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UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

**Legendary Pride:
How Legends Derived from Times of Oppression Influence Cultural Pride in
Subsequent Eras Through the Analysis of the Lowry War in Robeson County,
North Carolina 1864-1872**

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Master of History

by
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2015

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2015

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: OPPRESSION AGAINST THE LUMBEE AND THE LEGENDARY
MAN WHO FOUGHT IT 6

CHAPTER 2: THE HOME GUARD VS THE LOWRY GANG 24

CHAPTER 3: THE LEGEND MAKES AND IMPACT 46

CONCLUSION 53

Introduction

Racial oppression has been apparent in United States history since European contact in 1492. Many races have faced instances of oppression throughout American History. The first racial group to have interactions with Europeans was also the first group to experience racial oppression. The plight of Native Americans has been apparent in American history since the founding of the “New World.” But, just as racial oppression has existed in history, so has the fight against it. Through these fights against oppression, the racially oppressed gain a stronger sense of pride in its identity. Many times, legends are formed out of periods of turmoil, especially ones regarding oppression, to serve as a way for the oppressed group to assert its pride.

This is true for the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina. During the last years of the Civil War, and the beginning of the Reconstruction era, Henry Berry Lowry, a Lumbee Indian, fought against an oppressive power, the white community of Robeson County, North Carolina. The white community in Robeson County during this period in American History was largely made up of plantation owners,

Lowry’s rebellion began in 1864 and lasted until his disappearance in 1872.¹ This eight-year period of violence, banditry, theft, and murder led by Henry Lowry came to be known as the Lowry War. Through his fight, he left behind a legend that helped an entire group of people assert their culture and identity. Lowry became a legendary and cultural icon for his people and by retelling and celebrating his legend they were able to assert their pride and identity to their oppressors in subsequent eras.

This thesis will prove how legends derived from times of oppression in history are

¹ Gerald Sider, *Living Indian Histories: The Lumbee and Tuscarora People in North Carolina* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 158.

used to assert the identity of the oppressed. To emphasize the importance of a legend for one specific group, the victims of oppression, this thesis will present the Lowry War through both perspectives of the parties involved, the Lumbee and the oppressors, the white community of Robeson County. These perspectives appear on an interactive website accompanying this thesis, which can be found at www.henrylowry.com. This website illustrates what each group involved in the Lowry War is fighting for and how Henry Lowry is portrayed through the different perspectives. This website further drives home the point that there are indeed two perspectives, one being the Lumbee, who are fighting against oppression to assert their cultural pride, and the other is the white community fighting against outlaws.

Although the Lumbee perspective of the Lowry War and Henry Lowry is what created his legend, both Confederate and Lumbee perspectives will be acknowledged throughout this thesis. These perspectives will be based on primary documents from the period, such as newspaper articles, personal journals, and government documents, as well as some input from secondary sources. In conclusion, this study will reveal that legends created through small, localized fights against oppression provide a way for the assertion of cultural pride and identity. Because the Lumbee were victims of oppression and were able to prevail through the Lowry War, that is why the Lumbee perspective dominates the retelling of the Lowry Legend.

The historical scholarship surrounding Henry Lowry is very limited. He is typically embedded within Lumbee history. The scholars who do discuss Henry Lowry wrote in the latter part of the twentieth century. One historian, and Lumbee Indian, Adolph L. Dial, writes about the Lumbee people and covers all aspects of their history,

including their origin, major events in Lumbee history, folklore, and modern Lumbee people and practices.² Dial dedicates a section specifically to Henry Berry Lowry and the Lowry War. Karen I. Blu follows the same pattern as she includes the history of the Lowry War and Henry Lowry within her overall study of the Lumbee Indians.³ Others like Joseph Gregoire De Roulhac Hamilton include Henry Lowry and the Lowry war within his historical analysis of Reconstruction in North Carolina.⁴ Hugh Talmadge Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome include a brief synopsis of the Lowry War in their overall history of North Carolina.⁵ Furthermore, in his study about American Indians, and their participation in the Civil War, Laurence Hauptman discusses the career of Henry Lowry.⁶ Finally, W. McKee Evans provides a detailed study of Lowry and his family.⁷ He analyzes the people involved in the Lowry War, including the Lowry Band and Lowry himself. Although these authors note the importance of Henry Lowry in North Carolina and Lumbee history, what they do not do is explain how the legend of Henry Lowry was more significant to the Lumbee in North Carolina than the historical facts surrounding Henry and the Lowry War.

There are few authors who discuss legends in history, but they do not argue that legends are used to assert racial identities in times of oppression. In his book *Searching*

² Adolph Dial, *The Only Land I Know: A History of the Lumbee Indians* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996).

³ Karen I. Blu, *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of an American Indian People* (Lincoln: Nebraska Union Press, 2001).

⁴ Joseph Gregoire De Roulhac Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1914).

⁵ Hugh Talmadge Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963)

⁶ Laurence Hauptman, *Between Two Fires: American Indians and the Civil War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

⁷ W. McKee Evans, *To Die Game: The Story of the Lowry Band, Indian Guerrillas of Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Union Press, 1971).

for Murrieta, Bruce Thornton argues that the harsh truth is more important than any benefit legends may bring to a people.⁸ Additionally, Richard Shenkman states that Americans are ignorant of history and have been so submerged by historical legends that they have “forgotten what they should remember, but they have remembered what they should have forgotten.”⁹ This thesis is arguing the opposite of these two historians. Legends, like the one of Henry Lowry, are needed by a group of individuals to serve a greater cultural purpose. This thesis is not only unique in arguing the importance of Henry Lowry’s legend, but legends in history.

More specifically, this thesis addresses how legends derived from times of oppression serve as a way for the oppressed to assert their pride and identity. This will be proven throughout this thesis in the following three chapters. The first chapter will introduce the reader to the Lumbee Indians and give a brief summary of their history and experiences with oppression. Also, this chapter will cover the hero of this legend, Henry Lowry. The reader will get to know this charming, yet powerful, bandit from Robeson County, North Carolina. The second chapter will go more in-depth into the events of the Lowry War by focusing on the two groups involved, the Home Guard and the Lowry Gang. Finally, in the third chapter, all of the events described throughout the thesis will be applied to prove how the legend derived from oppression and the fight against it can influence the cultural pride of a people.

The Lowry War is only a small and localized event of oppression. Battles, like the

⁸ Thornton, *Searching for Murrieta*, xii.

⁹ Shenkman, *Legends and Lies, & Cherished Myths of World History* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 11.

one Henry Lowry fought, were, and are, fought all over the world against oppression. It is the legends that are derived from these fights that live on through the years. And it is those legends that are used to assert the cultural identity of the once oppressed.

Chapter One: Oppression Against The Lumbee and The Legendary Man Who Fought It

As far as oppression in the Civil War and Reconstruction eras go, we generally understand that there is a conflict between whites and blacks, primarily in the South. But, in Robeson County, North Carolina, there is a third group, the Lumbee Indians, involved in the tensions of the South in the 1800s.

The American South has been a popular subject studied by historians and certain cultural and political aspects of the South have been a specific area of interest in American History. Especially during the Civil War and Reconstruction, studies about the South largely focus on the cultural differences and racial tensions of white and blacks. But, Robeson County was home to a diverse population of whites, African Americans, and Indians, among them, the Lumbee. Regarding the Lumbee, the white citizens of Robeson County had developed racial tensions towards them during the 1800s, particularly in the Civil War. The cause for this tension between whites and Lumbees was primarily due to the pre-existing cultural differences along with some local events leading up to and during the Civil War.

The white citizens of Robeson County felt the need to control the “free-persons of color” community, ranging from people of African descent who were no longer slaves to Native people who were not affiliated with a federally recognized tribe. In 1840, thirty-six members of the white community submitted a petition to the local officials requesting that those labeled “free-persons of color” would be unable to buy or sell alcohol due to their unruliness. They demanded:

The County of Robeson is cursed with a free-colored population that migrated originally from the districts round the Roanoke and Neuse rivers. They are generally indolent, roguish, improvident, and dissipated. Having no regard for character, they are under no restraint but what the law imposes. They are great toppers, and so long as they can procure the exhilarating drought seem to forget entirely the comfort of their families.... We think that a law restricting them in the sale of that article would benefit them and the community at large.¹⁰

This passage refers to the consumption of alcohol by the Lumbees. The whites declared that the Lumbee Indians were all drunks who needed to be controlled and forbade the selling of alcohol to them. This declaration was based off of local stereotypes of the Lumbee people. The above passage, a statement was given by several white citizens to the general assembly to the state of North Carolina, sheds some insight on what the concerns the white citizens of Robeson County had about the Lumbee based off of stereotypes placed on the Lumbee by the white community. This passage implies that the white community had preconceived perceptions of the Native Americans that were heightened by local stereotypes of the Lumbee. Not only did the white community pass judgment on how other people spent their time, they took it upon themselves to make what they thought was the best decision for them. These cultural differences existed before the Lowry War and tensions between whites and Lumbees continued to grow well into the Civil War.

After the outbreak of the American Civil War, North Carolina, where Henry Lowry lived, supported the Confederates. One hundred and twenty five thousand men, adding up to one fifth of the white population of North Carolina, served in the

¹⁰ Gerald Sider, *Living Indian Histories: The Lumbee and Tuscarora People in North Carolina*, 174.

Confederate Army during the Civil War.¹¹ The strong support North Carolina had for the Civil War reflected in their attitudes and laws towards those who avoided conscription or deserted during the war. A group of individuals were assembled by the state of North Carolina to control those who avoided conscription or deserted the war; these men were called the Home Guard.

