

## ABSTRACT

### A COMMUNITY DIVIDED: VISALIA, CALIFORNIA 1852-1940

The term “racial frontier” often describes the interaction between minority groups and the white majority. Yet in certain cases, a racial frontier can also suggest a division between members of a white community. Such a situation existed in Visalia, California, between 1852 and 1940. During these years, members of a predominantly white community disagreed about their racial ideologies, forging two distinct camps regarding events such as the Civil War and later the second rising of the Ku Klux Klan. The Civil War era revealed a strong pro-Confederate presence in Visalia, including a pro-Southern newspaper. However, a counter-culture also existed in the town, one that rallied behind the Union cause and supported federal troops sent to supervise the unruly “Secesh” community. The dichotomy that existed in Visalia exposes a new racial frontier where the white community is not homogeneous, but rather divided within itself. The differences within this community, particularly regarding the wielding of power in Visalia, directly affect the formation of its racial ideology.

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