

West Edwards Days: African Americans in Territorial Edmond



*By Christopher P. Lehman**

West Edwards Street in Edmond, Oklahoma, is about five hundred feet in length from west to east, but that short street contains a rich history. When African Americans first owned real estate in Edmond during Oklahoma's territorial years, they made West Edwards Street the foundation of their community. Many of them worshipped at an African American church there, and their children received an education at the city's segregated school down the street. People from Edmond and its neighboring townships worked during the 1890s and 1900s to develop the city's African American community and its institutions. However, like most African American communities in territorial Oklahoma, besides the All-Black towns, African American West Edwards disintegrated in the first decade of the twentieth century. African American residents fled Edmond as Oklahoma's government officials increasingly imposed segregation upon them, and their institutions fell into disarray. European American residents of

the city subsequently purchased the abandoned community's homes, church, and school. By the 1920s the Ku Klux Klan established a presence in the city, and no African Americans owned real estate there. Nearly all traces of African American West Edwards vanished.¹

In its short life, Edmond's African American community thrived in ways that distinguished it from Oklahoma Territory's other African American settlements. Edmond's settlement peaked at around fifty residents during Oklahoma's territorial years—a much smaller number than the thousands comprising African American communities in the major cities Guthrie and Oklahoma City, or the hundreds in All-Black towns such as Langston. Nevertheless, African American Edmondites operated their own school and church for most of that period. Also, most of African American Edmond could read and write, and the community gained a reputation citywide for its literacy. The European American Edmondites in charge of the city's newspapers published advertisements that the community wrote for its own residents to read; for example, the local press reported upcoming gatherings among African Americans for celebrations such as anniversaries of the Emancipation Proclamation and fundraisers like the local African American school's social gathering for a new library at the facility.

Most importantly, African Americans in neighboring communities committed themselves to helping Edmond's African American community survive. The existence of African American West Edwards, therefore, testified to the strong solidarity among African Americans throughout central Oklahoma during the territorial era. African Americans in nearby small towns as well as in Guthrie and Oklahoma City held major events in Edmond and attended events that African American Edmondites staged.² The education of the residents and the communal effort of African American Oklahomans sustained African American West Edwards until segregation proved too powerful for it.

The majority of African American Edmondites were former residents of Kansas. Their parents had come to that state decades earlier as illiterate agricultural laborers. These migrants, although free, were not yet citizens when legal slavery ended nationwide in 1865, and they had to define freedom for themselves in the absence of civil rights. As a result, freedom for them simply meant living as differently from slavery as possible, even in a geographic sense. For African Americans deserting the westernmost former slave states like Missouri and Louisiana, Kansas was the closest state without a history of legal slavery or of existence as a Confederate state during the Civil War.³

The parents of the future African American Edmondites had wealth, enabling them to travel across the country to escape the South, and in

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Kansas they invested in building new homes and in creating resources for their new communities. They established and maintained independent farms in Kansas. They also developed their own churches and other social institutions, and they started schools for their children. Segregation in Kansas limited their potential for advancement. However, the children of Reconstruction-era migrants took their inherited wealth, their education, and their experiences in organizing with them when they departed to Oklahoma.⁴

These new migrants were different from those of previous generations. By 1890 slavery had been illegal nationwide for twenty-five years, and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the US Constitution established citizenship for African Americans by 1870. As a result, African American Oklahomans had spent nearly their entire lives in free citizenship. As children they saw their elders take advantage of new access to education, property, and the right to vote. On the other hand, they saw voter suppression, the creation of new segregation laws, and violent vigilantism against their families for advancing too quickly during those years. In contrast, as a federal territory instead of a state, Oklahoma had not yet established any local segregation laws. African Americans moved there to take advantage of its territorial status and hoped to keep Jim Crow away from Oklahoma for as long as possible, if not permanently.⁵

Edmond did not immediately attract African Americans. Fifty thousand European Americans comprised the overwhelming majority of settlers of Oklahoma's Land Run in 1889, but about 2,600 African American farmers, ministers, and educators made their way to Oklahoma by the following year. Many of them developed new towns exclusively for African American residents after reading newspaper accounts or hearing stories about Oklahoma as a land where African Americans could live only among themselves. Langston, which was founded in 1890, was one such All-Black town. Also, through their experience in farming, the migrants stood to potentially benefit from the territory's agricultural economy. Consequently, Oklahoma's urban communities with sizable European American populations did not attract as many African Americans. Fewer than half (about one thousand) of the territory's African American newcomers comprised the cumulative African American populations of Guthrie and Oklahoma City, and in 1890 no African Americans lived in the city of Edmond.⁶

