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April Robinson-Kain

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

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April Robinson-Kain

The Infamous Madame Hatchett and Her Sons: Great Depression through the Civil Rights Movement

Introduction

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Johanna Hatchett, an African American woman in Southern Illinois, found herself in a difficult situation to care for her family when her husband and eldest son died unexpectedly. As a historical pattern, the only jobs available for African American women were domestic positions, too, adversely affected by the failing economy.¹ Yet, she sought to sustain her family and help numerous people within her community by exploiting unconventional means of support for her family's remaining members. Hatchett's determination and notorious business practices were well-known throughout Southern Illinois and the country. This essay examines the interconnectedness of race, gender, and class by illustrating the personal and professional struggles of Johanna Hatchett, along with her attitudes toward community during the Great Depression, and the role she played in the desegregation of local schools by guaranteeing access to college educations for her surviving children.

This study of Johanna Hatchett of Number Nine, Illinois, methodically analyses primary and secondary source materials and personal interviews.² These materials include personal diaries, community memorabilia, photographs, and newspaper articles imperative to understanding the lives of the Hatchett family and the culture in which they lived. These sources provide significant detail and insight into the lives, community functions, and importance of race relations during this era. The documents further reveal the values, concerns, and societal conditions some African American women experienced during the Great Depression and up to the Civil Rights Era. Additionally, I interviewed Dayton Franklin, a friend and neighbor

1 Great Depression and World War II, 1929-1945 Race Relations in the 1930s and 1940s." Library of Congress. Library of Congress, 2020.<https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/depwwii/race/>.

2 Data collection for primary sources consisted of two repositories: Williamson County Historical Society in Marion, IL and Southern Illinois University Special Collections in Carbondale, IL, and an oral history interview.

of Johanna Hatchett. While memory and remembering often conflict with historical narratives, Mr. Franklin's memories speak primarily about Ms. Hatchett's charitable contributions to her community. Finally, the secondary sources under analysis documented the daily challenges faced by African American women during an era rife with Jim Crow laws, sundown towns, and active Ku Klux Klan community chapters.

Lastly, one significant limitation often faced by historians was the narrow trail of personal records. In the case of Ms. Hatchett, many personal records have been misplaced or destroyed throughout the years. Those who best knew her are now deceased. Nevertheless, Mrs. Hatchett's life's fragmented pieces will significantly enrich our understanding of African American women in Southern Illinois.

African American Women during and after the Great Depression in Southern Illinois

In the United States historiography, a persistent narrative argues that women shouldered the primary role of caring for the children and maintaining the home.³ In the early twentieth century, diverting notions about adolescence and adulthood, where children no longer fit the idea of small adults, there was a shifting view in which childhood became a time of curiosity, play, learning, and fun. Jane Adams described this shift in *Resistance to "Modernity": Southern Illinois Farm Women and the Cult of Domesticity*, noting that as American values became progressively more focused on rearing children, society became more delineated by gender separation industrial production versus household commerce.⁴ These structural transformations placed the responsibility of morality on Mothers whose tasks centered on domesticity, integrity, and obedience to a patriarchal society.

African American mothers had an added burden as they dealt with the devastating forces of racism, oppression, and socio-economic and political isolation, causing a detrimental effect on African American households' viability. This burden was due to a combination of race relations, accepted gender roles, and the need to earn wages. In *Transitioning the Caregiving Role for the Next Generation: An African-Centered Womanist Perspective*, the authors explained that these factors had a remarkably significant impact on economically disadvantaged, mother-only households burdened with intense physical and emotional responsibilities along with diminished social supports

3 "Married Women During the Great Depression." <https://thegreatdepression-family.weebly.com/married-women-during-the-great-depression.html>.

4 Jane Adams, "Resistance to 'Modernity': Southern Illinois Farm Women and the Cult of Domesticity," *American Ethnologist* 20, no. 1 (February 1993): 89–113.

from their community.⁵

In Southern Illinois during the Prohibition Era, African Americans faced the pressures of segregation, Jim Crow Laws, and the activities of the KKK, as noted by Tyler D'Ambrose in *Morality in an Era of Lawlessness: How the KKK and Organized Crime Attempted to Instill their Visions of America during the Prohibition Era*.⁶ D'Ambrose examined the notion of morality through lawful and lawless events carried out by whites under the pretense of moral superiority during the Prohibition Era in Southern Illinois, events ethically problematic. D'Ambrose showed that the idea of morality was used by different groups of men to justify organized crime, the Ku Klux Klan worldview, and law enforcement; each group redefined it to further their ambitions.