The Home Guard was made up of magistrates, clergymen, lawyers and generally influential members of the white community. The Home Guard, who were acting under direct orders from the adjutant general of North Carolina, enforced the laws of the state by arresting deserters, drafting men to do whatever they felt was necessary for the Confederate cause, and maintaining law and order while many Southern white men were at war.¹² Near the end of the Civil War, North Carolina and the rest of the Confederacy were feeling the stress of an advancing Union Army. As more and more troops were pulled out of the Home Front to battle, the defense of North Carolina was left to the hands of a group of non-professional soldiers who went by the name of the Home Guard.¹³

In Robeson County, the Lumbee, particularly the Lowry family, avoided conscription to serve the Confederate Army. This behavior was unacceptable to supporters of the Confederate Army in the Civil War and, as a result, the Lowry family was under such scrutiny by the Home Guard. The harsh punishments enacted by the Home Guard against those Lumbee who avoided going to war were seen as oppressive

¹¹ Edwin Anderson Alderman, *A Brief History of North Carolina*, (Boston: Ginn & Co, 1896), 32.

¹² Francis H. Casstevens, *The Civil War and Yadkin County, North Carolina: A History: with contemporary photographs and letters*, (Jefferson: North Carolina, McFarland & Company, Inc., 1997), 80.

¹³ Dial, *The Only Land I Know: A History of the Lumbee Indians*, 48.

and excessively violent acts. Lumbees avoiding service in the Confederate Army and the harsh and even fatal punishment enacted by the Home Guard against the Lumbee fueled the extreme tension between the Lumbee and the whites during the ten-year period of the Lowry War.

Another defining aspect of Southern identity was religion. Many historians have noted the close ties between religion and culture in the South in the late nineteenth century, particularly the roles churches played in supporting the area's racial orthodoxy and in imposing a conservative, moralistic way of life.¹⁴ In 1909, Mary Norment, a Robeson County white citizen, wrote a biographical history of Henry Lowry. In many instances she includes her prejudice against the Lumbee in her work, which reflects the sentiments of many white citizens of Robeson County. As cited in her work, *The Lowry History, As Acted in Part by Henry Berry Lowry*, Mary Norment takes the moralistic tone described above and condemns the Lumbee Indians for their habits and ethical choices. She claims the "habits of the Indian are peculiar and eccentric, sometimes assuming a religious aspect as austere as the most rigid Pharisee could desire, at other times plunging headlong into immoral excesses degrading to human nature."¹⁵ She goes on to describe the Lumbee as immoral people who steal, kill livestock, drink, and fight. She concludes: "But notwithstanding these evils, nearly all Indians, when they arrive, join either the Baptist or Methodist church they claim as their church."¹⁶ The fact that the Lumbee practice the same religion as many of the white members of Robeson County, but do not

¹⁴Charles Reagan Wilson, "The Religion of the Lost Cause: Ritual and Organization of the Southern Civil Religion, 1865-1920" in *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Houston: Southern Historical Association, 1980) 219.

¹⁵ Norment, *The Lowry History, As Acted in Part by Henry Berry Lowry*, 30-31.

¹⁶ Ibid.

follow the same moral code, irritated many white members, including Mary Norment.

The white community's attitude towards religion is one of respect and of the utmost importance to their cultural identity. When the Lumbee, who claim to attend those same churches and practice the same religions, acted irresponsibly, the white community viewed the Lumbee as hypocritical and childlike. A lot of the tensions between the Lumbee and the white community are the result of different cultures and values, and the perception of those differences. The attitudes towards the Lumbee by the whites show the discrimination. In the mid to late 1800s, when racism and racial feuds were brought to the forefront in the South, the pre-existing tensions between the whites and the Lumbee paved the way for oppression. Leading up to, during, and after the Civil War, the white citizen's actions against the Lumbee, such as forcing them to work as slaves, taking away their rights, and killing their people, is what led the Lowry War, a fight against oppression, to begin.

The Lumbees lost their rights and were forced to work as slaves because they were subject to a law that took away their identity. The Lumbee people knew themselves to be Native American, and so did many of their neighbors in Robeson County since their arrival in the sixteenth century. The Lumbee had no native language, no traditional dress, and as a consequence were not recognized as a tribe by the Federal Government. They received no benefits, did not live on a reservation and had no commonalities with the other Native American tribes in the area.

But, there was no doubt to the Lumbee that they were Native Americans. As Karen Blu argues the Lumbee Indians are held together by their shared ideas of

themselves as an American Indian people.¹⁷ Even without their federally recognized status and lack of commonalities with other Native American Tribes, the Lumbee Indians identified as Indians because of their ancestry to the Hatteras, Tuscarora, and Croatan Indians.¹⁸ However, without federal recognition, the Lumbee had no protection against laws regarding race.

In 1835 a newly ratified constitution for the state of North Carolina caused “non-slave blacks to lose most of the attributes of citizenship, including the right to vote and the right to bear arms.”¹⁹ The purpose of the new law served as way to re-enslave freed blacks. But, the Lumbee Indians fell under the category “free persons of color.” The law caused the Lumbee to lose their unofficial classification as Native American and they were now officially recognized as a classification that was only above that of a black slave during this time. In the years leading up to the Civil War, racial tensions were at an all-time high, especially in the South. And with their new classification, the Lumbee Indians began to be treated as free persons of color, and lost many of their rights.

The Lumbee Indians fell under this category because they were not federally recognized as an Indian Tribe. In addition to their lack of a common history with other Native American Tribes, another reason why the Lumbee were not officially seen as Indian was because of their ancestry. The Lumbee Indians are believed to be descendants of the settlers in the “Lost Colony” of Roanoke according to several historical investigations and an in depth analysis of a the census. The colony of Roanoke Virginia was established in 1587 when John White took a group of 120 men and women and

¹⁷ Blu, *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of an American Indian People*, 2.

¹⁸ Ibid., 40.

¹⁹ Evans, *To Die Game: The Story of the Lowry Band, Indian Guerillas of Reconstruction*, 32.

landed on Roanoke Island to the north of Cape Hatteras in North Carolina. In need of more supplies for this new colony, White went to England promising to return in three

Figure 3. The Lumber River

Photo by K. Thoreson

The Lumber River is the only black water river in North Carolina. The blackness of the water is due to the tannic acid from many cypress gum trees along its banks. The Lumber River proved to be beneficial in the Lowry War because the heavy tree lines on its banks, the blackness of the water, and the plentiful swamps were ideal hideouts.

years with the necessary goods. When White returned to the colony he found no trace of it on Roanoke Island. The Governor only saw the name “Croatoan” carved upon a tree. The colonists and Governor White had a previous understanding where he would interpret the carving to mean the colonists had left Roanoke Island for Croatan.²⁰ No actual trace of the missing colonists was ever found.

One hundred years later, explorer John Lawson set out to investigate the disappearance of the colonists of Roanoke. He concluded that a group of Hatteras Indians on the

island forced the English to cohabit with them.²¹ The descendants of the English and

²⁰ McMillan, Hamilton, *Sir Walter Raleigh's Lost Colony: An historical sketch of the attempts of Sir Walter Raleigh to establish a colony in Virginia, with the traditions of an Indian tribe in North Carolina. Indicating the fate of the colony of Englishmen left on Roanoke Island in 1587.* (Wilson, NC: Advance Presses, 1888),4.

²¹ John Lawson, *1674-1711 A New Voyage to Carolina; Containing the Exact Description and Natural History of That Country: Together with the Present State Thereof. And a Journal of a Thousand Miles, Travel'd Thro' Several Nations of Indians. Giving a Particular Account of Their Customs, Manners &c.* (London, 1709), 62.

Hatteras then left for Croatan and their descendants who were of mixed blood were known as the Croatans.

Census evidence suggest that present day Lumbee Indians are descendants of the Lost Colony of Roanoke with at least 108 families that were identified as descendants of the colonists of Roanoke according to the 1790 Census taker.²² Their name change is due to the immigrants from Roanoke traveling to what is now known as Robeson County by means of the Lumber River and settled there.

These new settlers in Robeson County from Roanoke and Croatan were a mixed race due to years of racial mixing with English Colonists and Hatteras Indians. Among the new group of settlers in Robeson County were some mixed Tuscarora Indians as well.²³ This melting pot of whites and Indians eventually became united as one group of people. Although these people came to Robeson County without much of an identity, the settlers eventually claimed the name “Lumbee” due to their location near the Lumber River.²⁴

Although the Lumbee identified as an Indian community, they spoke English and some had European features such as blonde hair and English names.²⁵ Although the Lumbee looked white due to years of racial mixing, the Lumbee’s culture and ancestry separated them from the other whites in Robeson County. In addition, the Lumbee had no

²² David Stick, *Roanoke Island: The Beginnings of English America*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 240.

²³ Blu, *The Lumbee Problem*, 40.

²⁴David Stick, *Roanoke Island: The Beginnings of English America*, 255.

²⁵ Blu, *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of an American Indian People*, 36-44.

tribal organization or culture to prove that they were Indians.²⁶ As a result, the white community of Robeson County did not accept the Lumbee as white and began to associate them with the free blacks but the Lumbee did not identify as black. As a result, the Lumbee were lost in a society where racial identity was the difference between slavery and freedom.

The law in the 1835 State Constitution applied to the Lumbee as well as freed slaves because they were legally recognized as “free-persons of color.”²⁷ Since the Lumbee were not officially recognized as Native American and fell under the category of free-persons of color, they lost their rights to bear arms and vote along with non-slave blacks during the Civil War. The dominant white community in Robeson County associated the Lumbee with blacks and with the outbreak of the Civil War when racial tensions were heightened, the white community began to treat them as such. For example, the Lumbee were subject to perform tasks one would expect of a slave during the time of the Civil War. The Lumbee were assigned to work alongside black slaves to build forts for the Confederate army. The conditions at the labor camps were poor. Food rations were inadequate and medical facilities almost non-existent. Additionally, the work was often dangerous and always hard.²⁸ In fact, fewer black slaves were being sent to the forts due to the poor conditions and high number of deaths. Slave owners stopped sending their slaves because they were essentially giving up their property. As a result, the Home Guard resorted to recruiting more Lumbee Indians to fill the place of the slaves. This shows that the Lumbee’s racial status was further diminished because slaves were seen as

²⁶ Ibid., 32.

²⁷ Ibid., 202.

²⁸ Dial, *The Only Land I Know: A History of the Lumbee Indians*, 46

more valuable to the white slave owners. Working alongside blacks and in place of slaves challenged the Lumbee's "indianness."²⁹ Given the series of hardships forced upon the Lumbee, including their restriction of rights and degradation of status to not only working alongside slaves, but also in place of them, their outrage at the Confederacy began to rise.