African Americans began moving to Edmond in 1891, but they did not develop into a self-sustaining community. Although preachers and teachers were among Oklahoma's African Americans, they did not settle in Edmond. The majority of African American Edmondites

were farmers and domestic workers. Only one minister briefly lived in the community, and no African American educators resided there full-time. As a result, African American Edmondites relied heavily on African Americans from outside the city to build the community's institutions and to maintain its vitality. Oklahoma County created the community's school and supplied it with teachers from out of town, and an African American from outside Edmond helped establish the community's church.⁷

In 1891 Bird and Nancy Gee were the first African Americans to invest in real estate in Edmond. Bird was born in the slave state of Missouri and barely reached adulthood when legal slavery ended in 1865. On the other hand, he came from a family of means, because his parents had wealth after emancipation. In 1870 in Kansas, they owned real estate worth \$600 and had a personal estate of \$700. Years after Bird and Nancy married in 1886, the couple left Kansas for Oklahoma and resided in Springer—a township in Oklahoma County. Their purchases of lots in Blocks 60 and 76 in Edmond led to claims in those blocks from more African Americans for the remainder of the territorial period.⁸

Other African Americans from Kansas settled together along Main Street in Edmond. Alexander and Ellen Yarbrough bought one lot in Block 58, and they made their home at 113 East Main. Originally from North Carolina, Alexander was fifteen years old when slavery ended in the United States in 1865, and he relocated to Kansas in the 1870s. Meanwhile, two large families in Edmond—the Estes and the Reeces—were close neighbors on Block 78. The former family lived at 223 West Main, the latter at 203 West Main. In addition, both families were among the first African Americans to claim land in present-day Oklahoma. They had lived in the predominately African American township of Lincoln in 1890 before moving to Edmond, thus expanding the presence of African Americans in central Oklahoma beyond the All-Black towns.⁹

African Americans also came to Edmond directly from the South, but mostly from one extended family. Lacking the wealth of the migrants from Kansas, they had lived in the South as sharecroppers during Reconstruction and did not leave until segregation intensified and lynching became more frequent. By the 1890s, two to three African American southerners were lynched per week. David and Caroline Veasy bought the Gees' lots in Block 76 in 1892. The Veasys made their home there at 211 South Santa Fe Street. David and the former Caroline Dooley had survived slavery in Mississippi; emancipation came during their teenage years. At first the couple resided near Caroline's

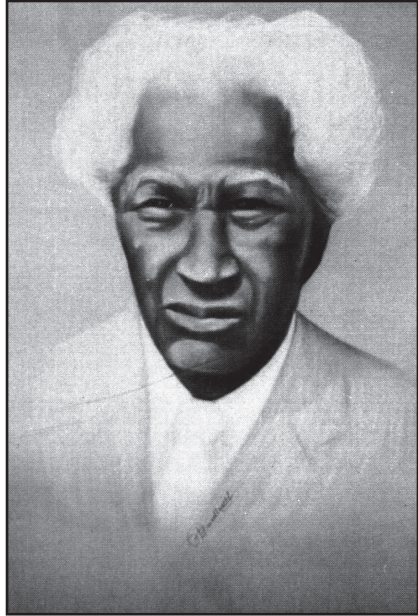
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family in DeSoto County, Mississippi, and their neighbors were the recently freed Goosby family. By 1880 the Veasys, Dooleys, and Goosbys moved to Tate County, Mississippi, and remained there until relocating together to Edmond in the 1890s.¹⁰

Meanwhile, Block 60 developed into a neighborhood of people of diverse household structures, vocations, and regions. Widowed mother Martha McMullen raised her children in the states of Georgia and Texas before moving with them to Edmond. Robert Sweatman, a laborer born in Alabama, lived on 318 East First Street. A blacksmith named Andrew Signer, born in the northern state of Pennsylvania, resided in Missouri in the 1880s and 1890s before moving to Block 60 in Edmond. He occasionally advertised his business in one of the city's newspapers. He provided the services of laying plows, placing buggy tires, and shoeing horses. His business was in the first door to the south of Broad Street's post office.¹¹

After the first year of African American settlement in Edmond, local government invested in educating the community's children but on a segregated basis. The Oklahoma County commissioners purchased two adjacent lots in Block 2 on August 3, 1892, "conveyed for colored school purposes," according to the deed. Classes began the following month, and K. S. Smith served as the instructor. About two dozen African American students enrolled in the school each year. Smith offered courses in arithmetic, geography, and physiology, and the school also provided a weekly Christian Sunday School lesson. Thus, the school became the center of African American children's academic and religious education in Edmond. It stood at 21 West Edwards Street. One local periodical described the school's Christmas observance: "The colored people had their [Christmas] tree in their school building. . . . A large tree covered with presents was never lost sight of by the children that were present."¹²

