IMMEDIATE FAMILY

Frazier B. Baker
1855 - 1898
Frazier B. Baker was born in 1855 in South Carolina. He was a member of the Colored Farmers Alliance, a schoolteacher, the postmaster of Effingham, South Carolina, then finally the postmaster of Lake City, South Carolina. While being the postmaster of Lake City, he was threatened numerous times, due to the population of Lake City being primarily white. The people of Lake City attempted to shoot both Frazier B. Baker and his assistant numerous times, and they set the post office where he was residing on fire, causing him to move out of town. Though threats kept occurring, Frazier B. Baker felt safe enough to send for his family in early February, 1898. They were in town for only thirteen days before the lynching occurred. Frazier B. Baker was shot and killed on February 22, 1898.

Lavinia Russell Baker
1861 - 1947
Lavinia was born in Effingham, South Carolina and was 37 years old on the night of the lynching. During the attack, she was carrying her baby, Julia (almost 2), when she was shot with a bullet that passed through Julia’s body into her own wrist, which caused her to drop her baby. After recuperating from her injuries and tending to her three other critically injured children, she remained in Charleston with her family for 16 more months. During that time, she received assistance from anti-lynching activists.

After the trial of the lynching mob, Lavinia moved her family to Boston at the urging of a young, white, activist reformer named Lillian Clayton Jewitt (below). For nearly two years under Jewitt’s guidance – some would say exploitation – Lavinia and her family were paraded in front of audiences, revealing their injuries to horrified gasps as living testimony against the horrors of lynching.

Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison II raised $1200 to provide a home for the Bakers in Boston. During the next twenty years, all of Lavinia’s children lived beyond the age of five. In 1942, after her last child, Barnett, was born in July 1942, Lavinia returned to Florence County, South Carolina, less than five miles from Lake City.

Rosa (Roselia) Baker
1880 - 1942
Rosa (Roselia) Baker was born in Effingham, South Carolina in 1880. She was 18 years-old on the night of the lynching. Rosa was wounded by gunfire to her arm which ended up broken. She moved with her mother, Lavinia Baker, and her siblings to Boston, Massachusetts. As an adult, she became a music teacher. She died in 1942 in Boston, Massachusetts. She was the eldest of the Baker children and lived the longest.

Lincoln Baker
1884 - 1916
Lincoln Baker was born in Effingham, South Carolina in 1884. Lincoln was 11 years-old on the night of the lynching. Lincoln was wounded by gunfire to his abdomen and suffered a broken arm. He moved with his mother Lavinia Baker and his siblings to Boston, Massachusetts. As an adult, Lincoln worked as a laborer. He died in 1916 from Tuberculosis in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Cora Baker
1895 - 1920
Cora Baker was born April 1884 in Effingham, South Carolina. She was 14 years-old on the night of the lynching. She moved to Massachusetts with her mother and siblings in 1898. Her occupation was a housemaid. She died on March 9, 1920 from tuberculosis in Boston, MA.

SOURCES


Brett, Colton, "Lake City post office will be renamed for SC town postmaster lynched 120 years ago", The Post and Courier, January 6, 2018.

Center, David C., "The lynching of postmaster Frazier Baker and his infant daughter Julia in Lake City, South Carolina in 1898 and its aftermath", The University of South Carolina Alumni, Lake City, SC.


In Loving Memory, this page is dedicated to Frazier B. Baker and his family. We would like to express our most profound appreciation for allowing us to bring this injustice to light.

The Reformers

Lillian Clayton Jewitt and Ida B. Wells-Barnett

An inspiring author and anti-lynching advocate, Lillian Clayton Jewitt was 24-years-old and living in Boston at the time of the lynching. As news of the murder and trial caught national attention, Jewitt took a personal interest and saw it as an opportunity to arouse recognition for her campaign. She appealed to the members of a prominent African American church in Boston to help lead her effort to “rescue” the Bakers, who were reportedly in need of money. She wanted to bring the family to Boston. She faced a backlash from the city’s black elite and from the Colored National League who had already been working on the matter. Though, she felt the league should handle any plans for the Bakers, not turn it over to “some chit of a white girl who sprung up overnight.” Ignoring the passionate debate, Jewitt secretly traveled to Charleston where she convinced Lavinia to return to Boston promising to provide for the family.

Ida B. Wells-Barnett

A prominent journalist, author, public speaker, and civil rights activist during the 19th and early 20th centuries, Wells-Barnett was known as the leader of the anti-lynching movement. The lynching of Frazier and Julia Baker outraged her. Determined to help the Baker family, she wrote letters to the Department of Justice and to the former Republican Senator Henry Dawes to urge the President for medical and financial aid for the surviving Baker family. Although she succeeded, the Bakers never received any money because the government’s attention was distracted by another national crisis, the explosion of the USS Maine in Havana Harbor. Her frustration is expressed in her book on lynching in the US: “Here again was an illustration of how our own people seem to stand in the way of any accomplishment of federal intervention against lynching.”

Justice Sought: Dr. Festonia Baken Living Relative

Dr. Festonia Baken is Frazier B. Baker’s grandniece. Born in 1941, she was 6 years old when Lavinia died. A South Carolina native currently living in Washington, D.C., she left the South in her early-20s. She is a retired history and science professor.

Dr. Baker appears in the film An Outrage, a documentary about lynching in the American South. Regarding the murder of her uncle, she says she “doesn’t want to forget the past, as painful as it is.” She remembers walking with her father near their ancestor’s abandoned land asking, “Tell me something about Uncle Frazier.” He answered, “Well, honey, it’s a long, sad story.”

Dr. Baker worked with U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-Columbia on the bill to rename the Lake City post office in honor of Frazier B. Baker. Upon hearing the bill had become law, she said, “We would be remiss if we didn’t recognize that we are coming close to 121 years since the painful event against Frazier and the other members of the family. We as a family, are glad the recognition of this painful event finally happened. It’s long overdue.”

Sources

‘The Baker Family: A Story of Injustice Amid Reform”

Verna Peddi, Ashley Schipae, Alexis Slacum, Yvonne Solis

College of Arts and Sciences, Intro to Archaeology ANT3101.66S19