Of the Lumbee forced to work in the forts, the Lowry family was one of them. Henry Lowry's ancestors were among those who migrated from Roanoke and Croatan. Henry's great-grandfather, James Lowry, purchased land in what became known as Robeson County.³⁰ Lowry came to North Carolina with six other family members. In the Robeson County Census of 1790, James Lowry listed himself and his family under the "all other free persons" category as well as three other individuals who were listed under the "Slaves" category.³¹

The Lowry family was a very prominent family in Robeson County. Henry's father, Allen Lowry, was a good man, honest, industrious, and a devout member of Methodist Episcopal Church. He was universally respected and loved. He worked hard to earn his money.³² He married Marry Coombs and had 9 sons, youngest to oldest, Henry, Carlin, Stevens, Thomas, William, Sinclair, Andrew, Purdy, and Patrick, and one daughter Mary. Henry Lowry, Allen's youngest son, was born and lived in Robeson County, North Carolina from 1845 until his disappearance in 1872. He lived with his family in an area of Robeson County known as Scuffletown, which is now known as

²⁹ Blu, *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of an American Indian People*, 51.

³⁰ Anna Bailey, *How Scuffletown Became Indian Country: Political Change and Transformations*, 23.

³¹ No Author, *Robeson County Census of 1790*, Volume 26, pages 968-985. <http://docsouth.unc.edu> (Accessed March 12, 2014)

³² C.W. Alexander, "The Swamp Outlaws of North Carolina: A Full Authentic and Thrilling History of the Adventures, Exploits, Battles, and Ferocious Deeds of The Lowry Gang of Bandits" (The Old Franklin Publishing House: Philadelphia, PA, 1872), 4.

Prembroke. Although the origin of Scuffletown's name is uncertain, what is known is that it was poorest part of Robeson County and was located close to the swamps. Since Henry Lowry's grandfather, James Lowry, owned a great deal of land in Scuffletown, he was well known as a successful businessman and over the years the Lowrys became a predominant family in the area.

Already, Henry Lowry was born into a well-known Lumbee family in Scuffletown. He was already one step in the direction of being a figurehead for the Lumbee people for the fight against oppression. But, what made him different from his other brothers in this sense was his personality and looks.

Figure 1. Henry Berry Lowry. North Carolina Office of Archives and History

In each legend there is a character that serves as the centerpiece and is someone who has unique and desirable qualities that make the story become a legend. Henry Lowry is one of those characters. Henry Lowry had the makings of a legendary man, but the Lumbee people made him a legend by perpetuating his image through the romanticized retelling of the Lowry War to assert their culture and identity. Henry Lowry started off as a son, brother, and member of the Lumbee community, but through the Lowry War, Henry became known as a hero to the Lumbee people, a villain to members of the white community, and an all-around mystery to all parties involved.

Like many of the Lumbee Indians, Henry Lowry was of mixed race and had light skin. Henry Lowry was a very unique outlaw due to his looks and personality. At the beginning of the Lowry War, Henry was twenty-seven years old, and stood five feet ten

inches high. He had long straight black hair, a beard, grayish hazel eyes, and a soft and pleasant voice.³³ This is a very basic description of his appearance, which is very rare when describing Henry Lowry. People began to describe him with exaggerated qualities as the Lowry War went on and records of his appearance began to change. A Lumbee man from Scuffletown claimed, “Lowry’s eyes spoke for him, literally piercing and prowling around at every glance.”³⁴ This description shows the intensity that Lowry carried himself with and how other Lumbees perceived him. The reason behind the exaggeration is because he was gaining a reputation among the Lumbee as a man fighting against the whites and was doing so in a way where he came out to seem superhuman; the odds were stacked against him, he was outnumbered, he was hunted by the local authorities and bounty hunters, and he escaped imprisonment and death on numerous occasions.

Reports that romanticized Lowry added to the dominance of the legend of Henry Lowry that would later be created and perpetuated to assert the Lumbee’s identity to their oppressors. The public began to see and hear rumors of the outlaw’s appearance and personality as being visually striking, tactfully cunning, and intelligently charming. These exaggerations and glamorized perspective of Lowry is what created the divide from the man himself to the man associated with the legend. However, the story of Henry Lowry cannot be divorced from the legend because Henry Lowry undertook a heroic effort to

³³ C.W. Alexander, *The Swamp Outlaws of North Carolina: A Full Authentic and Thrilling History of the Adventures, exploits, Battles, and Ferocious Deeds of The Lowry Gang of Bandits: Who Fought for Eight Years, Who Have Defeated All the Government and State Troops Sent to Capture Them, and For Whose Heads Nearly Eighty Thousand Dollars Reward Offered. To Which is Added Miss Patton’s Account of Her Experience Among Them While a Prisoner In their Hands.* (Philadelphia: The Old Franklin Publishing House, Entered according to Act of Congress in 1872 in the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington), 60.

³⁴ Ibid.

fight for his people. The heroic man, had to look like a hero, and thus the legend came to be. The legend he left behind helped that continuing battle by giving the Lumbee people a way to assert their identity and culture.

The Lumbee asserted their identity and culture by making the fight of Lowry known, both during and after the Lowry War. Lowry became the subject of many conversations around Robeson County and even caught the interest of national reporters. A Lumbee Indian interviewed by David Ball, a New York reporter gave an exaggerated description of Henry Lowry and said, “Lowry can run like a deer, swim like a fish, and endure any amount of hunger and thirst, and when he is seen with his arsenal of weapons belted round him he is indeed a terrible looking character.”³⁵ The language used to describe his actions implies a fear and respect for Lowry. But, those who did know him, knew him as an honest and hardworking man who was fighting for his people.

For example, his devoted and beautiful wife, Rhoda Strong, supported Henry and what he was fighting for. There are those who say “that to look into her face the careless spectator would little dream that she is a bandit’s wife, and one also who actually delights in the bloody deeds of her terrible husband.”³⁶ Rhoda did not live like a wife trapped in the complications of her husband being an outlaw. Rhoda saw Henry as a persecuted man and a hero, instead of a felon and a bandit.

³⁵Alexander, *The Swamp Outlaws of North Carolina: A Full Authentic and Thrilling History of the Adventures, Exploits, Battles, and Ferocious Deeds of The Lowry Gang of Bandits*, 61.

³⁶ Ibid., 58.

Figure 2. Rhoda by Ellis Sampson
Museum of Native American History, University of
North Carolina, Pembroke.

Rhoda was often rumored to have helped Lowry escape imprisonment on numerous occasions. But she did not participate in any of the Lowry Gang's crime sprees. She spent most of her time tending to her home and three children while Lowry was away.³⁷ Her support of Henry and the popularity she gained from those who covered the Lowry War helped the Lumbee

perspective of these events become more favorable to the American population. This is shown in the work done by C.W Alexander, a reporter from New York who covered the Lowry War during the late 1800s, as well as authors and historians who look back on Rhoda's role, such as Liz Sonneborn in her work *A to Z of American Indian Women*.

Rhoda is intriguing to these authors and journalists because Rhoda was the wife of a feared bandit, but did not seem like she would be. She was fair and reserved; these are not traits one would expect from an outlaw's wife. Rhoda attracted attention because of her beauty and had the respect of the Lumbee people because her never faltering loyalty to her husband and her people. She never told anyone the whereabouts of Henry Lowry during the war or after his disappearance. Whatever she knew about the outlaws she never revealed as long as she lived.

Rhoda adds a unique element to the legend of the Lowry War. She appealed to the public outside North Carolina due to her physical attractiveness and also gave the outlaw

³⁷ Liz Sonneborn *A to Z of American Indian Women*, (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2007), 138.

king a humanistic quality. He had a wife who loved him and a family he adored. So, it poses the thought that this bandit was not so terrible as people said, therefore making his legend more appealing to a larger audience, including some whites. However, he was also gaining a reputation among the whites of Robeson that was not so positive.

Many members of the white community met their deaths at the hands of Henry Lowry. The true number of victims of the Lowry Gang is uncertain, but there were at least eleven influential members of Robeson County who were killed by Lowry and his gang. Mary Norment, a citizen of Robeson County and fervent opponent of the Lowry Gang, states the victims of the Lowry War were “most excellent citizens of Robeson County who met their sad fate...not in civilized warfare - not in accordance with modern military tactics, but by the bullet of the highway robber and midnight assassin.”³⁸ Henry Lowry and his gang had robbed and killed the men in Robeson County through guerilla warfare tactics. Often, Lowry and his gang would hide and wait for their target to enter into a vulnerable position, then attack. Many of Henry’s targets were those who were involved in his father and brother’s murders, others were wealthy members of the community who had taken land from the Lumbees, or who were opponents of Henry Lowry and his gang. To the white citizens of Robeson, Lowry was an assassin who killed what they thought were good men for no reason. They saw him as a murderer and the Lowry War increased the racial tensions between the whites and the Lumbees.

While many feared and/or hated him and his gang, there are several accounts where Henry Lowry came in contact with members of the white community whom he did not have a grudge against, and they reported him to be surprisingly pleasant, as proven in

³⁸ Gerald M. Sider, *Living Indian Histories: Lumbee and Tuscarora People in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 169.

the following excerpts.

One example of a peaceful interaction between Lowry and a member of the white community is from an article in *The Robesonian* newspaper, which appeared in *The Daily Phoenix* in Columbia, South Carolina. The article entitled “The Civility of an Outlaw” reported that a man, who went by the name McNeil, was hunting for raccoons with his dog. After the dog had killed one, he went to retrieve it, but saw the outlaw in the thickness of the trees and because of the stories McNeil had heard and the reputation Lowry had gained in his community, McNeil left the raccoon and retreated back to town. Later that day, Lowry came to McNeil with a dead raccoon in hand giving it to him, saying it was rightfully his because his dog killed it. Lowry went on to ask if he could borrow one of McNeil’s raccoon hunting dogs for he would like to pick up the sport. Much to the surprise of McNeil, Lowry appeared to be a decent man.³⁹ At the same time, because of the robberies and murders committed by Lowry against his oppressors, he was widely known as a dangerous and villainous man. But, accounts such as this one, show that Henry Lowry was not a madman going on a racist fueled killing spree. He was fighting against oppression and specifically against those who had done him or his people wrong. He did not indiscriminately kill any white man he came across which is apparent in this account with Mr. McNeil.