The city's school board hired Smith's first three successors at the school from the Wells Teaching Association, an organization of African American teachers in Oklahoma Territory. William Sulcer of Oklahoma City helmed the school from 1895 to 1896 and gave it the nickname "Tuftime." He held significant power in the Wells Teaching Association and arranged for the organization to hold a meeting in Edmond's Opera House in 1895. As one newspaper in Oklahoma City put it, a "large crowd of the leading colored people of this city went to Edmond," and they traveled by train to attend the event. Mattie Hamilton replaced him, and the board reappointed her for the 1897–98 school year. Charley D. Clem took over the school in 1898 and led



Left: Charles D. "Charley" Clem, pictured in the January 23, 1902, issue of the Edmond Enterprise. Right: William Sulcer (images courtesy of the Edmond Historical Society and Museum).

it into the twentieth century. An effective fundraiser, he facilitated a social in town for the purpose of raising money for a library at Tuftime.¹³

Most of Edmond's African American children attended the school. The twenty-four students enrolled in the spring of 1896 came from twelve families, and one-third of the pupils were from just two households—four Reece children and four Veasy children. The majority of African Americans in the city lived away from the school, but at least two families moved to West Edwards Street after the school opened there. William and Elizabeth Covington bought one lot on Block 2 in 1894 and raised their four children in their new home at 14 West Edwards. Jeff and Dollie Estes had lived near Edmond since 1889, but in 1901 they moved their ten children to a house at 32 West Edwards, across the street from the school.¹⁴

Among African American Edmondites, the Covingtons and the Esteses possessed extraordinary wealth. William Covington, who was born in North Carolina in 1863, had not yet reached the age of thirty when he ran a grocery business in Edmond. Dollie Estes's parents—Press and Millie Thomas—lived comfortably in the first decade after

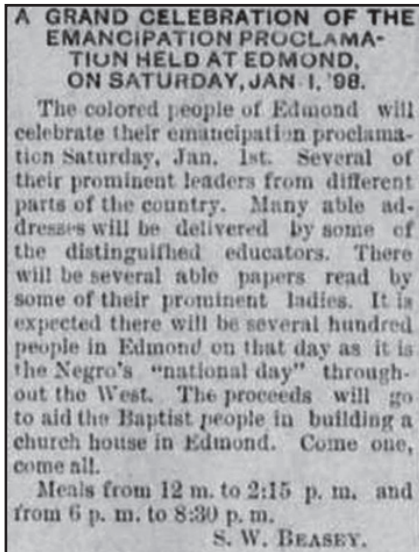
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slavery's demise. In 1870 the Thomases held real estate worth \$1,000 and possessed a personal estate of \$250 in Clinton County, Missouri. When the Estes chose to relocate to Oklahoma, the Thomases joined them and settled near them in Oklahoma County.¹⁵

African American communities throughout Oklahoma Territory promoted African American nationalism and unity, and African American West Edwards was no exception. The mere act of deliberately moving to Oklahoma to develop an ethnically exclusive community constituted nationalism, but African American Edmondites exercised their views in other ways. In the 1890s David Veasy's son Solomon led such efforts in Edmond. He conducted a church revival service for African Americans, and nine attendees became new members in one evening. The worshippers used European American resident W. G. Classen's pond as a baptism site. The separate church was just one of many that had emerged across the country since the eighteenth century. African Americans tended to split from denominations led by European Americans because of discrimination instead of theological differences; such circumstances led to the founding of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the 1790s. While enslaved, African Americans worshipped separately in secret out of dissatisfaction with sermons promoting humility and servitude at slaveholders' churches, and upon emancipation they embraced the opportunity to publicly worship on their own.¹⁶

Solomon Veasy also used the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation to facilitate a fundraiser for a construction project to benefit African Americans. "The colored people of Edmond will celebrate their emancipation proclamation Saturday, Jan. 1st," he announced in a local newspaper. With the proceeds the city's African American Baptist trustees were to build "a church house in Edmond." The event was just one of many annual Emancipation Day observances among African Americans across the country through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Moreover, through the observance, Solomon defined African American unity in Edmond through economic solidarity and the building of social institutions.¹⁷

Management of the church and its funds rested with the elders of the African American community in and near Edmond. As of 1901 the church's trustees were David Veasy, William Covington, and Hartzell resident Henry Clem—a former slave and Charley Clem's father. That year the trustees jointly purchased two lots of Block 2 for the Mount Zion Baptist Colored Association. The land lay at 31 West Edwards, which was at the western end of the street and a couple of houses to the west of Tuftime. With two institutions on the same street, West



Announcement of a celebration commemorating the Emancipation Proclamation that appeared in the December 24, 1897, issue of the Edmond Sun-Democrat (image from The Gateway to Oklahoma History, gateway.okhistory.org).

