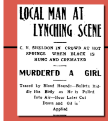
DARKEST BEFORE DAWN



LOCAL MAN AT LYNCHING SCENE

C. H. SHELDON IN CROWD AT HOT SPRINGS WHEN BLACK IS HUNG AND CREMATED

MURDERFD A GIRL

Traced by Blood Hounds—Bullets Riddle His Body as He is Pulled Into Air—Hour Later Cut Down and Oil is Applied

Charles Sheldon described the lynching he witnessed to readers of the *Appleton Evening Crescent.*

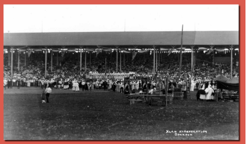
Appleton Evening Crescent, June 23, 1913

Witnesses to Murder

Reports of Southern Black **lynchings**, burnings at the stake, and shootings were common stories in area newspapers. **Appleton editors inconsistently condemned the actions.**

At least two white Appleton residents witnessed vigilante mob killings of Blacks in the South. In 1905, Herman Kamps saw five Black men burned at the stake near Mobile, Alabama. In 1913, while visiting Hot Springs, Arkansas, Charles Sheldon witnessed the lynching of a Black man. In both instances, the men were taken from their jail cells after a mob formed outside and were dragged to a public space for the execution. All six men were never given due process of the law.

Violence against Blacks increased throughout the South, but exploded yet again in the North, as in Marion, Indiana, where two Black men were lynched in 1930.

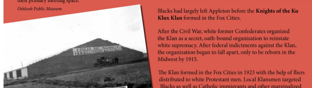


A rally held in Oshkosh in 1925 demonstrates the size of Klan membership in the Fox Cities.

Oshkosh Public Museum

Klan members in the Fox Cities erected this enormous tabernacle south of Neenah for their primary meeting space.

Oshkosh Public Museum



Segregation Takes Hold Again

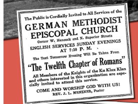
Blacks had largely left Appleton before the **Knights of the Ku Klux Klan** formed in the Fox Cities.

After the Civil War, white former Confederates organized the Klan as a secret, oath-bound organization to reinstate white supremacy. After federal indictments against the Klan, the organization began to fall apart, only to be reborn in the Midwest by 1915.

The Klan formed in the Fox Cities in 1923 with the help of fliers distributed to white Protestant men. Local Klansmen targeted Blacks as well as Catholic immigrants and other marginalized people. The Klan held large meetings near Strobe Island, organized chapters in New London and Waupaca, and tried to intimidate their targets by **burning three crosses along College Avenue.**

Renewed harassment and segregation left many residents without hope. During this period, Black voices almost completely disappeared from local historical records. A few Blacks continued to live in the area. Starting in the 1920s, **Edward Buchanan** worked for thirty years as an executive at the John Strange Paper Company in Menasha.

According to the Federal Census, Appleton's Black population had abruptly declined to ***zero*** *residents by 1930.*



The Public is Cordially Invited to All Services of the

GERMAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Corner W. Hancock and N. Superior Streets

ENGLISH SERVICES SUNDAY EVENINGS AT 7:30 P. M.

The Text Tomorrow Evening Will Be Taken From

"The Twelfth Chapter of Romans"

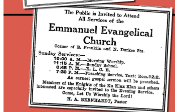
All Members of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and others interested in this organization are especially invited to attend this service.

COME AND WORSHIP GOD WITH US!

REV. J. L. MENZNER, Pastor

In 1925, the Ku Klux Klan recruited from the pulpit through religious services at the First Baptist Church, German Methodist Episcopal Church, and Emmanuel Evangelical Church.

Appleton Post Crescent, January 31, 1925, February 21, 1925, March 7, 1925



The Public is Invited to Attend All Services of the

Emmanuel Evangelical Church

Corner of E. Franklin and N. Durkee Sts.

Sunday Services:—

10:00 A. M.—Morning Worship.
11:15 A. M.—Sunday School.
6:45 P. M.—E. L. C. E.
7:30 P. M.—Preaching Service. Text: Rom.12.2.

An earnest gospel sermon will be preached.

Members of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and others interested are especially invited to the Evening Service.

Come, Let Us Worship the Lord!

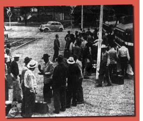
H. A. BERNHARDT, Pastor

Courage in Migration

Some Black people were able to find temporary housing and employment in Appleton. Once they arrived in Wisconsin, the workers were often treated as second-class citizens.

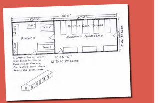
White labor shortages during World War II required businesses to hire Black migrant workers from **Jamaica**, the **Bahamas**, and the South. The federal **Emergency Farm Labor Act of 1943** brought about 150 Black laborers to Appleton who helped harvest and pack at Fuhrmann's Canning Company.

Black migrant workers returned to Appleton throughout the 1950s. The Black press reported widespread racism throughout Wisconsin but noted that unemployed Blacks were willing to travel for the work. Many businesses in tourist regions posted **"whites only"** signs, a common practice in Door County.



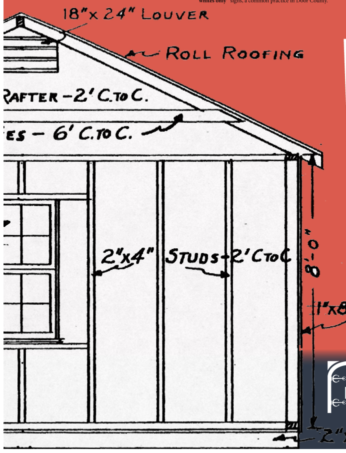
A photograph published in the *Appleton Post-Crescent* documented Jamaican migrant workers arriving by bus in June 1946.

Appleton Post-Crescent, June 19, 1946



Migrant workers in Appleton lived in barracks built on the property of their employer.

Emergency Farm Labor Collection, UW-Madison Archives at Steenbock Library



HISTORY MUSEUM
AT THE CASTLE