These instances where some whites were intrigued by Lowry, and not enraged, surfaced frequently during the Lowry War. A *New York Herald* reporter, David Ball, stated, “even the relatives of the white men he killed admit that he is the handsomest Indian they ever saw. His body is straight in shoulders and limbs...he has good chest,

³⁹ Robesonian, “Henry Berry Lowry-The Civility of an Outlaw,” *The Daily Phoenix*, October 25, 1871.

long bones, and good proportions. In his dress he is negligent but not insulting.”⁴⁰ Ball added, Henry Lowry “defies white society with his own superiority.”⁴¹ Lowry’s captivating personality, striking features, and backstory for vengeance made him an intriguing character for some members of the white community. Henry Lowry was infamous and famous at the same time among the whites. The reason is because of the type of man he was and what he was fighting for. He did not quarrel with every white man he came across, just those who wronged him or had enough money to spare for the Lumbee.

The history of Henry Lowry fighting against white oppression has turned into a legend because of the man he was, accompanied by sensationalist reports. He was intriguing to some whites and heroic to the Lumbee, and through that began to help the Lumbee as a whole assert their identity. Since the man who stood against white oppression of the Lumbee had some support from the white community, the legend became more powerful. The Lumbee were already asserting their identity through Lowry during the Lowry War, and through the years the Lumbee perspective of the legend of Henry Lowry become a means for them to assert their culture and identity.

Henry Lowry started off as a well-known member of the Lumbee community thanks to his family’s history of being a prominent Lumbee family. The Lumbee people attributed specific traits to his personality that made him seem so special in a way where he was almost superhuman. The traits, although exaggerated for the sake of the legend, were based on factual events. In addition to his personality traits, the look of Henry

⁴⁰ David Ball, *The Swamp Outlaw* (Durham, North Carolina: Brightleaf Press, 2010), 6.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Lowry made him somewhat of a significant spectacle. Looking back on Henry Lowry and the man he was, it is evident that he had the makings to be a legendary man. He had the support of his people to turn him into the legend he is today.

The Lumbee Indians are responsible for perpetuating the legend of Henry Lowry. The legend is important to the Lumbee because through the Lowry War, Henry Lowry gave the Lumbee people a cultural icon to inspire them to fight for all the rights they had lost before and during the Civil War and assert their culture and identity. This is why the legend of Henry Lowry is presently told through the Lumbee's perspective; they had more to gain from it than the whites of Robeson County.

Chapter Two: The Home Guard Vs. The Lowry Gang

Legends are appealing because there is typically a villain and a hero. There is someone to root for and someone to root against. What makes the legend of Henry Lowry so interesting is that these labels could go either way, depending on who is telling the story. From the perspective of many whites, the Lumbee Indians are indolent people whose cultural icon, Henry Lowry, was a ruthless outlaw.⁴² To the Lumbees, the whites were a cruel people who oppressed the Lumbee. It is essential to acknowledge and cover both perspectives. This chapter will evaluate what each group was fighting for and how the retelling of the Lowry War would serve the interests of the Lumbee and the whites. The Home Guard and the Lumbee interacted frequently during the Lowry War, so their perspectives are intertwined.

The Home Guard recruited the Lumbee to serve the Confederacy's war efforts. Many Lumbees had been drafted to help the Confederacy with the development at the forts. The working conditions at the forts meant certain death for the workers. In addition, Lowry and his family members saw their position working alongside slaves as degrading since racial identification was more important than social status to the Lumbee. Since many Lumbee avoided the labor draft they earned the attention of the Home Guard. The Home Guard's involvement in taking many Lumbee men to work in the forts perpetuated the racial tensions between the Lumbee and the white community.

⁴²This sentiment is reflected in the writings of Mary Norment and Colonel Wishart, who were both opponents of Henry Lowry during the period of the Lowry War. Mary Norment, *The Lowry History, As Acted in Part by Henry Berry Lowry*, (Lumberton, NC; Lumbee Publishing Company, 1909)

⁴²Francis Marion Wishart Journal, Wishart Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection #4624, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, (Chapel Hill: N.C.).

The Home Guard took their responsibility seriously and punished any deserter regardless of race. For example, a soldier named John Danner suffered for being less than devoted to the cause of the Confederacy. He worried about his family and would often return home to cut wood, plow field, plant crops, and do chores around the farm. The

Figure 4. The Lowry Gang. (Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Home Guard captured him and returned him to the army on three separate occasions. The third time they captured him, the Home Guard tied him to a stake and shot him.⁴³

Danner's punishment

shows how serious the matters of abandoning the war and dodging drafts were taken by the Home Guard. The Lumbee Indians, and particularly the Lowry Family, were frequently subjected to the Home Guard's scrutiny. The Home Guard used the Lumbee to work at the fort in Wilmington.

Many Lumbee, including members of the Lowry family, managed to escape from the forts, or avoided being drafted in the first place, by hiding out in the swamps of Robeson County.⁴⁴ The swamps served as a refuge for Lumbees, runaway slaves, and Union soldiers who escaped prison camps. The Home Guard was particularly interested in the Lowry family. The trouble between the Home Guard and the Lowrys began in 1862, when the Confederate authorities wanted to enlist all of Allen Lowry's sons into

⁴³ Ibid., 75.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 36-44.

the army. Several of them went along peaceably enough. But Henry, Steve and Tom would not go, and when the recruiting officers came around, they would slip away to the woods, and hide until the recruiters had gone off before they would come back.⁴⁵ But, the Home Guard also kept a close eye on the Lowry Family.

In addition to avoiding the labor at the forts, Lowry's bad reputation among whites is also attributed to Lowry assisting the Union Army. While the Lowrys were out in the swamps of Robeson County, they gave valuable information to General William T. Sherman's Union troops. When the Union soldiers had left the county, Confederates began to persecute Allen Lowry and his family.⁴⁶

The Home Guard would often raid the home of Allen Lowry looking for something incriminating. Captain Hugh McGregor, the leader of the Home Guard in March 1865, launched a series of raids in Scuffletown in search for Henry Lowry and his men, including the home of Allen Lowry. McGregor falsely accused Allen Lowry and his son, William, of stealing.⁴⁷ The next day the Home Guard returned and held an unofficial trial in front of a jury made up of people from white Confederate population of Robeson County. The men were found guilty and forced to dig their own graves and face a firing squad. After being forced to watch the execution of her husband and son, Henry Lowry's mother was tied up to a tree and tormented by the Home Guard. This type of behavior by the Home Guard is what makes them appear to be the oppressive power in the Lowry War. They abused the fact that the Lumbees were not thought highly of by the majority

⁴⁵ Alexander, *The Swamp Outlaws of North Carolina: A Full Authentic and Thrilling History of the Adventures, exploits, Battles, and Ferocious Deeds of The Lowry Gang of Bandits*, 5.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁷ Hauptman, *Between Two Fires*, 82.

of the white community and planted stolen items and held an unofficial trial where there would be no objections.

However, there was one person who would hold the Home Guard accountable for their unjust and violent tactics. Henry Berry Lowry had been hiding and watching the horrific events that were unfolding at his father's house. The reason why he ignored "his natural inclination to rush forward, kill as many of the murderers as he could, and sell his own life as dearly as possible" was because of his "desire of vengeance."⁴⁸ If he had attacked there would have been no Lowry Gang and no legend for the Lumbee people to assert their culture and identity to their white oppressors. Instead of showing himself, Lowry went to the swamps where he knew he would find many men who shared his same sentiments about the Home Guard and whites.

Although the safety of the swamps attracted a diverse group of refugees, the most important group of these refugees was the Lowry band.⁴⁹ The Lowry Band was made up of men from different backgrounds. However, the diverse backgrounds of these individuals do not counter the idea of indianness in the Lumbee that the gang was fighting for. The history of the Lumbee, being ancestors of mixed races, is reflected in the diversity of the Lowry Gang. Additionally, first and foremost, the gang was fighting against oppression. The leader of the gang, Henry Lowry, represented the Lumbee people.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 11-12.

⁴⁹ Evans, *To Die Game: The Story of the Lowry Band, Indian Guerillas of Reconstruction*, 36.

Figure 5. Thomas Lowry, Calvin and Henderson Oxendine, and George Applewhite. Southern Collection. The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

The members ranged from relatives of Lowry, to Yankee soldiers, to freed black slaves. All members had felt the “sting of injustice at one time or another in one way or another.”⁵⁰ They had one common enemy, the Confederate army.

The members of the band included his two older brothers, Steve Lowry and Tom Lowry. Steve was the eldest in the band. He was the most violent and hot tempered. It was reported that he took part in most of the killings associated with the Lowry War.⁵¹ Tom Lowry was his older brother’s opposite. He was temperate in mood and opted to avoid bloodshed when possible.⁵² Henry’s two cousins, Calvin and Henderson Oxendine were in the band along with his two brothers-in-law, Andrew and Boss Strong. Andrew was compassionate and soft spoken. Boss Strong was Henry’s closest friend and most trusted band member.⁵³ Two other Lumbees joined the band, John Dial and William Chavis. Chavis made bullets for the band. There were also two freed slaves, George Applewhite and Eli Ewin. Ewin was nicknamed “Shoemaker John” because he was a skilled artisan in shoe making.⁵⁴ Finally, there was one white member, Zachariah T.

⁵⁰ Dial, *The Only Land I Know: A History of the Lumbee Indians*, 61.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 62.

McLauchlin. Each of these men had a specific role to play and this structure allowed Henry to act out his vengeance on the Confederate white community.