Edwards emerged as Edmond's African American social center at the dawn of the twentieth century.¹⁸

An African American farmer named Doctor McRandel became Mount Zion's new pastor by 1900. He continued Veasy's fundraising work for the church. McRandel announced in 1903 that Edmond's residents had raised \$54 toward the payment of an \$88 note on the church. On the other hand, McRandel's tenure had its share of setbacks. In 1902 Henry Clem left the trustee board and moved with his family to Kansas.¹⁹

Edmond's African American community thrived in the early 1900s. Its population peaked at about fifty people in 1900, and seven of the city's households were owned—not rented—by African Americans that year. With the exception of Signer's blacksmith shop and Covington's grocery business, the community members made their living by either farming or performing domestic work. The community consistently remained a small portion of the city at large; 1,500 of Edmond's 1,550 residents were European Americans. Nevertheless, the African American population had grown rapidly from the days of the Gees, and its school and church educated and socially nurtured the community.

Intensifying segregation throughout Oklahoma Territory loomed as a threat to the survival of African American West Edwards, but some European American residents contributed to the community's development. African Americans found several European American residents

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The Jefferson Preston Estes family at their farm in territorial Edmond toward the end of the nineteenth century. Jefferson Preston “Jeff” Estes is pictured at the far right (photograph courtesy of Gloria C. Richard and family in loving memory of their beloved ancestors, the Estes and Thomas families).

willing to sell land in Edmond to them. The sellers were middle and upper class in income but diverse in profession. John Adams, who worked as a foreman at a railroad coalhouse, and his wife, Cynthia, sold two lots to the Veasys in 1901, and city trustee F. J. Dawson sold two lots to them in 1902. Mount Zion’s trustees bought their land from hotel manager George Wallace and his wife, Mary. The Esteses purchased land from farmers Matthew and Mary Kanaly in 1899 and from banker John Pfaff two years later. These transactions in Edmond took place as European Americans began driving their African American neighbors out of cities and towns. In April 1902 alone, European Americans in Lawton and Shawnee drove African Americans from their homes. Thus, despite its small size, African American Edmond continued to survive.²⁰

Nevertheless, African American West Edwards did not grow significantly along with Oklahoma’s other urban African American populations. African American Edmondites numbered only in the dozens and did not increase into a triple-digit population, in contrast to the African American communities in Guthrie and Oklahoma City—both of which numbered in the hundreds in 1890 and in the thousands by 1900. Also, as with other communities throughout Oklahoma, an

imbalance in power within African American West Edwards took place on the basis of gender. More men than women in the community could read and write, and men dominated among the leaders and entrepreneurs in West Edwards. At most, women could buy real estate on their own in the community. The women serving as community leaders—largely the teachers—came from outside of Edmond.²¹

As Oklahoma Territory's residents prepared for statehood, they proposed making their new state a segregated one. Legislators had already mandated separate schools by skin color throughout the territory in 1901. African Americans lacked political power in Oklahoma and, as less than one-tenth of the territory's population, were too small a demographic to wield significant influence over city and county officials. As only fifty of Edmond's 1,550 residents, African American Edmondites had even less demographic power. They settled largely in the western part of the city and helped develop that area. Trouble ensued, however, when they strayed from their confines and attempted to establish themselves elsewhere in the city.²²

In the spring of 1903, William and Elizabeth Covington's daughter Caroline nearly completed her public school education, but she had to challenge the territory's law mandating separate schools before finishing her studies. Only the graduation test remained, but it was held at the "whites only" schoolhouse. Nevertheless, she entered the building on examination day and walked into the testing room among the other adolescent pupils from across the county. Her surprised fellow test-takers murmured upon her entrance, and some boys openly expressed their disapproval of her presence. Meanwhile, girls left the room, and the situation became "near a riot," as a local newspaper later put it. To quell the chaos, the instructor supervising the testing placed Caroline in a chair in an adjoining hall to take the examination.²³

Her segregation within the examination building did not appease all of the other students. One of them reported the incident to a member of the school board, who then went to the school and removed Caroline from the premises. He directed her to take the examination questions to Tuftime so that she could take the test there. When she arrived at Tuftime and explained what had happened, her teacher became upset and wrote a letter of protest to the instructor conducting the exam. Despite the turmoil surrounding her testing, Caroline passed the examination and graduated from public school the following month. She became the first African American to receive a diploma from the city's public school system—a major educational accomplishment for African American West Edwards, especially in the face of increasing segregation throughout the territory.²⁴

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By then Edmond's school board drew from college students when appointing teachers for Tuftime. A young African American woman named Victoria Saunders was attending Oklahoma's African American normal school in Langston when she accepted the position as Tuftime's teacher at the age of twenty-three. Like many other young African American Oklahomans, she was born in Kansas. On the other hand, she was also a product of privilege. Both her parents were literate, and they had owned their home in Kansas before moving to Guthrie. She continued her college education in Langston while taking on teaching duties in Edmond.²⁵

