

# Charles Humphries

**Location of Lynching:** Phenix City, Alabama

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?amp%3Busp=sharing&mid=1r8LkHerGgNOqgZqZocyT8xq87p1OhP8e&ll=32.46005212399318%2C-85.10218910792548&z=13>

**Date:** March 18, 1900

**Age:** unknown (small number of articles report 22 years old in two newspaper articles but many more reported Humphries to be “young.” We believe he was between the ages of 16-22.)

**Brief:** On March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1900 Charles Humphries was accused of attempted assault on a white woman. That evening, a lynch mob led by the McCoy family surrounded Charles Humphries at his relatives home and shot him more than forty times. No one was held accountable for the murder of Charles Humphries.

**Essay:**

Charles Humphries was killed by a Lee County lynch mob on March 17, 1900. The details of his brief life, his alleged crime, and his violent murder are scarce. The numerous newspaper accounts relating his story contradict each other and are clearly intended to sensationalize the supposed crime. This story exemplifies both the sensationalism of racial terror and the silences of the historical record surrounding racial terrorism at the turn of the twentieth century.

The reports allege that about ten miles from Columbus, Georgia, near Phenix City, Alabama, Mr. Humphries attempted to attack the teenage daughter of a farmer named McCoy (who was sometimes reported as Frank, Fee, or T.T. McCoy). The daughter’s name was not given. According to newspaper reports, Mr. Humphries worked on the McCoy farm and was allegedly in the teenage girl’s bedroom. Some accounts suggest that Mr. Humphries was in the bedroom and startled her when she entered; other newspapers suggest that she was sleeping when he broke into her bedroom. Reports claimed that family members came running to help the

teenage girl after hearing her scream, and they observed a man leaving her bedroom who someone in the family identified as Charles Humphries.

According to the reports, a “posse” of white men, likely including McCoy and his neighbors, surrounded and captured Charles Humphries at his home. The reports state that after Mr. Humphries confessed, the lynch mob shot him as many as forty times. The story of Mr. Humphries’ murder was broadcasted around the United States and published alongside news of similar lynchings, next to general news, or with routine daily advertisements. No newspaper articles reported any attempt at identifying or persecuting any members of the lynch mob, and no one was ever held accountable for the murder of young Charles Humphries.