Many Lumbee and whites alike described the men of the Lowry gang with almost as much fear and admiration as Henry Lowry. A *Herald* reporter interviewed a Lumbee Resident of Robeson County during the time of the Lowry War who attributed a super-human feature to each of the men in the Lowry Gang. Steve Lowry was said to be a powerful looking man with a sturdy build. The man being interviewed adds to Lowry's exaggerated and legendary appearance as he describes Lowry as having "a heavy countenance, thick lips and dark, yellow complexion and devilish looking restless black eyes make him look like what he is a fiend. He would rather kill anyone than not and at a word from Henry he would shoot anyone."⁵⁵ That same interviewee described Tom Lowry as the "Fox of the gang." Boss Strong had a heavy build, was very strong, and was as courageous as a bulldog. Finally the Lumbee man told the *Herald* reporter that Andrew Strong was a "human hyena." Andrew Strong was the most treacherous and cowardly member of the band, because nothing delighted him more than to steal and sneak.⁵⁶

In addition to their super-human descriptions, the individual members of the band began to have legends associated with them. For example, George Applewhite was the luckiest member of their gang. He allegedly survived two different gunshot wounds despite being reported as dead.⁵⁷ These types of stories and descriptions played a role in the romanticization of the Lowry War, and therefore led to the Lumbee Legend of Henry

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Adolph Dial, *The Only Land I Know: A History of the Lumbee Indians*, 63.

Lowry.

In addition to their outlandish descriptions, stories about the deeds of the Lowry Gang began to surface, and the outcomes added to their exaggerated romantic image. A newspaper article from the *Hudson Daily Post* reported;

The notorious Henry Berry Lowry, of Robeson County-, N. C., is charged with another murder. An attempt was recently made to arrest him, and his house was surrounded by a party of men, while the sheriff went to an adjacent town, to summon further assistance. During his absence, Lowry escaped from the house, aided by his friends, fired upon the party, killing a young man, named Luman, and severely wounding another, named McKay. The outlaw and his party escaped.⁵⁸

Reports such as this one made Lowry and the Lowry Gang appear invincible. It gave the Lumbee people the idea that Henry Lowry could not be stopped, and would accomplish whatever he set out to do. The people in Scuffletown began to help out the Lowry Gang as much as they could. They would open their doors to hide the Lowry Gang in their homes, tell lies to officials looking for Lowry, and throw-off the occasional bounty hunter who was looking to claim the reward for the capture of the entire Lowry Gang. Because of their ability to escape the law and fight the Home Guard, the Lowry Gang was viewed with an exaggerated and romanticized light.

The Lowry Gang was gaining popularity among the Lumbee and whites, but for different reasons. Stories about the Lowry Gang's actions spread throughout Robeson County. One incident in particular showed just how powerful Henry and his reputation had become. When the Governor issued monetary rewards for the bandits, people came to Robeson ready to kill them. Several times Henry Lowry and his band members were

⁵⁸ Henry Lowry, *Hudson Daily Post* (Hudson, Ohio), May 07, 1899, Mailable Edition, 4.

shot at while they were at the Moss Neck Station. In response to this, one day, Lowry and his gang boarded a train and forced all the passengers out onto the station platform. The men were searched and all weapons were confiscated. Lowry told the men to return home and tell people not to come with weapons into the swamps and not to expect any mercy. He then wrote a letter to the president of the railroad informing him of what had happened. Lowry received a response letter that assured him no one would be traveling with arms anymore.⁵⁹

As fearsome as the gang was to the whites, the Lowry Gang did not kill or harm whites at random. Lowry set limits on his crimes. He did not harm women, rob anyone who had very little money, nor those who did not wrong him or his people. For example, Lowry raided a local plantation, he and his men took the owner's wallet only to discover there was only fifteen dollars. Henry returned the money and he and his band left the man's plantation. Lowry only took from those who he felt could afford it. And he redistributed his plunders with the poor of people of Scuffletown. This is how Lowry gained the reputation as a local "Robin Hood."⁶⁰ But the rich and those who crossed the Lowry Gang faced a worse fate.

Many of the victims of Henry Lowry were often wealthy white men who had opposed Henry Lowry. One man, James P. Barnes was a wealthy landowner who could not stand the Lumbees, especially not the Lowry boys. His sentiments ended up being the reason for his murder. The murder of Barnes was representative of the racial tensions between the Lumbee and the white Community during the Civil War. Barnes was a

⁵⁹ Alexander, *The Swamp Outlaws of North Carolina: A Full Authentic and Thrilling History of the Adventures, Exploits, Battles, and Ferocious Deeds of The Lowry Gang of Bandits*, 14.

⁶⁰ Richard Cooper, *Henry Berry Lowry: Rebel With a Cause*, 39.

neighbor of the Lowrys and he owned some livestock. When two of his hogs went missing, he accused the Lowry boys of stealing them to feed Union Soldiers who were hiding in the Lowry's house. These two accusations were severe crimes, but neither was proved. Barnes did threaten to kill any member of the Lowry family who trespassed on his property thereafter. The threat did not sit well with Henry Lowry. He and his brother William found Barnes at the Clay Valley Post Office on December 21, 1864 and shot him three times, once in his chest, once in his side, and the last in his face.⁶¹

After Barnes, another victim was James Brantley Harris. Harris was a conscription officer in the Home Guard. He was responsible for drafting members of Scuffletown to work at the forts. Since many knew Harris as a "large, brutal tyrannical fellow, a human combination of boar and bull,"⁶² he was placed in charge of "Scuffletown," home to the Lowrys.

Because of his assignment to recruit Lumbee labor from Scuffletown, the Lumbee Indians began to believe Harris was a bully who hunted down Indians for forced labor.⁶³ To the Lumbee, James Brantley Harris was a man "mean as the devil."⁶⁴ Initially, Henry Lowry and some of his family members attempted to enlist in the Confederate army, but instead were compelled to work alongside slaves at the forts.⁶⁵ When the Lowrys found out that their fate serving in the army was actually slave's work and could lead to their

⁶¹ Ibid., 47.

⁶² C.W. Alexander, *The Swamp Outlaws of North Carolina: A Full Authentic and Thrilling History of the Adventures, exploits, Battles, and Ferocious Deeds of The Lowry Gang of Bandits*, (The Old Franklin Publishing House: Philadelphia, 1872), 17

⁶³ Richard Cooper, *Henry Berry Lowry: Rebel With a Cause*, (Creative Productions: Raleigh, 1985), 5.

⁶⁴ Dial, *The Only Land I Know*,

⁶⁵ Richard Slotkin, *The Gunfighter Nation: Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Maxwell Macmillan International: New York, 1992), 132.

death, the boys evaded conscription by hiding out in the swamps.

Harris kept an eye on the Lowry boys because they owed military service to the Confederate Government on the fortifications, but often escaped in the swamps. James Brantley Harris and the Lowry family had been quarrelling for years over conscription for the Civil War. The feud quickly escalated until there were deaths from each party involved. Fed up with The Lowry's avoiding work, Harris took four Lowrys by force. Harris came to Lowry's house and took three of Allen's boys. A *New York Herald* reporter stated "The next day, two of them were found dead, each having been shot, his throat cut, and his head beaten in with a pistol butt."⁶⁶ The third boy was able to escape while his two family members were being murdered, and took refuge in Henry Lowry's Cabin. He told Henry Lowry the accounts of what had happened to the other two men. To avenge this act, Henry and his brother Steve hunted down and killed Harris.

Just like these previous two examples, the murders in the Lowry War were part of a race war. One violent act was repaid with another and so on. Additionally, the local authorities, such as the Home Guard or later, the State Militia, were more invested in the outcomes of the Lowry War than the state officials or federal government

Keeping in mind that we cannot apply the laws and ethics of today to the past, it is important to note that many of the crimes committed by the white citizens against the Lumbee were not crimes at all, like the unofficial trial and murder of the two Lowrys. The Lumbee received no sympathy from the authorities when their people were murdered. This is the reason why Lowry had to take matters into his own. When the law

⁶⁶ C.W Alexander, *The Swamp Outlaws of North Carolina: A Full Authentic and Thrilling History of the Adventures, Exploits, Battles, and Ferocious Deeds of The Lowry Gang of Bandits*, 17.

engages in an act of injustice, revenge by means of banditry is the result.

Following the two murders of influential white men and after the onset of the Lowry War, the Lowry Gang was very much a threat to the white community of Robeson County. The Lowry Gang became high-profile bandits even with the end of the Civil War, the hunt for them continued. Some bounty hunters came to Robeson to find Lowry and collect the \$20,000 bounty on him, or the \$30,000 for the entire gang.

Lowry did what he could to intimidate those who came to Robeson County in hopes of capturing him and members of his gang. One story claims that Lowry amused himself by playing pranks on six men who came to Robeson to kill him. According to a South Carolina Newspaper, *The Daily Phoenix*, he scared the men by jumping out of bushes, “armed to the teeth with the information that he was the redoubtable Henry Berry Lowry. He told them they were fools if they came to Robeson County with the expectation of killing or capturing him, for it would never be done.”⁶⁷ What appears as a trick played by a bandit on the Confederates, was actually a clever strategy to get the word out to deter bounty hunters from coming to Robeson and interrupting Henry’s quest for vengeance.

But, with the promise of \$30,000 some men still ventured to Robeson County. One man, who came asking questions about where to find Henry Lowry, went by the name of Mr. Gillespie. Scuffletowners viewed newcomers with suspicion and always announced the stranger’s presence so that Lowry would know about them. Not long after he started looking, Mr. Gillespie was found dead. His fiancée, Miss Patton, from New

⁶⁷ September 9, 1871 “The North Carolina Outlaw-How Henry Lowry Amuses Himself” in *The Daily Phoenix* (Columbia: South Carolina).

Orleans was notified and she came to Robeson County to avenge his death. Her kidnapping was the only reported incident of a woman as a victim of Henry Lowry.

Lowry never attacked or injured women. Even his victims spoke of his courtesy to women.⁶⁸ However, there is one account where the Lowry Gang kidnapped a woman, who is only referred to as Miss Patton in all records. Miss Patton came to Robeson County in search for Mr. Gillespie's murderers. Upon her arrival, she gathered information about the culprits, who she learned was the Lowry Gang, and headed to Scuffletown to seek vengeance.