During Saunders's tenure, Tuftime remained a viable school, but it was past its peak years. In the 1903–04 school year, only sixteen students—eleven girls and five boys—were enrolled. However, the number remained high enough for the board to reappoint her for the 1904–05 year. Saunders did not attract as much press attention as her predecessors had, and her neglect of community outreach did not address the school's declining enrollment. She did not have William Sulcer's flair for rallying teachers all over Oklahoma, nor did she possess Charley Clem's skill in organizing fundraisers and gaining political influence. Instead, under Saunders's leadership Tuftime kept a low profile. Newspapers did not bother to mention the school except to publish citywide public school reports about attendance and appointments.²⁶

No matter how strongly African Americans from outside Edmond supported African American West Edwards, the small number of African American residents in Edmond made the community vulnerable to segregation. In February 1905 Jeff Estes died suddenly, leaving his widow Dollie and their ten children behind. She decided to send some of her children to live with her parents, and she raised the others with her new husband. The relocation of the Estes children cut the number of students at Tuftime by nearly half. Meanwhile, Elizabeth Covington died in 1905, and William moved to Oklahoma City with his children Amos and Hazel. His daughter Caroline moved into his Edmond home with her husband, but they shared ownership of it with Hazel. That same year, with so many departures of African American children from Edmond, the school board told the city's remaining African Americans that they had too few children for the school to remain in operation.²⁷

The departure of Tuftime's teacher worsened the school's outlook. Saunders finished her education in early 1905 and earned her certification for teaching the second grade. She immediately left Guthrie and moved north to the city of Stillwater. After mar-



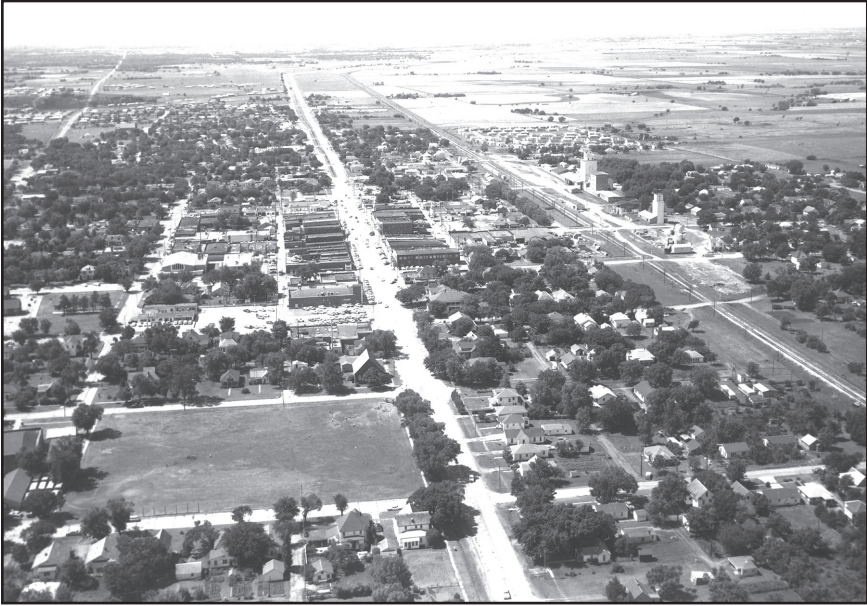
The men's dormitory at the Colored Agricultural and Normal University, now known as Langston University, c. 1910 (4189, Frederick S. Barde Collection, OHS).

rying there the following year, she and her new husband moved to Manhattan, Kansas. Edmond's school board did not announce a replacement for her when the 1905–06 school year commenced, and no reports about Tuftime's students appeared in the local press from that year onward. Finally, in 1911, Oklahoma County sold the school building to a white resident.²⁸

The disintegration of Edmond's African American community after 1905 was gradual but complete. They suffered a heavy blow when the community's oldest family—the Veasys—sold their home in June 1906 and moved to Lincoln Township. David and Solomon Veasy were still on the trustee board of the Mount Zion Baptist Church Association when they sold the church's lots in 1907. As statehood approached, longtime residents Martha McMullen and the Reeces also gave up their lands and departed.²⁹

The last hope for the community arrived shortly before statehood, but it was short-lived. James Royal "J. R." Johnson, born the child of former slaves in Georgia, moved to Oklahoma City in 1905, and then bought McMullen's land in Edmond in 1907. His parents Amos and Johanna Johnson had labored as the slaves of US Senator Robert Toombs before emancipation. Johnson taught at the segregated school in Oklahoma County's Waterloo Township in the 1906–07 school term. The next year he began a long association with the normal school for African Americans at Langston, Oklahoma, where he taught mathematics. He sold his land in January 1909 and left Edmond.³⁰

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Aerial photograph of Edmond, Oklahoma, looking south down Broadway, c. 1960. The West Edwards neighborhood is in the foreground (photograph courtesy of the Edmond Historical Society and Museum).