While there is a significant number of studies focusing on the lives of African American women in the United States historiography, there is a lack of studies on African American and organized crimes, let alone studies on African American women who owned and operated businesses outside of the law, especially in Southern Illinois.⁷ This study endeavors to bring awareness to the strength and determination (agency) of one African American Woman who ran a successful business, though problematic, as she provided for her family and assisted those in need within her neighborhood during an era of subjugation by the white race.

The Great Depression

The Great Depression ended the United States' post-war prosperity, bringing a degree of suffering unimaginable to many. This suffering was incredibly real for minorities. Investigators from the National League on Urban Conditions Among African Americans (NLUCAAA) reported higher unemployment rates (30 to 60 percent) among Negroes, in 106 American cities than their white counterparts.⁸ During the early days of the depression, African Americans filled unskilled job positions. For example, they fulfilled almost twenty-five percent of household domestics work, but employment positions terminated when employers felt the first strains of depression.⁹

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- 5 Rhonda Wells-Gilbon and Gaynell Simpson, "Transitioning the Caregiving Role for the Next Generation: An African-Centered Womanist Perspective," *Black Women, Gender + Families* Vol. 3, No.2 (Fall, 2019): 87-105.
 - 6 Tyler D'Ambrose, "Morality in an Era of Lawlessness: How the KKK and Organized Crime Attempted to Instill their Visions of America during the Prohibition Era," *Legacy: A Journal of Student Scholarship* Vol. 18, (2018): 39-50.
 - 7 See for example, Rufus Schatzberg and Robert J. Kelly, *African American Organized Crime: A Social History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996).
 - 8 Raymond Wolters, *Negroes and the Great Depression* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1970), 84.
 - 9 *Ibid*, 92.

Whites viewed African Americans as expendable based on the history of institutional racism in the United States. As a result, whites tended to give whites jobs or leave the position unfulfilled to save money. African Americans faced systematically higher unemployment rates, fewer job opportunities, greater job insecurities, and lower wages. Deliberate discrimination against African American workers as well as segmented labor markets created an unstable job market. As the number of available jobs decreased, white men received preferential treatment as employers hired them while simultaneously firing African Americans to make jobs available for them.¹⁰ There was an unspoken rule among white employers where blacks were the last hired and the first fired.¹¹

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately twelve million workers were unemployed in March 1933, while other organizations estimate higher unemployment numbers.¹² Among this number, more than fifty percent of African Americans were unemployed.¹³ These numbers are the basis for the rise in African American activism, which led to the civil rights movement of the 1950-1960s. The suffocating socio-economic effects of the depression touched many African Americans' lives, including the newly widowed Johanna Hatchett, known to her friends as Josie. On March 8, 1892, John and Sarah Smith welcomed the world little Johanna Smith in Cromwell, Kentucky. During the depression, Johanna lived in Number Nine, Illinois (an unincorporated Williamson County area). Young Johanna married her first husband, coalminer Ollie Taylor and had a son, Earl Taylor. The first marriage of Johanna ended in divorce.¹⁴ In 1917, she married her second husband, William Hatchett, in Clifford, Illinois.¹⁵ Soon after their marriage, William was drafted. He completed basic training at Camp Grant and deployed to Germany to fight in WWI.¹⁶ The war ended soon after his deployment, and Private Hatchett returned home.¹⁷

On April 4, 1923, William and Johanna Hatchett purchased a building that

10 Ibid, 91.

11 Christopher Klein, "Last Hired, First Fired: How the Great Depression Affected African Americans," History.com, August 31, 2018.

12 Ibid, 83-84.

13 "Great Depression and World War II, 1929-1945 Race Relations in the 1930s and 1940s." Library of Congress. Library of Congress, 2020. <https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/depwwii/race/>.

14 Colp Pride, September 5, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=johanna%20hatchett&pa>.

15 Ibid, 7.

16 Ibid, 8.

17 War Department Application for Headstone 1933, Southern Illinois University Special Collections ID:1/10/MSS381,(September 3, 2019).

included a six-bedroom addition to open a boarding house and speakeasy.¹⁸ Before 1930, the Hatchetts placed a red neon hatchet sign on the building's front and opened for business.¹⁹ The sign placement was especially dangerous because this happened during the years of prohibition in the United States. Prohibition made the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages illegal in the United States from 1920 to 1933 under the Eighteenth Amendment terms.²⁰

Adjacent to the tavern, there was a small house where the family lived.²¹ The 1930 Census listed William (38) and son Earl Taylor (23) as coal miners. Josie, on the other hand, did not appear to hold a countable job (homemaker). Perhaps this was because the Hatchett's had a young son, named William Hatchett Jr., who was four at the survey time.²² In 1930, after the census, the family had another son named Lawrence.²³

As the economic effects of the depression intensified across the United States, the Hatchett family faced much grief and family loss. In February of 1931, Earl Taylor died. He left behind his wife Bernice, and infant son, Earl Taylor Jr. Just ten months later, two days before Christmas, William Hatchett Sr. died at the age of 40.²⁴ The death of William Sr. left Josie, a widow at 42, to care for their two sons William and Lawrence. One can only surmise that Johanna must have been in deep mourning after losing her oldest son and husband. She must have been fearful for the future of her surviving sons.