Upon confronting the Lowry Gang, Henry Lowry had taken in Miss Patton with his crew instead of harming her. Although the Lowry Gang kidnapped her, she was never in any danger, however. After she went to seek out Henry Lowry she tried to appeal to Lowry's sympathetic side and told him she was a fugitive from justice. Because he himself was fighting against a corrupt justice system, he welcomed Miss Patton into his home.

Instead of killing him outright, Miss Patton was confused by his charm and generosity and did not think that this man would have killed her soon to be husband. She told Lowry the real reason for her trip to Robeson County and wanted to kill the man responsible for murdering Mr. Gillespie. There had been a number of instances where men had been robbing and killing in the name of the Lowry Band, which increased the bad names of the bandits. Lowry knew one of these men and called upon him. This man, named Jake, did admit to killing Mr. Gillespie and Lowry forced him to return the stolen

⁶⁸Richard Cooper, *Henry Berry Lowry: Rebel With a Cause*, 39.

goods to Miss Patton.⁶⁹

Steve Lowry took out the murderer and thief and executed him. Miss Patton was thankful for the truth and the justice set upon the man guilty for Mr. Gillespie's death. When all affairs were taken care of in relation to Miss Patton, Lowry took her to the train station to send her on her way back to New Orleans. Before she left he told her to tell the people the real truth about us Lowrys. He told her:

When you get back among civilized folks again, just tell the people the real truth about us Lowrys. Tell them that we owned all this region originally, that when the war broke out, we was dragged away to work with the common slaves on the Confederate fortifications at Wilmington, and when we ran away and took to the swamps, our cabin was burned, our old gray haired father and brother was murdered, and our mother, the good old woman... was stood against a tree and pistols fired over her head, and she was forced to look at the butchery of her son. Tell the people that, on all them as was concerned in this we have been a taking revenge, and that we intend to keep on doing it at any chance we get. But, all the rest of the crimes that's laid to our charge, we did not do. Miss Patton, we never hurt nor insulted any lady, not even Steve's ever done that, and Steve's the roughest of the whole family. No! They drove us into the swamps and won't let us get away if they can help it. But you see they have the advantage as they can tell the people what they like about us, but we can't speak for ourselves.⁷⁰

What Henry Lowry told Miss Patton at the train station is so imperative for the argument of this paper. Because of the Lowry Gang's negative reputation among the whites, they regarded the Lowrys with fear and disgust. Those who had interaction with the Lowry Gang were slowly challenging that reputation. Although Lowry did commit

⁶⁹ Alexander, *The Swamp Outlaws of North Carolina: A Full Authentic and Thrilling History of the Adventures, Exploits, Battles, and Ferocious Deeds of The Lowry Gang of Bandits*, 30.

⁷⁰Ibid.

crimes, it was only on those who wronged him, and some had spread the word of Henry Lowry, like Miss Patton.

In addition to spreading the word about the truth about the Lowry Gang, Patton did not reveal any information that would assist in the hunt for Henry Lowry. She did not disclose the gang's whereabouts, and while many believed that there was an escape route in the back of Henry's cabin, Miss Patton claimed to have never seen any signs of such a convenient arrangement.⁷¹

Although Miss Patton was not Lumbee, she perpetuated the Lumbee version of the legend of Henry Lowry. A few newspapers, especially in the Northern Part of the United States, began to promote Lowry's fight against those who killed his family and sympathized with the bandit and the outlaw gang. In an article entitled, "Swamp Angels" a Montana newspaper attributed the Lowry War to the Lowry Gang organizing solely to avenge a father's brutal death.⁷²

While Lowry's reputation was spreading nation-wide, his war in Robeson County raged on. Even with the end of the Civil War, Lowry and his men were still at large. Although the Home Guard dissolved at the end of the Civil War, the threat of Henry Lowry and his gang still weighed-heavily on the minds of the people of Robeson County. As a result, a local militia was formed specifically to hunt down Henry Lowry. The man who led this militia was Colonel Francis Marion Wishart, a Confederate officer from Maxton, a city near Lumberton in Robeson County, N.C. He served in the Confederate

⁷¹ Alexander, *The Swamp Outlaws of North Carolina: A Full Authentic and Thrilling History of the Adventures, Exploits, Battles, and Ferocious Deeds of The Lowry Gang of Bandits*, 34.

⁷² September 22, 1889, "Swamp Angels" in *The Helena Independent*. (Helena, Mont.) 1875-1943. (www.chroniclingamerica.com) Accessed: January 15, 2014.

army during the Civil War and upon returning home from the war, had a strong sense of duty to hunt down Henry Lowry. In March 1871, he led a group of men who planned to rid Robeson County of the Lowry outlaws. The eleven men in Wishart's hunting-party were the few but brave men who were fighting to defend their state.⁷³ To these men, and to Wishart especially, the gang was a group of Indians that terrorized Robeson County.

To the white community, in a way, Wishart was like Henry Lowry and his men were like the Lowry Gang. Mary Norment spoke of Colonel Wishart as a kind of hero for their cause:

High on the "roll of honor" in the county of Robeson stands the name of Col. Frank M. Wishart — a man that would be noticed in any crowd on account of his showy appearance. He was an old Confederate officer, and served throughout the war between the States with credit to himself and honor to his native county....He possessed true nobleness of mind and a lofty magnanimity of character...he bore himself with dignity and disinterestedness, fearless of danger to his person or reputation. All honor to Frank M. Wishart for his noble example — all honor to his name for his exalted patriotism. True to his natural instincts, he joined the compact of those eleven self-sacrificing men who determined to rid Robeson County of the Lowrie (Lowry) Outlaws.⁷⁴

Norment suggests that Wishart was Lowry's opposite. He fought in the Civil War; he was patriotic, and honorable. But, in some ways Wishart and Lowry were the same. They were both fighting for reasons that their respective communities would think noble. Neither man cared about harm coming to themselves or their reputation, and both were heroes to their people.

⁷³ Mary Norment, *The Lowrie History: As Acted in Part by Henry Berry Lowrie*, 111.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Figure 6. Colonel Francis M. Wishart.
Source: Wishart Family Papers, Southern
Historical Collection, Wilson Library,
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

One major difference between Wishart and Lowry was that Lowry depended on word of mouth to carry on his legend, whereas Wishart helped craft his image by recording his experiences in a journal. Wishart was frustrated with the lack of progress in capturing the bandit. Wishart wrote; “When men refuse to do anything but talk... what can one man do? My God! If I only had the power I would discipline them and make them move.”⁷⁵ This statement is pretty telling. There is no doubt that

some people feared the bandit, but, were not motivated enough to stop him. He went on to write about how some men in his group never complained about their duties and were just as eager as he was to find the bandit. He concluded this same entry by claiming, “There are few of us who are determined never to SURRENDER this country to Henry Berry Lowry”⁷⁶ To Wishart, Henry was a villain and had to be brought to justice.

Colonel Wishart shot at Lowry several times, but always missed him, and once had him surrounded, but failed to capture him.⁷⁷ Despite Lowry and his Gang’s escape, Wishart was determined to capture Lowry and continued to pursue the bandit. On the morning of the July 10 1871, eighteen militiamen came across Henry Lowry floating down the Lumber River in a canoe. They waited until he drew near the landing and then

⁷⁵ Francis Marion Wishart Journal, 29 July 1871, Wishart Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection #4624, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ De Witt, *The Swamp Outlaws or North Carolina Bandits. Being a Complete history of the modern Rob Roys and robin hoods*, 18.

77

opened fire. The gunmen thought they had hit Lowry when his canoe tipped and he went in the water near the far side of the canoe. To their surprise, he was not dead, and came up firing his rifle. Using the thick hull of the canoe as a shield, he drove the militia from the bank to the woods until they finally retreated. Single-handed, Lowry had won what has become known as the Battle of Wire-Glass Landing.⁷⁸ After a series of encounters such as the two mentioned above, Wishart grew desperate to put an end to the Lowry War.

In an attempt to draw Henry Lowry out in the open, he and his men kidnapped all of the wives of the Lowry Band. In a series of raids all over Scuffletown, Wishart and his men arrested the wives of every known bandit, including Henry's wife Rhoda. That same day, the Lowry Band went to a local white citizen's house, Mr. McNair, fully armed and told him to write a message and deliver it to the authorities in Lumberton, where the women were taken. The message said, "Our wives are guilty of no crime except being married to us. If they are not released and sent home by next Monday morning, we will kidnap every wife of every leading citizen in the county and take them into the swamps with us."⁷⁹ In response to Lowry's demand, Wishart wrote in his journal, "I would see them in hell before I would release the wives."⁸⁰ Though Wishart and the sheriff were opposed to giving up the women to their husbands, public pressure to the contrary made them think otherwise. This was because Henry had threatened to carry off the white women to the swamps if the Indian women were not set free. The fearful citizens

⁷⁸ Ibid., 44.

⁷⁹ Alexander, *The Swamp Outlaws of North Carolina: A Full Authentic and Thrilling History of the Adventures, Exploits, Battles, and Ferocious Deeds of The Lowry Gang of Bandits*, 44.

⁸⁰ Francis Marion Wishart Journal, 14 July 1871, Wishart Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection #4624, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

convinced Sheriff McMillan and Colonel Wishart to release the outlaws' wives.⁸¹

With his failed attempt at coercing Lowry out with the capture of the Gang's wives, the war continued. But, the day the fight against the Lowry Gang came to an end for Colonel Wishart was on May 23, 1872. A few days before his death, Colonel Wishart met Steve Lowry and Andrew Strong unexpectedly at Moss Neck Station. They approached the man, and after they assured Wishart they meant him no harm, Andrew told him that Lowry wanted to meet Wishart and discuss their situation with the Lowry War. Wishart agreed to meet Lowry and a few days later a messenger came and told Wishart where to meet Lowry. Although there was nothing documented about their encounter, it is clear that Wishart was tricked by the outlaws and brutally murdered, because he was found with two gunshot wounds to his body and head.⁸²

The death of Wishart outraged the whites. Just as the Lowry Gang formed to avenge the death of Henry's family and the oppression of the Lumbee, a small hunting party formed to avenge the death of Colonel Wishart. With the death of the leading member of the fight against Lowry, it can be assumed that the hunt for the outlaw would end. But, Wishart left behind a legacy due to his personality and presence in the white community. After word reached Colonel Wishart's brothers, they recruited other men bent on winning the fight against the Lowry Bandits. The night they achieved their vengeance was on July 17th when they killed Thomas Lowry, Henry's brother. After the Wishart brothers received information about the whereabouts of Tom Lowry, they hunted him down and shot him to his death. For the killing of this bandit, the Wisharts received

⁸¹ The Robesonian, Lumberton, NC. Page 5c September 25, 1994.