Only two African American households from the territorial period remained in Edmond by 1910. The Yarbroughs moved to Guthrie that year, leaving only the Covington family as Edmond's African American territorial holdovers. After Caroline Covington and her husband moved to Kansas in the 1910s, Hazel Covington gained full ownership of the family's old Edmond home on West Edwards. Hazel continued to reside in Oklahoma City, and in 1920 she sold the West Edwards house. The sale marked the last tie to break between the territorial era's African Americans and the city of Edmond.³¹

The absence of African Americans from Edmond was not lost on the city's European American residents, and one immediate result was the willingness of numerous residents to celebrate and reinforce their homogeneity. In November 1921 a local newspaper noted with approval that the city had "no colored population." Within two months of that boast, a new local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan began making public appearances, and the organization held a parade in July 1922 for "one of the largest crowds ever assembled on the streets of Edmond," according to one local newspaper. The Klansmen marched through neighborhoods where African Americans had once settled. Even after

First imitation of the existence of the Ku Klux Klan at Edmond was given this week when a letter, inclosing \$225 for the deserving poor of the city, was received from the klan by the Provident Association.

Short notice in the January 19, 1922, issue of the Calumet Chief-tain pointing out the emergence of the Ku Klux Klan in Edmond (image from The Gateway to Oklahoma History, gateway.okhistory.org).

leaving the city for the smaller townships, African Americans remained vulnerable. A man was lynched in Arcadia, near Edmond, in 1920.³²

The collapse of Edmond's African American community was complete. It was unique among former African American settlements in Oklahoma because it disintegrated at a gradual pace. No expulsions immediately dropped the population to zero as in Lawton and Shawnee, nor did violence purge Edmond of African Americans as in Arcadia or in the mob violence against Tulsa's African American community in 1921. Nevertheless, like those cities, Edmond moved on without African American residents except for European Americans' live-in help and farm laborers, and no African Americans owned real estate in Edmond for the next half-century.³³

The US Supreme Court's ruling of segregated public schools as unconstitutional in 1954 marked the beginning of the end of legalized Jim Crow, and Oklahoma started to slowly desegregate. In Edmond, Central State College (now known as the University of Central Oklahoma) began admitting African Americans that year, but they were restricted to campus housing when living in the city. Fourteen years later the Fair Housing Act of 1968 created the possibility of desegregated neighborhoods in Edmond. However, realtors still refused to show properties to African Americans, and by extension the public elementary and secondary schools remained "whites only." Edmond was hardly alone, for other cities and towns in Oklahoma similarly restricted or prohibited the settlement (or resettlement) of African Americans.³⁴

Perhaps because of resistance from Edmondites and from decades of publicity as a city with "no colored population," no African American purchased a home in Edmond until January 1973. Meanwhile, in the 1972–73 school year, an African American student enrolled in one of the city's public elementary schools for the first time in more than six decades. This integration was no small accomplishment, for it took

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place at the same time as “white flight” from Oklahoma City’s public schools in the wake of a court order for school integration there in February 1972. On the other hand, Edmond was part of a statewide trend, for other “whites only” cities in Oklahoma integrated their schools and residential areas during that time.³⁵

By then, African American West Edwards was a decades-old distant memory. Most of the city’s original African American residents had died, and the traces of the community they had built disappeared over time. West Edwards Street still exists today but without Tuftime and Mount Zion. Celebrations of Emancipation Day and printed appeals to “the colored people of Edmond” have ceased. Caroline Covington no longer lived in town to counsel African Americans on how to attend school with European American classmates.

The exiles of African American West Edwards carried on with their lives. The African American communities near Edmond transitioned from supporting West Edwards to welcoming its refugees, and these areas benefitted from their new arrivals’ talents. Their years in Edmond taught them that they could relocate to a new environment and survive, and that they did not need large numbers to build a community. Thus, when Edmond desegregated, the descendants of the territorial era’s African Americans were not among the first to move there. Rather, African Americans with no ties to that first community arrived to build upon the foundation that their predecessors had constructed.

Endnotes

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¹ James S. Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance: The Tulsa Race War and Its Legacy* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002), 36. This article uses the phrase “European American” instead of the more common term “white.” The term “white” as in “white people” or “white race” is inaccurate, because only one race or species for people—the human race or species—exists. Therefore, a “white” species within a human species does not exist. “European American” is an accurate term, because some people actually are of European heritage and are born in the United States.