The townships of Dewmaine, Number Nine, and Clifford were all situated in an unincorporated section of Williamson County, near Colp, Illinois. These majority-black rural communities were one mile west of Herrin and three miles north of Carterville. The origins of this African American enclave began with the opening of the Number Nine Mine. The mine employed many African American miners, including William Hatchett Sr. and Earl Taylor. The mine, and its workers, was a site of racial hatred as white miners referred to it as "nigger nine."²⁵ These semi-cities bordered the sundown towns of Herrin and Carterville, Illinois. Sundown towns were all-white neighborhoods in

18 "Place Cannot Be Used for Any Purpose," *Southern Illinoisian*, January 30, 1957, 1.

19 John Homan, "Colp Was Once an Entertainment Mecca," *Southern Illinoisian*, July 27, 2008, 9.

20 Holland, Webb, "Temperance Movements and Prohibition," *International Social Science Review* Vol. 74, No. 1, (1999): 61–69.

21 Dayton Franklin, Interview by April Robinson-Kain, Digital recording, Herrin, Illinois, September 6, 2019.

22 1930 United States Federal Census § (1930).

23 1940 United States Federal Census § (1940).

24 War Department Application for Headstone, 1933, *Southern Illinois University Special Collections ID:1/10/MSS381*, (September 3, 2019).

25 Dayton Franklin, Interview by April Robinson-Kain, Digital recording, Herrin, Illinois, September 6, 2019.

the United States that practiced segregation by excluding non-whites through a combination of biased local laws, intimidation, and violent behavior.²⁶ Legislation, known as Jim Crow laws, separated people of color from whites in schools, housing, jobs, and public gathering places.²⁷ White public officials, and the general public, justified segregation by citing the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court ruling *Plessy v. Ferguson*.²⁸ The case legally coded “separate but equal” to describe the legal philosophy that bolstered institutional racial intolerance and segregation. By law, segregation was not discrimination so long as the government provided comparable facilities for whites and non-whites: a rarely adhered to practice.²⁹

Some African American Colp residents worked in Herrin under the threat of death if they remained overnight. In *Negro in Illinois*, Brian Dolinar reported that Fred A Henderson, the mayor of Herrin, stated that the city of Herrin “was built by a class of people who did not care to mix with Negroes.”³⁰ For this reason, they would not allow African American’s to live in Herrin. The mayor went on to admit that there was no “written law in this city demanding the Negroes stay out of this territory.”³¹ He believed that it was merely a practice agreed upon by the towns establishing inhabitants. More than twenty-five percent of blacks who found work did so as household domestics.³² As an African American widow existing in an area teeming with racism, Hatchett had few options other than continuing to operate the family tavern or work as a servant in Herrin. No matter her choice, she knew she would have to provide for her two young sons. Work was scarce during the depression; blacks consistently faced discrimination in schooling, housing, and employment during this racial segregation era. Maids, chauffeurs, cooks, and gardeners were easily dispensed with when the pressures of depression were felt, further adding to job scarcity and insecurity.

Hatchett opted to continue to operate the family tavern and boardinghouse to provide for them during the worst economic event in our

26 James Loewen, “Sundown Towns and Counties: Racial Exclusion in the South,” *Southern Culture* 15, no. 1 (2009), 22–47.

27 Stephen Berrey, “Obstacles to Freedom: Life in Jim Crow America,” in Hasan Kwame Jeffries, ed., *Understanding and Teaching the Civil Rights Movement* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2019), 59–72.

28 Jessica Foy, “Plessy v. Ferguson,” in James Ely, ed., *the New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Law and Politics* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 115–16.

29 *Ibid*, 115.

30 Brian Dolinar, ed., *The Negro in Illinois; The WPA Papers* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 162-163.

31 *Ibid*, 163.

