed to be the Sheriff in Picayune, Mississippi, told XXX that if XXX ever testified for the federal government in the Parker case, XXX had better not come back to Picayune. The FBI file notes that a man named “M.H. Stuart” was the Constable of the Fourth District at Picayune.

Monroe H. Stuart died on November 18, 1970.

**Dr. William F. Stringer (deceased):** XXX, an inmate at the Pearl River County Jail, was present when the mob came to take Parker.<sup>77</sup> XXX, who was under the care of Dr. William F. Stringer for medical conditions arising from a XXX automobile accident, told the FBI on May 12 and 13 that XXX was treated by Dr. Stringer on April 25, 1959, and that Dr. Stringer (who, as noted above, had performed Parker’s autopsy), told XXX, “Don’t be scared; they got what they came for and they’re not from this county.” XXX said that XXX believed Stringer may have resembled one of the men who entered the jail to abduct Parker. On May 6 or 7, XXX cut XXX own throat. The FBI file reports that XXX told the FBI that XXX cut XXX own throat in order to be released from the jail and provide information concerning Parker’s abduction. After being treated, XXX was released from the jail on May 10.<sup>78</sup> On May 12, 1959, XXX, a cab driver, reported to the FBI that he had transported XXX for about five hours that day. XXX said that

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<sup>77</sup> XXX was serving 150 days in jail for selling mortgaged property.

<sup>78</sup> XXX told the FBI that XXX cut XXX throat not in an effort to commit suicide, but as a way to be released from the jail so that XXX could speak with the FBI concerning Parker’s abduction.

while in his cab, XXX told him that the doctor who removed the stitches from XXX throat told XXX that XXX should keep XXX mouth shut, or he would finish cutting XXX throat. The FBI file does not indicate that agents took any action based on these reports.

Dr. William F. Stringer died on July 21, 2009.

**Saxon Farmer and Ernest Ray McElveen (deceased):** Law enforcement sources in Bogalusa, Louisiana, named Saxon Farmer and Ernest Ray McElveen as possible conspirators, given their pronounced anti-Black sentiment and activities.<sup>79</sup> Both Farmer and McElveen reportedly served as representatives of the White Citizens' Council<sup>80</sup> of nearby Washington Parish, Louisiana, and had been responsible for challenging the voting registrations of between 400-500 individuals, "principally Negro," in Washington Parish.<sup>81</sup> Washington Parish Sheriff Dorman Crowe reported to the FBI that numerous Black residents of the parish had complained to him that Farmer had beaten them when they could not make good on outstanding debts, and that he had heard individuals comment to him that they had seen Farmer "beat up Negroes for various reasons."

The FBI consulted payroll records at McElveen's employer and confirmed that McElveen checked into his job at 9:49 p.m. on the night of the murder and worked until 5:45 a.m. the following morning.

The FBI interviewed Farmer on May 4, 1959. Farmer told the FBI that he was not approached to join the mob and had not participated in the murder. Farmer further stated that, while he believed that Parker probably received what was coming to him, he "did not believe in the method used," and that he was "opposed to mob violence and would not take part in such activity." He acknowledged beating Blacks who "owed him money or had done him wrong," but had never killed them, and "objected to such action."

Saxon Farmer died on June 19, 1994. Ernest Ray McElveen died on February 17, 2003.

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<sup>79</sup> The FBI identified Farmer as a subject in reports dated May 7 and May 19, 1959, but did not identify him as a subject in any of its later reports. The FBI identified McElveen as a subject in a report dated May 28, 1959, but did not identify him as a subject in any of its later reports.

<sup>80</sup> White Citizens' Councils (WCCs) were Southern white supremacist and segregationist organizations formed in opposition to the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) that segregation in public education violated the Constitution. WCCs, which openly opposed integration and Black voting rights, frequently employed violence, intimidation, and repressive economic tactics in a protracted, multi-decade effort to resist the advance of civil rights in the South.

<sup>81</sup> Saxon Farmer was a Grand Titan of the Original Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Farmer's white supremacist activities—including voter suppression, threats, and intimidation—were the subject of multiple actions brought by the United States. See *United States v. Original Knights of the Ku Klux Klan*, 250 F. Supp. 330 (E.D. La. 1965). Ernest Ray McElveen was charged with murder on June 2, 1965, for the killing of a Black deputy Sheriff in Washington Parish. The case was never prosecuted, and the charges were dropped. A month later, Farmer led a Klan rally in Bogalusa.



**J.L. McCaffrey, Sr. (deceased):** A source told the FBI that J.L. McCaffrey, Sr., the owner of McCaffrey Food Market in Hattiesburg, may have furnished from his store the gloves used by the mob. The source reported that about two or three months before the murder, McCaffrey told the source that he had beaten a young Black man behind his store after the young man “propositioned” a female employee of McCaffrey’s.