⁸² Norment, *The Lowrie History: As Acted in Part By Henry Berry Lowrie*, 125.

\$6,000 from the state treasury as a reward for killing Tom Lowry.⁸³

The eleven men who hunted Lowry under Colonel Wishart echoed the mission of Lowry Gang. They were fighting for what they thought was right. To the militia, they saw innocent members of the white community being robbed and murdered by a band of irrational and belligerent Indians. First the Home Guard, and then Wishart's men, believed they were protecting their people from bandits. On the other hand, these were not traditional bandits. The Lowry Gang was fighting with a purpose and with guidelines. The Lowry Gang never killed those who did not wrong them, never robbed any man who could not afford it, and never harmed any woman. The Lowry Gang followed and supported Henry Lowry, who wanted to avenge the murder of his father and brother.

The last known act of the Lowry War by Henry Lowry was In February of 1872. Henry Lowry disappeared in 1872 after the robbery of the sheriff's office and Pope and McLeod's store in Lumberton. Among the gang's plunders, they obtained several hundreds of dollars worth of supplies and \$20,000 in cash. What is interesting about this incident is that the bounty for Lowry and his gang was a total of \$20,000. The money in the safe could have very well been the money for the bounty. Lowry ended his career as

Figure 7: Wishart Brother's Killing. With the body of Tom Lowry at their feet. Source: Wishart Family Papers, Southern Historical collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁸³ Melinda Maynor Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South: Race, Identity, and the Making of a Nation* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 2010), 5.

an outlaw with the money meant for his death or capture. This was the last event of the Lowry War and Henry Lowry was never heard from again.

His mysterious disappearance adds to the drama and legacy of Henry Lowry. There are conflicting theories as to what happened to Henry Lowry at the end of the Lowry war. A Southern newspaper reported that there were vague rumors coming from North Carolina that Henry Lowry of the Lowry Gang either shot himself accidentally or fled the country.⁸⁴ Either way, his life as an outlaw was over. It has been estimated that Lowry had accrued \$60,000 through his robberies. Given his reservations about putting his family in danger, and given the incident with Wishart and the kidnapping of the wives, it is likely Henry planned his departure to ensure the safety of his family.

The speculation of a planned disappearance is supported by accounts found in a series of articles about Henry Lowry published by the *New York Herald*. In the articles, the reporter claimed the first part of Lowry's plan was to spread a rumor about that the outlaw chief had accidentally killed himself while out hunting, by the accidental discharge of his gun.⁸⁵ The story circulated and allowed Lowry to escape from Robeson County without officials searching for him.

The legend of Lowry's disappearance was the topic of much discussion in Robeson. A man living in Robeson told the *Herald* reporter, in regards to the vanishing of Henry Lowry, "What makes the mystery more complicated is the fact, that only a short time ago a report prevailed in Robeson County that Lowry had been seen again in the

⁸⁴ March 18, 1872, "Henry Berry Lowry" in *The Memphis Daily Appeal*. (Memphis, Tenn.). (www.chroniclingamerica.com) Accessed: April 23, 2014.

⁸⁵ Alexander, *The Swamp Outlaws of North Carolina: A Full Authentic and Thrilling History of the Adventures, Exploits, Battles, and Ferocious Deeds of The Lowry Gang of Bandits*, 57.

swamps.”⁸⁶ There was such an emotional tie to Lowry by so many, that they saw what they wanted to believe and were not ready to let go of what he stood for, Lumbee pride. This is why his legend of Henry Lowry is such a powerful one.

Henry Lowry’s disappearance is essential for the impact of his legend. A hero leaving the story at a critical moment keeps himself relevant. Having vanished from Robeson County, it allowed for people to make up rumors about his sudden departure. Thus began the creation and perpetuation of his legend and ultimately the beginning of a cultural pride movement among the Lumbee.

What can be drawn about Lowry’s disappearance is that even though the man was gone from the Lumbee community and Robeson County, his legend remained. It was his legend that asserted Lumbee identity nationally, and that was the driving force behind the fight of the Lumbee community to become a federally recognized tribe. The National attention Lowry brought to the Lumbee in North Carolina helped put their issues of oppression and losing their rights in the spotlight. Lowry’s fight inspired the Lumbee Indians as a whole to stand up for their heritage and identity. With the help of Henry Lowry, the Lumbee began the long journey of becoming a federally recognized tribe.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 58.

Chapter 3: The Legend Makes an Impact

“Seek wisdom, not knowledge. Knowledge is of the past, Wisdom is of the future”

-Lumbee Proverb

The life and war of Henry Lowry may have been exaggerated when perpetuated by the Lumbee people. But, that is because a greater lesson could be learned from it. The lesson teaches about courage to stand up against oppression and have pride in your people and heritage. Like the Lumbee proverb states, wisdom will benefit your future. And it is wisdom that is gained through the retelling of the legend of Henry Lowry through the Lumbee perspective. The values and emotions that Henry Lowry’s fight inspired in the Lumbee people made an impact on their identity at a local and national level.

After losing their rights due to their lack of federal recognition as Indians in the Civil War, and living through the many years of oppression, the Lumbee came out of the Lowry War ready to continue the fight. The Lumbee began officially working for their federally recognized status in 1888. The Lumbee had been subject to white oppression since the loss of their racial status years before the Civil War and continued to face oppression during and after the Civil War. Henry Lowry and his gang fought their oppressors in the Lowry War. The Lowry War served as an inspiration for the Lumbee people to continue the fight against oppression. The first of many instances where Lowry’s legend inspired Lumbee pride is by the Lumbee working for and reclaiming their identity by being federally recognized as an official Native American Tribe.

The task of federal recognition was not easy. But, the racial and cultural pride

demonstrated in the Lowry War provided the Lumbee with the appropriate inspiration to endure the sixty-eight year fight for federal recognized status. The Lumbee had encountered strong resistance from those in the legal position to name the Lumbee as an Indian Tribe.⁸⁷ Finally, in 1956 the United States Congress passed the Lumbee Act and they are now recognized as the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina.⁸⁸ As mentioned before, the Lumbee had no traditional dress, language, or a common memory with the rest of the Native American Tribes. But, with Henry Lowry serving as a cultural icon, the Lumbee had developed their own traditions and had a new and unique memory of a time when they fought against oppression and gained recognition.

In addition to their legal status, Henry Lowry had an impact on the culture of the Lumbee community. He fought against the Lumbee's oppressors in a time when the Lumbee were losing their land to whites, losing their rights, and were subjects of violence and slave-like labor in the Confederate forts. Henry Lowry and his legend symbolized Lumbee pride, and the hopes and aspirations of all Lumbee Indians.⁸⁹ His image and legend created a cultural icon for the Lumbee to admire and emulate. To celebrate his memory, a tradition started in the early 1970s where the Lumbee presented an individual in their community who best exemplified the highest standard of service to the community with the Henry Berry Lowrie (Lowry) Award.⁹⁰ The Lumbee Indian who would be nominated for this award demonstrated pride in the Indian heritage and background, worked diligently against racial injustices, and was an advocate for Indian

⁸⁷ Alexander, *The Swamp Outlaws of North Carolina: A Full Authentic and Thrilling History of the Adventures, Exploits, Battles, and Ferocious Deeds of The Lowry Gang of Bandits*, 58.

⁸⁸ United States. Congress. House Committee on Natural Resources. *HR 65 - Lumbee Recognition Act - U.S. House Bill*. By Committee on Natural Resources. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 May 2013.

⁸⁹ Blu, *The Lumbee Problem*, 155.

⁹⁰ Laurence Hauptman, *Between Two Fires: American Indians in the Civil War*, 85.

people under a dominant society.⁹¹ Just like Henry Lowry, the recipient fought against racial injustices. This alone proves how Henry's legend of fighting oppression fueled Lumbee pride in subsequent eras.

All of the qualities of a Henry Berry Lowry Award winner were all attributes that Henry Lowry stood for. He had pride in being a Lumbee and proved so by willing to die for his family and fellow Lumbee. He fought against the racial injustices of the whites and redistributed his wealth. He stood up for the Lumbee when they were part of a dominant white community and held no strong position in that society. These are all reasons why Henry Lowry's legend lived on and was perpetuated by the Lumbee people. This heroic icon served as an inspiration for Lumbee people and his image serves as the guidelines for an ideal Lumbee citizen.

Furthermore, the Lumbee continued to exercise their cultural pride and assert their identity by honoring Henry Lowry through the arts. For instance, The Lumbee commemorated Lowry's legend in an outdoor play called, "Strike at the Wind." It first premiered in 1976 at the Indian Cultural Center in Lumberton and lasted until 2007.⁹² The play was held in an outdoor theater near the relocated home of Henry Berry Lowry. Road signs throughout Lumberton directed people toward the play with arrows followed by the words "Strike at the Wind-Outdoor Play." The play covered all aspects of the Lowry War and Henry Lowry. The pride the actors and the audience had when viewing the play was so apparent, an article about the play in *The Mississippi Quarterly* claimed "The play became both a source of local pride and a way for the Lumbees to assert their

⁹¹ Blu, *The Lumbee Problem*, 155.

⁹² Ben Steelman, 'Strike at the Wind' Play depicts exploits of N.C Robin Hood, *Wilmington Morning Star*, July 3, 1987.