32 Raymond Wolters, *Negroes and the Great Depression* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1970), 92.

country's history, at a time when systematic racism and the Ku Klux Klan dominated Southern Illinois.³³ Mobs of racists regularly murdered blacks in the cruelest of ways. Consistently black bodies ('strange fruit' in the words of a poem and a song made famous by jazz singer Billie Holiday) were left dangling from trees.³⁴ In the nearby counties of St Clair, Perry, Pulaski, Union, and Alexander, whites lynched 46 blacks during the Jim Crow era.³⁵ The Klan was a prominent fixture in Herrin.³⁶ Dailies such as the Daily Jewish Courier reported on the terrorist's operations of the Klan. On July 11, 1924, in an editorial titled "The Ku Klux Klan Terror in Herrin," the daily noted that it is not a fight between the law-abiding element and the lawless element among bootleggers, but a fight between the Ku Klux Klan and the rest of the population which is opposed to the Klan.³⁷ The Klan acted under the pretext of facilitating law and order with deliberate acts of lawlessness and violence. The Ku Klux Klan did not support prohibition because they were devoted advocates of the Temperance Movement. The Klan fought for prohibition because it was in their business to seek their opponents' sins, but not their supporters'. Prohibition allowed the Klan to spread terror under the pretense of eradicating immorality.

The Klan made it extremely hard on black businesses, especially targeting those who were illegally selling alcohol. Despite all odds against Hatchett, an African American widow, and tavern owner during prohibition and the Great Depression, Hatchett Tavern remained opened; it prospered and grew in popularity. At some point, the enterprise became popular as more than a tavern and boardinghouse and became a brothel, known as Ma Hatchett's. Often it was speculated that Hatchett had made payments to both elected officials and the Klan to maintain her business open.³⁸ However, there are no official records to support or nor deny this practice.

The Roosevelt administration (1933 – 1945), primarily through its New Deal policies, worked diligently to aid in the United States' socio-economic

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- 33 Daily Jewish Courier, "The Ku Klux Klan Terror in Herrin," Foreign Language Press Survey, National Endowment for the Humanities, 2019. https://flps.newberry.org/article/5423972_3_1361.
- 34 Raymond Wolters, *Negroes and the Great Depression*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1970), 63.
- 35 Rigby, David, and Charles Sequin. "Lynching in the United States: 1883-1930." *Futurity*, 2020. http://www.charliesequin.com/lynching_map.html.
- 36 Equal Justice Institute, "Explore the Map" *Lynching in America*, Equal Justice Institute, 2019, <https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/explore/illinois>.
- 37 Daily Jewish Courier, "The Ku Klux Klan Terror in Herrin," Foreign Language Press Survey, National Endowment for the Humanities, 2019, https://flps.newberry.org/article/5423972_3_1361.
- 38 Dayton Franklin, Interview by April Robinson-Kain, Digital recording, Herrin, Illinois, September 6, 2019.

recovery from the Great Depression. The New Deal, a series of programs aiming to restore prosperity to the American people, created jobs and provided relief for those in need. The Number Nine area benefitted from these programs. The Works Progress Administration financed the enlargement of the Number Nine creek. Unemployed men took jobs manually, widening the creek using pickaxes and shovels. Number Nine's community opened a soup kitchen that served hungry families, a kindergarten program, and conducted literacy classes, all funded by the New Deal.³⁹ In 1933 First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt proclaimed that: "women know that life must go on and that the needs of life must be met."⁴⁰ She attributed the success of seeing families through crises to the "courage and determination" of women.⁴¹ It was this type of fortitude that Hatchett displayed when bringing her family through the desolation of the 1930s.

In the mid-1930s, a young neighborhood boy named Dayton Franklin met Josie (Ma Hatchett) while delivering the *Daily Journal* newspaper in Number Nine. He recalled when all the boys in the area, white and black, wanted to play ball but could not afford to buy balls and bats. Franklin said he knocked on Ma Hatchett's door and explained the situation. He remembered that Ma Hatchett handed him \$50 and said, "buy whatever, if you need more, let me know."⁴² Franklin said that Ma Hatchett saw all people as her family, "white or black, didn't matter."⁴³ He noted that those families would find an envelope with money at their doors when hard times hit families. He witnessed Ma Hatchett placing these envelopes on doorsteps, but she never admitted her charity. "She didn't want [anyone] to know. She was just that kind of lady."⁴⁴ Hatchett knew that much controversy surrounded her business choices and did not want anyone to know that she gave them money. While many locals benefitted from her kindness, others were upset by her business, too. Her granddaughter, Ramelda, noted some of the dangers her grandmother faced included being held at gunpoint by members of the Klan. She said that one Klansman said to the one with a gun, "leave her alone because she was a good woman and paid her debts."⁴⁵

Other than a few instances with the Klan and an understanding with

39 Mary B. Roderick, "Colp/No. 9: A Few Miles and a Different Future," *The Southern Illinoisian*, November 20, 2011, 43.