J.L. McCaffrey died on May 2, 1977.

**“Bob” (unidentified):** It was reported to the FBI that on the evening of April 27, 1959, three nights after the murder, a middle-aged white male known only as **“Bob”** was drinking at the Ritz Motor Court in Moselle, Mississippi. The man—described as being “about drunk”—was overheard saying that he was one of the men who got “the n[egro]” out of jail in Poplarville; that he put a stocking over his head when he went into the jail; and that “the n[egro]” was “at the bottom of the Pearl River.” Another witness told the FBI that “Bob” also said that he worked at “a grocery store in Hattiesburg,”<sup>82</sup> and that, when one of “Bob’s” drinking companions mentioned Parker’s murder, “Bob” said, “that damn Negro won’t talk no more,” prompting one of “Bob’s” companions to place his hand over “Bob’s” mouth. The FBI investigative file indicates that the FBI ultimately was unable to identify “Bob.”

**P. L. Watts (deceased), H.L. Boon (deceased), XXX (unidentified), XXX (unidentified), and XXX (unidentified):** An anonymous letter postmarked May 16, 1959, and sent from Pontotoc, Mississippi, to radio station WMCA in New York (which WMCA then forwarded to the FBI) named P. L. Watts, H.L. Boon, XXX, XXX, and XXX as participating in the plot to murder Parker.

The author of the letter, which was sent to WMCA after the station offered a reward for information leading to the conviction of the killers, claimed to live in Tupelo, Mississippi, and claimed to have overheard a conversation on the street in Tupelo between an unidentified Tupelo man and “some white men,” some of whom “were from Poplarville and Hattiesburg.” The men said that they had come to Tupelo to “hid[e] out for awhile [sic] until things cooled down some.” When the “Tupelo man” asked the men how they had gotten to Parker, the “mob gang” said:

We couldn’t have done it without the sheriff and jailer. They told us just how to get in and where the key would be. In fact, to be true, they gave us the key and told us to break in. They named several others, it was near twenty men or maybe twenty five. There were two cars that carried the mob. Some stood guard outside the jail.

The letter correctly identified certain members of the conspiracy—namely, J.F. Lee, Jr., C.C. Reyer, and Jewel Alford:

I can give you five members of the mob but there were several others. Number one, the husband of the white woman that accused Parker; Number two, Jeff Lee,

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<sup>82</sup> Of note, J.L. McCaffrey, whom a source suggested may have furnished the gloves used by the mob, was the proprietor of the McCaffrey Food Market in Hattiesburg, as discussed above. The FBI investigative file offers no indication that the FBI investigated whether there existed any connection between “Bob” and McCaffrey.

Poplarville garage mechanic – he gathered the mob for number one man; Number three, C.C. Reyes [sic] furnished the car; Number four, Sheriff W.O. Moody, stood guard outside the jail, also brought Parker from Jackson jail to the mob; Number five, the jailer also stood guard outside. The sheriff and the jailer told just where the key would be and also told them to break in to make it look real.

The author named the following additional persons as participating in the plot: “One, XXX of Hattiesburg, Mississippi; Two, P.L. Watts of Hattiesburg, Mississippi; Three, H.L. Boon of Petal, Mississippi; Four, XXX of Hattiesburg, Mississippi; Five, XXX of Hattiesburg, Mississippi.” The author claimed that XXX “is the XXX that helped to plan, bought some of the gloves for them, made some of the hoods and furnished some stockings.” The author further stated that XXX, Watts, Boon, XXX, and XXX “are getting worried and are planning on going to the north.”

The FBI attempted to locate the persons named in the letter and interviewed Percy L. Watts in Hattiesburg on May 21, 1959. Watts, an outspoken segregationist and member of the local White Citizens’ Council, told the FBI that he knew nothing of the murder apart from what had been reported in the newspapers, and had no friends or relatives in Pearl River County, and was not in Pearl River County on the night of the murder. Watts denied knowing any of the other persons identified as conspirators—that is, XXX, Boone, XXX, or XXX.<sup>83</sup>

Percy Watts died on September 14, 2002.

Agents interviewed Henry Lonzo Boone, Jr. in Petal, Mississippi, on May 23, 1959. Boone told the FBI that he had no first-hand knowledge of the murder but admitted that he “has talked about this practically everyday and read newspaper accounts and reports of the abduction.” Boone stated that he was home with his family on the night of the murder and had not been contacted or invited to any meeting in connection with the murder. Boone told agents that “his personal sympathies are in favor of the individuals who abducted Parker and feels that if he had been invited, he would have participated.”<sup>84</sup>

Henry Lonzo Boone, Jr. died on November 10, 2002.

