

Social Problems of the Era

However, "gilded" the age was, Port Jervis was not without its share of problems during this time. The city reflected the nation at large in its racial and nationalistic feelings. On June 2, 1892, Robert Lewis was lynched before a crowd that some say may have numbered several thousand on East Main Street in front of the Baptist Church. News of this black man's tragic death, punishment for a rape he may not have committed spread throughout the nation, and for several days news regarding the lynching captivatd the nation's interest. The case was left "resolved" when a special jury was convened and no one could be charged with a crime.

The Lewis lynching, one of only three ever in Orange County, was an extremely rare occurrence for a northern state. The incident once again reared its ugly head in an article entitled "The Day of the Lynching" that appeared in the magazine "Saga" in April 1955 in which the whole event was graphically described. Even to this day, the incident is spoken about in hushed tones.

The Klu Klux Klan, with its slogans of racial hate, religious bigotry and strong nationalism also had a substantial following in the Tri-State area and crosses were burned at the top of Point Peter to the horror of many. Regularly scheduled parades of Klan members were conducted along the same route as firemen's parades of the period.