40 "Married Women During the Great Depression," <https://thegreatdepression-family.weebly.com/married-women-during-the-great-depression.html>.

41 Ibid.

42 Dayton Franklin, Interview by April Robinson-Kain, Digital recording, Herrin, Illinois, September 6, 2019.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Colp Pride, September 5, 2019 *My Memory of Johanna "Ma" Hatchett* <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=my%20memory%20of%20johanna%20hatchett>.

the Sheriff, Ma Hatchett's operated for many years without facing any problems coming from local officials. Franklin suggested that the lack of police or government interference was because she did not live in Colp but in Number Nine. Secondly, because she possibly reached an agreement with the Williamson County Sherriff. In addition, the fact that she was mostly left alone would also suggest an understanding between Ma Hatchett and neighboring whites.⁴⁶ Throughout high school, Mr. Franklin worked for the grocery store in Colp as a delivery boy. He fondly remembers many times when he arrived to work, and there were already orders lined up on the back counter for delivery. He often delivered these purchases to the homes and was told that they did not order the goods, but his boss told him to leave them at the houses regardless.

He noted that he eventually became curious and started asking the grocer, who admitted that Ma Hatchett would buy groceries for families in need, sometimes as much as a month's supply. Franklin reiterated that he was "not saying that she was an angel; she ran a whorehouse."⁴⁷ Those who knew Ma Hatchett were willing to overlook that she operated a prostitution house because she helped many people. Many in the community were protective of her. Ma Hatchett's commitment to her neighbors continued throughout WW2. Her grandson Earl Taylor Jr. and Dayton Franklin were both sent overseas to fight, while her son Junior attended college.⁴⁸ Anonymous grocery deliveries continued throughout the Number Nine and Colp communities, with many never knowing who their generous benefactor was. Whenever Hatchett found out about a family in need, money mysteriously appeared.⁴⁹

By this time, Ma Hatchett's Tavern and brothel had become relatively prosperous. Her establishment's reputation spread much farther than Southern Illinois. It was well-known that many of her girls came from New York and that white men traveled far to keep company with her black girls. While overseas, Franklin was critically wounded and sent to the hospital. By the end of his first month in the hospital, he finally received his mail. He told the story of a nurse delivering his mail and calling out "Dayton Franklin. Number Nine, Illinois package from Ma Hatchet." Men from "New York, California, and Florida" who were in the ward questioned how he knew the "infamous" Ma Hatchett. He explained the neighborhood connection, and the other "guys were in awe" when he received three of four more packages from

46 Dayton Franklin, Interview by April Robinson-Kain, Digital recording, Herrin, Illinois, September 6, 2019.

47 Ibid.

48 James Sprehe, "Fear of Bombings Spreads in Colp, Ill., After Threats to Two Leading Citizens," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, September 6, 1964, 3.

49 Dayton Franklin, Interview by April Robinson-Kain, Digital recording, Herrin, Illinois, September 6, 2019.

her.⁵⁰

In 1945, Lawrence, Ma's youngest son, started high school and received his first car from his mother. Meanwhile, in Colp, Junior Hatchett, Ma's middle son, organized independent basketball and softball teams to help reacclimate returning veterans to civilian life.⁵¹ Ma Hatchett sponsored those teams.⁵² On October 24, 1946, Junior turned twenty-one. Ma celebrated by purchasing him a bar in Colp.⁵³ Junior achieved some local popularity for his pitching ability in softball. His team often credited him for the team's wins.⁵⁴ All of which added to the notoriety of the Hatchetts in the surrounding area and increased their establishments' popularity.

The Hatchett's business prospered during the 1940s, but the 1950s afforded them much-unwanted notoriety. In February 1951, Mrs. Ressie W. Richardson of Colp filed a lawsuit against Junior for \$15,000. Mrs. Richardson claimed that Junior sold her husband alcohol, which caused him to become drunk. When he arrived home, she claimed that her husband beat her with his fist and a rubber hose before threatening to shoot her.⁵⁵ It is fascinating to note that she did not publicly blame her husband for overindulging, only the tavern owner for continuing to sell the alcohol.