Agents checked local police, credit, and phone records, but were unable to locate anyone named XXX, XXX, or XXX in Hattiesburg, and did not uncover any additional identifying information during the 1959 investigation. Federal investigators in the post-2008 investigation were subsequently unable to develop any additional identifying information.

## **Legal Analysis and Conclusion**

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<sup>83</sup> The FBI investigative file provides no indication that agents conducted any additional investigation with regard to Watts.

<sup>84</sup> The FBI investigative file provides no indication that agents conducted any additional investigation with regard to Boone.

This matter does not constitute a prosecutable violation of any federal criminal statute. At the time of the offense, there were no federal laws punishing bias-motivated crimes.<sup>85</sup> The only civil rights statutes that could conceivably have applied to the offense were violations of 18 U.S.C. §§ 241 (civil rights conspiracy) and 242 (deprivation of rights under color of law).<sup>86</sup> Prior to 1994, these statutes were not capital offenses, thereby subjecting them to a five-year statute of limitations, which has long since expired.<sup>87</sup> See 18 U.S.C. § 3282(a).

Thus, the only possible vehicle for a federal prosecution is 18 U.S.C. § 1201, the federal kidnapping statute. However, a § 1201 prosecution is not viable for three reasons. First, and foremost, all identifiable suspects are deceased, with the possible exception of one suspect who cannot be positively identified and who cannot be connected to the crime except by testimony of the now-deceased Arthur Smith.

Second, prosecution for kidnapping (or conspiracy to commit kidnapping) may well be time-barred. Federal law provides that offenses punishable by death are not subject to a statute of limitations. See 18 U.S.C. § 3281 (1958) (“An indictment for any offense punishable by death may be found at any time without limitation except for offenses barred by the provisions of law existing on August 4, 1939.”); 18 U.S.C. § 3281 (2013) (“An indictment for any offense punishable by death may be found at any time without limitation.”). At the time of Parker’s murder, a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1201, the federal kidnapping statute, was a death-eligible offense. See 18 U.S.C. § 1201(a) (1958) (providing for punishment by death if the victim is not liberated unharmed, and upon jury recommendation). It is also now a death-eligible offense.

However, in 1972, the federal kidnapping statute was amended to remove the death penalty

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<sup>85</sup> The first hate crime laws were enacted in 1968. See PL 90-284, 82 Stat. 73 (April 11, 1968).

<sup>86</sup> Under current law, if it could be proven that state or local officials (to include county or municipal law enforcement officers) knew of the risk that Parker would be lynched, yet willfully failed to intervene to stop it, they could be prosecuted under 18 U.S.C. § 242 for deliberate indifference. See *Cope v. Cogdill*, 3 F.4th 198, 206–07 (5th Cir. 2021), cert. denied, 142 S. Ct. 2573, 213 L. Ed. 2d 1123 (2022) (“An official violates a pretrial detainee’s constitutional right to be secure in his basic human needs only when the official had subjective knowledge of a substantial risk of serious harm to the detainee and responded to that risk with deliberate indifference. Although deliberate indifference is a high bar and requires egregious conduct, plaintiffs need not prove that the official acted with the intent to cause harm.”). However, all such potential subjects are deceased. Moreover, the deliberate-indifference theory was not recognized until 1976, long after Parker was murdered. *Strain v. Regalado*, 977 F.3d 984, 989 (10th Cir. 2020) (“The Supreme Court first recognized a § 1983 claim for deliberate indifference under the Eighth Amendment, which protects the rights of convicted prisoners.”) (citing *Estelle v. Gamble* and then explaining evolution of doctrine to apply to detainees). Finally, the five-year statute of limitations for prosecution under 18 U.S.C. § 242 expired in 1964.

<sup>87</sup> In 1994, some of these civil rights statutes, including 18 U.S.C. § 242, were amended to provide for the death penalty for violations resulting in death, thereby eliminating the statute of limitations. See 18 U.S.C. § 3281 (“An indictment for any offense punishable by death may be found at any time without limitation.”). However, the *Ex Post Facto* Clause prohibits the retroactive application of the 1994 increase in penalties and the resultant change in the statute of limitations to the detriment of criminal defendants. *Stogner v. California*, 539 U.S. 607, 611 (2003). It also prohibits retroactive application of modern civil rights statutes to actions that occurred before their enactment.