Indian cultural and racial identity to others.”⁹³ The statement in this article supports the claim in this thesis, that Henry Lowry’s legend provided a way for the Lumbee people to assert their culture and identity.

Willie French Lowry, an influential member of the Lumbee Tribe and locally famous musician, spoke about the cultural importance of the “Strike at the Wind” play. He said, “It raised awareness about things.... Our culture. Our existence. Our presence and our being there was a fight and a struggle. That’s where Henry Berry came in.”⁹⁴ Here, Willie French is recognizing the importance of Henry Lowry’s fight during a time of oppression for the Lumbee. And he is also stating the significance of the play and how it benefits the Lumbee people in modern times. Willie French Lowry went on to contribute his own works of art to supporting Lowry’s legend. He created a folk song entitled, “Henry Berry Lowry is My Hero.” According to a website created by teachers and students of Lumbee history, in this song “Willie tells the story of the cultural hero Henry Berry Lowery who stood up against external oppression during the Civil War era. Willie saw Henry Berry as “‘the king of the kings,’ and he was proud of the fact that he helped to pass his story along.”⁹⁵ Willie French Lowry proves that the legend of the Lowry War was and is being passed down by Lumbees and to show how Henry Lowry fought oppression to inspire Lumbee pride.

It is important to note that the Lumbee’s history does not only involve the Lowry War and the events leading up to it. The Lumbee have a vast and complex history outside

⁹³ Christopher Arris Oakley, “The Legend of Henry Berry Lowry: Strike at the Wind and the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina,” *The Mississippi Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 59.

⁹⁴ Michael C. Taylor, “Hello America: The Life and Work of Willie French Lowery,” *Southern Cultures* (Fall 2010): 100.

⁹⁵ “Willie’s Heritage and Legacy.” Lumbee History. Accessed July 25, 2014. http://lumbeehistory.com/?page_id=227.

of the years 1864-1872. But, the Lumbee people perpetuated the legend of the Lowry War throughout the subsequent years and provided a folk hero and a story that gave the Lumbee people a way to assert their existing sense of pride and identity. This cultural pride was demonstrated through plays, music, like the folk-song “Henry Lowry is my Hero” by Willie French Lowrie, events, and awards celebrating Henry Lowry. Henry Lowry is no doubt an important icon and legend. Although the Lowry War inspired the fight against the oppressive powers hindering Lumbee identity and culture during the 1800s, the Lumbee’s history is vast and does not revolve around one man.

Figure 8. North Carolina Indian Cultural Center Sign. By K. Thoreson

In modern days, the sense of Lumbee pride is so strong, that they have found new and different ways to assert their identity, a current visitor to Robeson County, the setting of the Lowry War, would argue that Henry

Lowry does not seem as prevalent to the

Lumbee people as he once was. This does

not mean the legend of Henry Lowry did not play a vital part in where the Lumbee people are today. Some of the ways the Lumbee honored Henry Lowry are not practiced today, in the year 2014. However, to those that question if Henry Lowry was not and is not prevalent in current Lumbee identity, the answer is that his legend has served its purpose.

The Lowry Legend helped the Lumbee to assert their culture and identity and inspire the Lumbee people to continue to fight against their oppressors in the years that

followed the Lowry War. But, in the Twenty-first century, the Lumbee people no longer need the specific legend of Henry Lowry as their driving force of Lumbee pride. When people need a legend, they find ways to make it endure. The Lumbee had the legend of Lowry survive through portraying his life through the Strike at the Wind play, commemorating him with awards, and songs. But, today, when his legend is no longer needed to inspire pride within a people, the play is no longer in production.

The location of the drama took place in the Indian Cultural Center in Pembroke, NC. The Indian Cultural Center was dedicated to conserving Lumbee history, specifically that of Henry Lowry. The Center had the refurbished Cabin of Henry Lowry. Today, as you drive up to the Indian Cultural sign, there is graffiti covering it.

Figure 9. Gated North Carolina Indian Cultural Center Entrance. By K. Thoreson

The entrance to the Indian Cultural Center is gated up and closed. This center was indicated to keeping the legend of Henry Lowry alive. From plays, his cabin, and museum exhibits, Henry Lowry was a main attraction. Now, any visitor to this location would have no knowledge of what lays beyond these gates.

But this is not to say that Henry Lowry is still not a cultural hero. Lowry is still

apparent in museums, such as the Museum of the Native American Resource Center at the University of North Carolina, Pembroke and the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh. The items in the Pembroke museum are a rifle used by Henry Lowry and several pieces of art that have been created in remembrance of Henry Lowry. The other location with Lowry War memorabilia, the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh, houses the pistol and ammo case used by Tom Lowry that was recovered by the Wishart men who killed him.

As mentioned above, Henry Lowry is inserted in histories about the Lumbee people. This shows that he is and was an important figure to the Lumbee. However, as he lives on in academia and artifacts in museums, he no longer is celebrated in plays and events. The closing of the cultural center and the play suggest that the Lumbee no longer need Henry Lowry to assert their identity. The Lumbee show pride in their heritage in other ways.

Each year the Lumbee have an annual homecoming where they celebrate their history with dances, music, food, and a Miss Lumbee Pageant. In addition to these celebrations, there are many “Lumbee Pride” websites, and social media sites, like Pinterest and Twitter and a large number of tattoos that show Lumbee pride, the links can be found on the accompanying website to this thesis. This proves that legends are essential for the benefit of a culture, but as soon as the legend has served its purpose, it is no longer needed. The Lowry Legend may not be prevalent in the way it used to be in the 1800-1900s, but Lumbee people have gained pride in their culture and identity that stems from the sense of pride demonstrated when Henry Lowry fought against the white oppressors.

Conclusion

In the world's history there have at times arisen men and women who have become celebrated in song and story for their deeds of blood and rapine. Too often the imagination of the romancer has lent an illusive cloaking to these sanguinary beings, and also thrown it around their characters like a glittering garment, attractive to the eye of the unthinking.⁹⁶

This statement written by a *New York Herald* Reporter about the Lowry War defines what has happened with the recollection of the events in this particular era in history. Henry Lowry and his gang did carry out some gruesome murders and robbed many people in Robeson County. But, the circumstances in which they committed these crimes, and the emotional story tugging at the heartstrings of anyone who has felt the sting of injustice, the struggles of oppression, or have lost a family member, served as the “glittering garment” justified these crimes.

Adolph Dial, historian and a Lumbee Indian, writes “While the name Henry Lowry meant lawlessness and terror to the white community, it meant more truly a man who fought oppression, to the Indians.”⁹⁷ In this statement, he says that even though there are two viewpoints to one event, one perspective is more important than the other because of its implications. Because of Henry Lowry and what he stood for mattered more to the Lumbee than the fear and hatred the white community had of this man, the Lumbee perspective remained prevalent.

The Lumbee people experienced drastic changes in identity because of their

⁹⁶Alexander, *The Swamp Outlaws of North Carolina: A Full Authentic and Thrilling History of the Adventures, Exploits, Battles, and Ferocious Deeds of The Lowry Gang of Bandits*, 1.

⁹⁷ Dial, *The Only Land I know*, 86.

undetermined origin. They have been referred to as Croatan, Tuscarora, Cherokee, and Cheraw Indians. Oral traditions have also connected the Lumbee to the Hattera, Tuscarora, Saponi, Cheraw, Waccamaw, and Peedee tribes.⁹⁸ Furthermore, the complex past of the Lumbee's origin resulted in federal recognition as a tribe.

Because the Federal Government did not recognize Lumbee as a Native American Tribe in the nineteenth century, they were labeled as free-persons of color. Some Lumbees did own slaves, like James Lowry, Henry's grandfather. During the time before and during the Lowry War being a slave was viewed as the lowest level of the racial hierarchy and being associated with slaves meant racial diminishment for the Lumbee.⁹⁹ This is what happened to the Lumbee when they were forced to do slave's work in the Civil War. These instances, among other reasons described in previous sections, is why the Lumbee had to fight for their own identity. Henry Lowry helped the Lumbee people assert their identity. Lowry fought against oppression and gave back to his people, not just money during the time of the Lowry War, but something priceless that lasted for years to come, cultural pride.

This thesis has argued that legends exist to the benefit a culture. As long as the legend is needed by that culture, it will live on. We have also seen that historical events, like the Lowry War, where legends are created have multiple perspectives.

Since this thesis presents the perspectives, the oppressors and those being oppressed, it is apparent that the legend formed out of the Lowry War helped the Lumbee

⁹⁸ Melinda Maynor Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South: Race, Identity, and the Making of a Nation*, 5.

⁹⁹ In their early settlement along the LumbeR River, the Lumbee were well established and had settled towns in which they owned slaves and livestock. (Gerald Sider, *Living Indian Histories: The Lumbee and Tuscarora People in North Carolina*, 89).

proclaim their pride. In the case of Henry Lowry, the Lumbees needed the legend of Henry Lowry more than the white community needed to use Lowry to condemn banditry.

If the Confederate account of this legend dominated the historical memory of the Lowry War, it would change the trajectory of the Lumbee people's identity. There were several reasons why it was not dominant. A few were because the Confederate and white population's goal to stop the bandit was only one of many problems the Confederacy had to face during the time of the Civil War and reconstruction. Additionally, the Confederate/white perspective buckled due to its unstable foundation. Some citizens were divided on how they felt about the bandit. Some lashed out on the Lowry Gang in such a manner where they could easily become viewed as the villain, like James Brantley Harris.

The Lumbee perspective portrayed Lowry as a man fighting for a cause. There was a sense of emotion tied to the Lumbee perspective which the Confederate viewpoint lacked. Although the legends that were derived from Henry Lowry's actions served their purpose, the legend is beginning to fade.

Through the Lowry War, Henry Lowry left behind a legend to remind the Lumbee and their oppressors of a time when the Lumbee fought against their tormentors and for their identity. Since the Lumbee Indians affirmed their identity through the Lowry War and continued to do so with the legend of Henry Lowry, their voice is dominant in the perpetuation of the legend. Henry Lowry's legend gave the Lumbee population an icon and a story to affirm their identity to the white population of Robeson County, North Carolina throughout the nineteenth century.

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