The 1950s proved fully writhed with legal troubles for the Hatchett's. After a raid to Junior Hatchett's Cocktail Lounge, state police found gambling equipment. Junior Hatchett with possession of equipment for illegal gambling. Police seized a Chuck-o-luck game from his establishment.⁵⁶

On October 17, 1955, police raided Ma Hatchett's Tavern. A local daily described these officers as "handsome young men of the Illinois State Police."⁵⁷ There were multiple arrests at the establishment described as a "combination tavern and bawdy house owned by ailing negro (Ma Hatchett) and managed by her son Junior who "drives around in a pink Cadillac." Ma Hatchett's remained opened following the arrests, "because everything goes in Colp."⁵⁸

The above statement reflected the sentiment of that time, "everything

50 Ibid.

51 Colp Pride, September 5, 2019, *My Memory of Johanna "Ma" Hatchett*, <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=my%20memory%20of%20johanna%20hatchett>.

52 Sprehe, "Fear of Bombings", 3.

53 Joe Jurich, "Residents Have Varied Views on Town of Colp; Some Speak Well of Ma's Civic Affairs Work," *Southern Illinoisian*, January 27, 1957, 3.

54 "Russell's Texaco Defeats Benton in 11 Innings," *Southern Illinoisian*, September 14, 1949, 7.

55 "Files \$15,000 Suit Against Colp Taverns," *Southern Illinoisian*, February 22, 1951, 3.

56 Chuck-o-luck is a banking game played with three dice in which players bet that a certain number will appear on one or more of the dice, that the sum of the three dice will make a certain number, or that all three dice will turn up alike.

57 "Ma Hatchett Raid Shakes Colp Industry," *Mount Vernon Register*, October 18, 1955, 4.

58 Ibid.

goes in Colp." With approximately 2,000 people living in the area, all residents knew of Ma Hatchett's. Some were glad about the raid and subsequent arrests, but this certainly was not the end of Ma's business ventures. Juanita Boykin and Mattie Porter were arrested at Ma Hatchett's tavern and charged as "inmates of a house of ill fame." They were arraigned the next day. Junior Hatchett posted a \$400 bond for each woman to be released.⁵⁹ Juanita Boykin was later found guilty and fined \$85.⁶⁰

Just 15 months later, Illinois State Police again raided Ma Hatchett's Tavern and Jerry Joe's Number Nine Club in Colp. On January 19, 1957, Juanita Boykin and Rosella Wilson were arrested at Ma Hatchett's, while a white woman named Kitty Monroe was picked up at Jerry Joe's. Initially, the *Southern Illinoisan* reported that Ma Hatchett had been charged, by State's Attorney Carl Sneed, with operating a disorderly house.⁶¹ The State's Attorney's office decided that because Ma Hatchett was not in the best of health, and reportedly had not entered the tavern in almost three years, to charge her younger son Lawrence Hatchett instead. The State's Attorney, Carl Sneed, charged Lawrence as the "keeper of a house of ill fame." Lawrence eventually pled guilty and paid \$100 and expenses for the verdict. The law allowed a maximum of \$200 fine and or 1-year imprisonment in the county jail. Juanita Boykin was arrested for the second time in this raid and charged with her second offense working as an inmate of a house of ill fame. She was ordered to pay a \$100 fine plus costs. Wilson and Monroe were charged with their first offense as inmates of a house of ill fame. During the initial arraignment, all plead not guilty but later changed their pleas to guilty. It would appear that this was done to try to settle. However, *The Southern Illinoisan* reported that States Attorney Carl Sneed was consulting with County Judge A.R. Cagle about the possibility of revoking the liquor licenses associated with Ma Hatchett's, which is "notorious over a wide area and has been in operation for more than 30 years."⁶²

On January 24, 1957, four days after the raid, State's Attorney Carl Sneed filed a petition to revoke Ma Hatchett's county liquor license. Sneed argued that "the county does not have the power to padlock the taverns [...] revocation of liquor licenses has the same practical effect."⁶³ Officers notified Ma Hatchett of the filed petition. Meanwhile, many voiced their opinion concerning the injustice committed against Ma Hatchett in the Sunday edition of the *Southern Illinoisan*. For these individuals, Ma Hatchett was the victim of the raid. A Colp

59 "House of Ill fame," *Southern Illinoisan*, October 17, 1955, 1.

60 "Number 9 Taverns," *Southern Illinoisan*, January 21, 1957, 3.

61 Ibid.

62 "5 In Colp Vice Raids Plead Guilty, Fined; Officials Studying Liquor License Action," *Southern Illinoisan*, January 23, 1957, 3.