as a potential punishment. *See* Pub. L. No. 92-539, 86 Stat. 1070-73.<sup>88</sup> In an appeal arising from a 2007 prosecution for a 1964 civil-rights-era murder, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals initially held that the 1972 amendment retroactively applied to the federal kidnapping statute the general federal five-year statute of limitations for criminal offenses. *United States v. Seale*, 542 F.3d 1033, 1045 (5th Cir. 2008). On this reasoning, the Fifth Circuit held that the defendant’s prosecution was time-barred, reversed the district court’s denial of the defendant’s motion to dismiss, and entered a judgment of acquittal. *Id.* However, on rehearing *en banc*, the Fifth Circuit split 9-9 on the issue, thereby affirming (albeit only nominally) the district court’s denial of the defendant’s motion to dismiss on timeliness grounds. *See United States v. Seale*, 600 F.3d 473, 478 (5th Cir. 2010) (recounting procedural history). The question thereafter was certified to the Supreme Court, which then dismissed the certified question. *Id.* The Fifth Circuit subsequently upheld the defendant’s conviction without further discussion of the applicability of the federal statute of limitations. *Id.* at 497. Given the Fifth Circuit’s diffident treatment of the issue, it appears that any potential defendant in this matter has, at minimum, a colorable argument that a prosecution under the federal kidnapping statute is barred by the five-year general federal statute of limitations, and we cannot predict with any confidence how such an argument would be received by courts in the Fifth Circuit.

Third, due to a lack of living witnesses, the government could not prove a critical element of a kidnapping offense. At the time of the lynching, the federal kidnapping statute read as follows:

(a) Whoever knowingly transports in interstate or foreign commerce, any person who has been unlawfully seized, confined, inveigled, decoyed, kidnaped, abducted, or carried away and held for ransom or reward or otherwise, except, in the case of a minor, by a parent thereof [shall be punished] . . . .<sup>89</sup>

18 U.S.C. § 1201 (1958).

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<sup>88</sup> The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 restored the death penalty as a potential punishment. *See* Pub. L. No. 103-322, 108 Stat. 1796; 18 U.S.C. § 1201(a) (2013) (providing for punishment by death or life imprisonment “if the death of any person results”).

<sup>89</sup> The present-day version of the federal kidnapping statute provides in pertinent part:

(a) Whoever unlawfully seizes, confines, inveigles, decoys, kidnaps, abducts, or carries away and holds for ransom or reward or otherwise any person, except in the case of a minor, by the parent thereof, when—

(1) the person is willfully transported in interstate or foreign commerce, regardless of whether the person was alive when transported across a State boundary, or the offender travels in interstate or foreign commerce or any the mail or any means, facility, or instrumentality of interstate or foreign commerce in committing or in furtherance of the commission of the offense . . . .”

18 U.S.C. § 1201 (2023).

In addition, to prove kidnapping, the government would have to prove that Parker was transported across state lines. To be sure, as explained above, several witnesses stated that they saw a car transport Parker from a jail in Mississippi, and one witness (Arthur Smith) told the FBI that he saw that same car travel across the Pearl River Bridge and into Louisiana. All of these witnesses are now deceased and thus could not testify to this fact in court. The government would therefore be unable to establish this element beyond a reasonable doubt.<sup>90</sup>

The Department has the authority under the Till Act to refer matters to the state for prosecution. No referral is warranted here. Due to the lack of living subjects and witnesses, state charges (such as murder charges) would not be successful.

In sum, the federal government could not pursue a prosecution in this matter because (1) all but one of the subjects identified during the course of multiple investigations are deceased, the remaining subject cannot be identified and also may be deceased, and no living person could link the remaining subject to the crime; (2) the statute of limitations on civil rights offenses has expired; (3) the statute of limitations for kidnapping arguably has expired; and (4) it cannot establish that an interstate offense occurred as would be necessary to prove kidnapping. It also is unlikely that a state prosecution would be successful in this matter. The case is thus being closed without referral to state authorities. AUSA Glenda Haynes, Southern District of Mississippi, concurs in this recommendation.

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<sup>90</sup> The federal kidnapping statute provides that “[t]he failure to release the victim within twenty-four hours after he shall have been unlawfully seized . . . shall create a rebuttable presumption that such person has been transported in interstate or foreign commerce.” 18 U.S.C. § 1201(b) (1958). *See also* 18 U.S.C. 1201 (2013) (same). Given that Parker was not released within 24 hours, such presumption would seem to apply in a prosecution brought under 18 U.S.C. § 1201. However, one Circuit Court has held that such use of the presumption is unconstitutional. *See United States v. Moore*, 571 F.2d 76, 86-87 (2d Cir. 1978) (“[W]e cannot escape the conclusion that the presumption of interstate transportation embodied in 18 U.S.C. § 1201(b) is unconstitutional when used to prove an element of the federal crime of kidnapping. . . . We simply cannot say with substantial assurance that for purposes of proving the transportation of a kidnapping victim in interstate or foreign commerce such transportation is more likely than not to have occurred whenever the victim is not released within 24 hours of his disappearance.”). Practically speaking, it seems unlikely that, in a prosecution brought decades after Parker’s murder, a factfinder would conclude that Parker had been transported in interstate commerce based on the mere fact that Parker was missing for more than 24 hours.