

# Relative of Oscarville resident shares history behind the city underneath Lake Lanier

The community was destroyed by an angry racist mob, and now this history is the subject of two films.

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GAINESVILLE, Ga. — Lake Lanier is a Georgia landmark, but before it became part of the state's landscape there was the town of Oscarville.

It was formed in the late 1800s during the [Reconstruction era](#). Georgia history teacher Lisa Crosby said Oscarville was a thriving Black community full of carpenters, blacksmiths, and bricklayers, with farming as the top trade.

"They had a miraculous farming growth here while the rest of the state was really struggling," she said.

That was the case until 1912, when Mae Crow, a 19-year-old white woman, was found dead in the woods near Oscarville, presumably after being raped.

"Typically, the answer to white girls being raped was to go to the Black communities and start blaming people," Crosby said.



*Credit: Rucker*  
Story of Oscarville

When nightfall came, terror began to reign over Oscarville; Crosby said mobs came together called night riders, and they drove the Black community out.

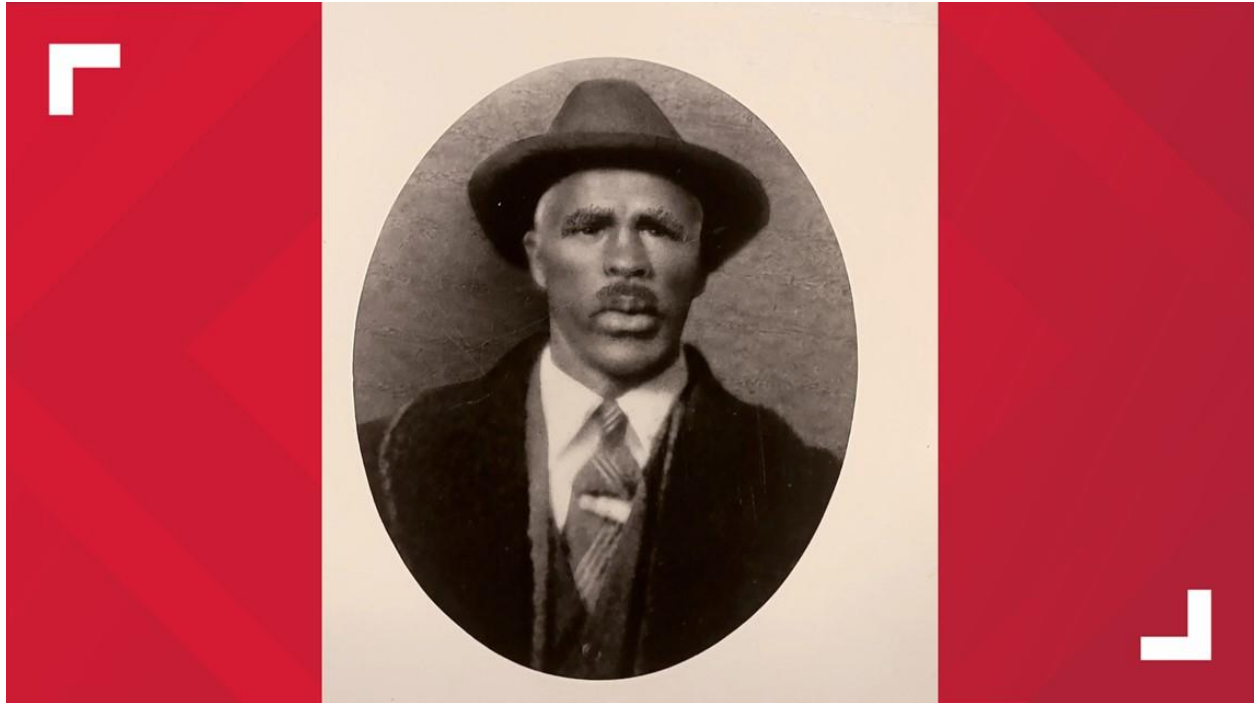
[Filmmaker Bob Mackey](#), who is capturing those horrendous nights in an upcoming television series, said the night turned deadly.

"They were wakened up by fires outside, firebombs thrown in the church," he said. "The church was the centerfold of the community so anytime something happened, guess where everyone would go? To the church," he said. " Well, they attacked the church where everyone was resting for a sense of protection."

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After the destruction, in the late 1950s, the Buford Dam was built, and Lake Lanier was formed, covering up Oscarville and swallowing most of its history. Many people died during the attack trying to get to Gainesville.

George Rucker, a direct descendant who has traced his lineage four generations back to Oscarville, told the story of his great-grandfather, Byrd Oliver and how their entire family was forced off their land.



*Credit: Rucker*  
**Story of Oscarville**

"When the night riders came through, they had to leave everything," he said. "The main thing they left was property and my grandfather had 100 acres."

Rucker said his family headed for the Chattahoochee River with an angry mob behind them. He said when the mob got to the bridge where they were, they had two options, "they either had to swim or drown."

"Most of them didn't make it," he said. "My grandfather is one of them that did make it. He lost some brothers and sisters."

He said his mother would tell him whenever Oliver recalled the nights, he just sat and cried.

His relatives who survived settled in Gainesville. Rucker said his great grandfather married his second wife, Beulah, and they built [Beulah Rucker House-School](#), which still stands in Gainesville.



*Credit: Rucker*  
**Story of Oscarville**

Crosby said whites in the area took over the remaining properties.

Oscarville farmers were specifically skilled in raising poultry, Crosby said, which set the pace for Gainesville eventually becoming the poultry capital of the world.

Other moviemakers are also sharing the story of Oscarville. Executive producers William Eric Bush-Anderson, Cindy Kunz-Anderson, and Ali Ashtigo are working on a project about Lake Lanier.

"It's a super important story, and I think a lot of people wanted it to be told as well," Bush-Anderson said. "Because there is another Black Wall Street before it was taken away."



Their film, with Ashtigo as the lead actor, will have a horror and thriller spin to it. "There's a big audience for horror, it's a different way to shine light on something that a lot of people deny to this day," Kunz-Anderson said.

The filmmakers emphasize that their approach is not a gimmick, but a way to draw attention to the purpose.

"Doing the movie the way we will be portraying it will be more of a wake-up call and that's our goal," Ashtigo said.

They will continue to work on the film and they hope to release it in 2023.



As for Lake Lanier now, many people believe it's haunted because of the high number of drownings that occur there. Officials said that there is an entire town that includes structures and even forest areas with trees that are 60 feet tall. It makes it more challenging to navigate through the lake. They said someone can quickly become trapped in debris, causing them to drown.