

Student's Name

Professor's Name

Course Name/Code

Date

The Footnote

The footnote was on page four of a history textbook. It said, in eleven words, that a town in my county had been a sundown town until 1968.

I had grown up in that county. I had never heard this. I was sixteen.

The footnote did not explain what a sundown town was. I looked it up, and then spent the next three months reading every source I could find about the geography of racial exclusion in the postwar United States: how restrictive covenants worked, how real estate practices shaped school district boundaries, how the physical structure of a region I thought I understood had been deliberately designed in ways I had never been taught. I started building a timeline for my county, cross-referencing census data, newspaper archives, and a collection of oral histories housed at the state historical society.

I have not finished that project. I am still not finished. Every source opens three more questions. I now have a folder of primary documents, a list of people I want to interview, and a clearer understanding that the history of a place is never finished being written. It is only paused while someone finds the time to continue.

The honors program at [University] offers the kind of sustained intellectual engagement I have been trying to build on my own: the seminars, the thesis track, the expectation that a question worth asking is worth spending years on. I want to be in a place where that approach to learning is the norm. The footnote sent me somewhere I was not expecting to go. I intend to keep following it.