² *Edmond (OK) Sun-Democrat*, August 10, 1894, 3; *Edmond Sun-Democrat*, July 28, 1899, 3.

³ Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1992), 245.

⁴ Painter, *Exodusters*, vii; Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance*, 33.

⁵ David A. Chang, *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership in Oklahoma, 1832–1929* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 157; Christienne M. McPherson, “‘Spirited Away’: Race, Gender, and Murder in Oklahoma in the 1920s,” in *Main Street Oklahoma: Stories of Twentieth-Century America*, Linda W. Reese and Patricia Loughlin, eds. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 134–35.

⁶ Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528–1990* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1998), 144; Chang, *The Color of the Land*, 156, 158; Kendra Taira Field, *Growing Up with the Country: Family, Race, and Nation after the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2018), 91–93; Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance*, 32.

⁷ US Census Bureau, *Twelfth Census of the United States*, Edmond, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1900), www.familysearch.org (hereafter cited as US Census 1900).

⁸ US Census Bureau, *Ninth Census of the United States*, Iowa, Doniphan County, Kansas (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1870), 48, www.familysearch.org (hereafter cited as US Census 1870); “Trustees’ Deed Record,” Edgar N. Sweet, William Knight, and David H. Hammons to Bird Gee, March 25, 1891, Deed Book 4, 135, Oklahoma County Assessor’s Office, Oklahoma City, OK; Kansas County Marriage Records, 1811–1911, www.ancestry.com; US Census Bureau, *Oklahoma Territorial Census of 1900* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1900), www.familysearch.org (hereafter cited as Oklahoma Territorial Census 1900).

⁹ Oklahoma Territorial Census 1900, Township 14, District 25, Oklahoma County, 8; US Census 1870, Old Fort, Township 9, McDowell County, North Carolina, 26; US Census Bureau, *Tenth Census of the United States*, Cottonwood, Chase County, Kansas (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1880), 7, www.familysearch.org (hereafter cited as US Census 1880).

¹⁰ Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 284; US Census 1870, Township 4, Range 8, DeSoto County, Mississippi, 2, 23; US Census 1880, Beat 2, Tate County, Mississippi, 35; US Census 1900, Edmond, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, 8B. In written records the surname Veasy is also documented as “Veasey,” “Vesey,” “Beasy,” “Beasey,” and “Veasley.”

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¹¹ US Census 1880, Subdivision 136, Navarro County, Texas, 9; US Census 1900, Edmond, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, 9A, shows that Andrew Signer was born in Pennsylvania and had a child in Missouri; *Edmond Sun-Democrat*, April 3, 1896, 3; *Edmond Sun-Democrat*, July 2, 1897, 3.

¹² “Deed Record,” John Darsh and Victoria Darsh to Oklahoma County, August 3, 1892, Deed Book 8, 316, Oklahoma County Assessor’s Office, Oklahoma City, OK; “Our Colored School,” *Edmond Sun-Democrat*, March 16, 1894, 4; *Edmond Sun-Democrat*, August 3, 1894, 3; *Edmond Sun-Democrat*, December 28, 1894, 3.

¹³ *Oklahoma Times-Journal* (Oklahoma City, OK), December 30, 1895, 4; *Oklahoma Times-Journal*, July 30, 1896, 1; *Edmond (OK) Sun*, 5 July 1895, 4; *Edmond Sun-Democrat*, June 26, 1896, 3; *Edmond Sun-Democrat*, August 6, 1897, 3; US Census 1900, Hartzell, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, 5A; *Edmond Sun-Democrat*, July 22, 1898, 4; “Book Social,” *Edmond Sun-Democrat*, March 9, 1900, 2.

¹⁴ “Tuftime’ School,” *Edmond Sun-Democrat*, April 24, 1896, 3; “Deed Record,” Harvey A. Daugherty and Igene L. Daugherty to B. C. Covington, June 28, 1894, Deed Book 42, 293, Oklahoma County Assessor’s Office, Oklahoma City, OK; “Warranty Deed Record No. 25,” John Pfaff and wife to Dollie Estes, January 15, 1901, Deed Book 25, 318, Oklahoma County Assessor’s Office, Oklahoma City, OK.

¹⁵ US Census 1900, Edmond, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, 11B; US Census 1870, Concord, Clinton County, Missouri, 27; US Census 1900, Britton, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, 8A.

¹⁶ McPherson, “Spirited Away,” 134; *Edmond Sun-Democrat*, October 8, 1897, 3; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 25–26, 47, 51.