63 "Colp Liquor Licenses," *Southern Illinoisan*, January 24, 1957, 3.

community member admitted that Ma Hatchett operated a tavern and house of ill repute but insisted that “No one was ever more active in civic affairs here and did more to help people.” A neighbor of Ma Hatchett’s refused to comment on her business but said, “she’s been a fine neighbor – never no trouble of any kind.” A prominent Colp citizen noted that there had been “attempts” to shut down Ma Hatchett’s because “everybody knows what it is.” He said, “You can’t fight big money;” and so nothing came of past attempts. Finally, a religious black man pronounced that Ma Hatchett’s business gave the community a “bad name” and that Ma Hatchett didn’t even want “colored people” to go to her place because they “don’t have that kind of money.”⁶⁴

Community opinion was divided. Some felt Ma was providing for the community while others felt that she was dividing it. Two days before the hearing for the revocation petition, William Hatchett (Junior) surrendered Ma Hatchett’s liquor license to commissioner Milo Cardwell. Once he surrendered the license, the State’s Attorney Sneed announced that he would seek an injunction to have the tavern padlocked under the Illinois Public Nuisance Act.⁶⁵

A person identified only as a Murphysboro man wrote a letter to the Southern Illinoisan editor, published on January 30, 1957. The person argued in defense of Ma Hatchett that he had never been to a “cleaner better regulated tavern anywhere in the 37 states and five foreign countries I have visited.” He said that he had seen many affluent men, including “doctors, lawyers, preachers, and businessmen” at Ma Hatchett’s and that “men down deep in our hearts appreciate an evening at Ma’s.”⁶⁶ In the same edition of the Illinoisan, the daily reported that Judge Zimmerman of Williamson County ordered Ma Hatchett’s Tavern closed. The injunction stated that the tavern and adjoining buildings (described as the tavern with a six-bedroom addition and another four-bedroom dwelling connected by a passageway) not be used for any purpose for one year.⁶⁷ The order observed that “Ma Hatchett [could not] even run a grocery store.”⁶⁸

An interesting facet of this story is that public opinion varied widely. Many in the community liked and respected Hatchett because of her business and others despite it. Many were happy that Ma’s business closed, while others thought it was disgraceful to pick on a long-running business and Ma Hatchett. Reverend B.G. Dale of Murphysboro, Illinois, in a letter to the editor

64 Joe Jurich, “Residents Have Varied Views on Town of Colp; Some Speak Well of Ma’s Civic Affairs Work,” *Southern Illinoisan*, January 27, 1957, 3.

65 “Tavern Permits,” *Southern Illinoisan*, January 26, 1958, 3.

66 A Murphysboro Man, “Man Defends Ma Hatchett,” *Southern Illinoisan*, January 30, 1957, 4.

67 “Place Cannot Be Used for Any Purpose,” *Southern Illinoisan*, January 30, 1957, 1.

68 “Ma’ Can’t Even Run a Grocery Store,” *Southern Illinoisan*, February 1, 1957, 1.

of the Southern Illinoisan, stated that he believed that there was “much to gain from closing such an establishment” and implored Colp residents to “enforce the court decision to keep the place closed” which would be in the best interest of the community.⁶⁹ While another Murphysboro man pointed out that States Attorney Carl Sneed, and many of the state police involved in the raids, were members of elite social clubs where gambling and slot machines routinely operated.

Nevertheless, none of those clubs had been raided nor had their liquors’ licenses revoked while blatantly operating against the law. Concerning Ma Hatchett’s, the man pointed out that State’s Attorney Sneed of Williamson County was only interested in persecuting two little taverns owners, in a small community, because they were “operated by Negro people.”⁷⁰ He felt that law enforcement was not interested in broken law; instead, they were only interested in the laws broken by people’s color.

Hatchett Family Involvement during the Civil Rights Movement

While Ma Hatchett’s was now closed, Junior’s other business ventures flourished, but most importantly, his community involvement. In July of 1957, Junior’s New Orleans Club, which featured a sunken dance floor, obtained a private club charter and became known as American Legion Post #951. He also held a prominent position in the community as President of the school board. It is essential to recognize that the fight for school integration in Colp was an ongoing struggle, and Junior led the fight.⁷¹ When Little Rock, AR, during the summer of 1957, faced school desegregation’s pains and struggles, Junior upset many white people and officials by expediting blacks’ integration into white schools in Williamson County.

Racial tensions ran high all over the nation, including Colp, Illinois. The Colp school board was divided along racial lines in its pursuit of integration. The board voted four to three to integrate Colp Attucks (grade school for blacks) and Colp Standard Schools (grade school for whites). The four black members of the school board voted for integration, while the three white members voted against it.⁷² In August, white elementary school pupils boycotted Colp grade school due to black students’ integration.⁷³ By the middle of September, the Colp School Board’s three white members resigned their positions in protest of desegregation. Meanwhile, white families began to move out of Colp or paid \$200 tuition to send their children to non-integrated

69 B.G. Dale, “Terms Ma’s A Blight,” *Southern Illinoisan*, February 1, 1957, 4.

70 Rt. 1 Murphysboro Man, “A Reader Speaks: Blasts Lack of Enforcement on Clubs and Slots,” *Southern Illinoisan*, February 17, 1957, 4.

