



Vengeance in a Small Town: The Thorndale Lynching of 1911

George R. Nielsen

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One hundred years ago, in 1911, two young men lost their lives: one from a stab wound and the other by mob action. In an attempt to explain how such violence could take place in a prosperous and forward-looking community, the author first examines the growth of Thorndale as a small agricultural town on the railroad and then connects Thorndale's geographical setting in central Texas with its tradition of violence. This particular lynching was unusual in that it took place at night, thereby complicating apprehension of the members of the mob. However, as a result of intervention by the governor, four men were arrested for the crime and three were tried. The lynching was also unusual because the victim was of Mexican heritage thereby inciting the Mexican community to voice its outrage and demand justice. The nature of its reaction testifies to the political awareness of the Mexican minority and also provides an insight into its perception of Anglo society.

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