71 “Appointments to Colp Board Still Pending,” *Southern Illinoisan*, September 9, 1957, 3.

72 “Hatchett Tavern Gets Club Charter,” *Southern Illinoisan*, July 7, 1957, 3.

73 “White Pupils Boycott Colp Grade School,” *Mt. Vernon Register News*, August 27, 1957.

schools in Carterville or Herrin.⁷⁴ Once integration began, white students did not attend the school.

On September 30, 1957, a bomb exploded at The New Orleans Club (American Legion Post #951), causing substantial economic damage to the business of the Colp School Board President, Junior Hatchett. There were no injuries reported in the blast. Arson inspectors believed that six to eight dynamite sticks composed the bomb that destroyed the rear wall, damaging its ceiling and interior.⁷⁵ Lt. Earl Pogue, commander of the Illinois State Police in DuQuoin, quickly dismissed community concerns that the bombing occurred due to school integration. The Lieutenant proclaimed that there was no connection because white children had been boycotting the Colp grade school since the school board voted for desegregation "at the start of the fall semester." He felt that it was more likely that since both "Negroes and White people frequent the tavern," that there could be some who objected to that.⁷⁶

The bombing of Junior's tavern was the first in a string of fires that destroyed Colp businesses, including Ma Hatchett's; all were attributed to arson and burned to the ground. In 1964, another bomb exploded at the Colp Fire station. Junior Hatchett was charged for the bombing, believing that he was retaliating for the bombing of his family properties. However, charges were dropped later. No one has ever been convicted for the crime. Over the next three years, four more taverns were destroyed by fire.⁷⁷ These events illustrate much animosity in the community over the taverns and their role in the community. While dealing with accusations of guilt in the fire station bombing, Junior, his family, and even Mayor Frank Caliper (the presumed intended victim in the fire station explosion) received death threats. Both families reported disturbing phone calls at night, the message always the same: "Beware you, your home, and family are going to be blown to kingdom come."⁷⁸ Junior sent his wife and children to Kentucky out of fear of their safety. His wife, though, refused to stay away for long and soon returned to the family home in Colp.

Conclusion

The Hatchett Family is quite remarkable. They started as a poor mining family in Number Nine. William and Johanna (Josie) saved money to buy a tavern and boardinghouse. When William Sr. passed, Josie was left to care for two small sons. She took her meager holdings and turned them into a

74 "Appointments to Colp Board Still Pending," *Southern Illinoisan*, September 9, 1957, 3.

75 "Bomb Cleanup Started at Wrecked Club," *Southern Illinoisan*, October 4, 1957, 13.

76 "Bomb Night Club in School-Embattled Colp," *The Dispatch*. October 1, 1957.

77 "Fires Led Colp in New Direction," *Southern Illinoisan*, September 5, 1989, 7.

78 James Sprehe, "Fear of Bombings Spreads in Colp, Ill., After Threats to Two Leading Citizens," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, September 6, 1964, 3.

thriving, although questionable business. Josie openly sold alcohol during prohibition, dealt with threats from the KKK, and operated a prostitution house for almost thirty years while convincing authorities to look the other way. Their story's interesting twist is that she did not hold on to the money her business profited. Ms. Hatchett shared it with neighboring families. She became known to the community as Ma Hatchett and made sure area children had baseball equipment to play with and food to eat. It did not matter who was in need, white or black, if she knew about it, she sought to ease their suffering. She sent both of her sons to college and paid their tuition when many colleges were not accepting black students.

When her son turned twenty-one, she purchased him a business he built into another thriving community club. When he wanted to start community softball and basketball leagues to help World War II Veterans reacclimate to civilian life, she willingly sponsored them. As heart disease started to take its toll, she turned the daily operations of Ma Hatchett's over to her son Lawrence.

Once *Brown v. Board of Education* was ruled on, and integration began, William Junior, who served as the school board president, led the integration of Colp Grade Schools. As pressure rose and the authorities closed Ma Hatchett's, followed by the bombing of Junior's business, the Hatchets stayed, and they persevered. When death threats started and they feared for their lives, they continued to fight for the belief that all men are created equal. It was only once Ma, and Lawrence Hatchett had died that Junior relocated his family to Chicago, where he built a successful financial firm. This family may not have acted within the law's moral and legal boundaries; during this time, the law functioned as if it was made for whites and not for citizens like them.

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