¹⁷ “A Grand Celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation Held at Edmond, on Saturday, Jan. 1, ’98,” *Edmond Sun-Democrat*, December 24, 1897, 3; William A. Blair, “Celebrating Freedom: The Problem of Emancipation in Public Commemoration,” in *Lincoln’s Proclamation: Emancipation Reconsidered*, William A. Blair and Karen Fisher Younger, eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 204–05.

¹⁸ “Warranty Deed Record,” George Wallace and Mary Wallace to Mount Zion Baptist Church Association, February 7, 1901, Deed Book 20, 124, Oklahoma County Assessor’s Office, Oklahoma City, OK; “Release of Mortgage,” Henry Clem, William Covington, and David Veasey [sic] to Samuel McKinney, Deed Book 2111, 220, Oklahoma County Assessor’s Office, Oklahoma City, OK.

¹⁹ US Census 1900, Edmond, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma, 8B; *Edmond (OK) Enterprise and Oklahoma County News*, March 3, 1903, 4.

²⁰ McPherson, “Spirited Away,” 135.

²¹ Chang, *The Color of the Land*, 157.

²² McPherson, “Spirited Away,” 134.

²³ “Almost a Riot,” *Edmond (OK) Enterprise*, April 9, 1903, 1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; *Spencer (OK) News*, May 30, 1903, 10; *Spencer News*, August 14, 1903, 3.

²⁵ US Census 1880, Lawrence, Ward 2, Douglas County, Kansas, 50; “The Teachers at Work,” *Oklahoma State Register*, July 23, 1903, 5; *Edmond (OK) Enterprise*, January 7, 1904, 2.

²⁶ *Edmond Enterprise and Oklahoma County News*, January 7, 1904, 2; *Edmond Enterprise and Oklahoma County News*, August 4, 1904, 2.

²⁷ James Coburn, “A Look Back,” *Edmond Sun*, February 25, 2007, www.edmondsun.com/news/lifestyles/a-look-back/article_5719f149-8495-5147-9ec5-0dd769ca3eb3.html.

²⁸ “Warranty Deed No. 143,” county commissioners to Etta Geyer, September 18, 1911, Deed Book 143, 152, Oklahoma County Assessor’s Office, Oklahoma City, OK.

²⁹ “Warranty Deed Record No. 60,” Dave Veasey [sic] to Henry Redmon, June 16, 1906, Deed Book 60, 380, Oklahoma County Assessor’s Office, Oklahoma City, OK; “Warranty

Deed Record No. 68,” Mount Zion Baptist Church Association to Dwight J. Perry, April 13, 1907, Deed Book 68, 348, Oklahoma County Assessor’s Office, Oklahoma City, OK; “Deed Record No. 73,” Joseph and Amy Reece to L. Tate, June 17, 1907, Deed Book 73, 434, Oklahoma County Assessor’s Office, Oklahoma City, OK; “Warranty Deed Record No. 79,” Martha McMullen to J. R. Johnson, September 3, 1907, Deed Book 79, 351, Oklahoma County Assessor’s Office, Oklahoma City, OK.

³⁰ “Will Teach in Langston University,” *Edmond (OK) Twice-a-Week Enterprise*, April 24, 1908, 1; Clement Richardson, ed., *The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race*, Volume One (Montgomery, AL: National Publishing Company, Inc., 1919), 286; “Warranty Deed Record No. 91,” J. R. Johnson et ux to Henry A. Trenkle, January 15, 1909, Deed Book 91, 146, Oklahoma County Assessor’s Office, Oklahoma City, OK; US Census Bureau, *Thirteenth Census of the United States*, Antelope, Logan County, Oklahoma (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1910), 9B, www.familysearch.org.

³¹ “Real Estate Transfers,” *Oklahoma State Register* (Guthrie, OK), February 24, 1910, 5; “Quit-Claim Deed,” Hazel I. Covington to John Shuman, June 30, 1920, Deed Book 231, 368, Oklahoma County Assessor’s Office, Oklahoma City, OK.

³² *Edmond Enterprise*, November 24, 1921, 8; “Ku Klux Klan Stages Parade in Edmond,” *Edmond Enterprise*, July 20, 1922, 1; Stan Hoig, *Edmond: The First Century* (Edmond, OK: Edmond Historic Preservation Trust, 1987), 18–19; *Calumet (OK) Chief-tain*, January 19, 1922, 4.

³³ US Census Bureau, *Fourteenth Census of the United States*, Edmond, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920), www.familysearch.org; US Census Bureau, *Fifteenth Census of the United States*, Edmond, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1930), www.familysearch.org; US Census Bureau, *Sixteenth Census of the United States*, Edmond, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1940), www.familysearch.org.

³⁴ Paul Finkelman, “Conceived in Segregation and Dedicated to the Proposition that All Men Were *Not* Created Equal: Oklahoma, the Last Southern State,” in *Black Americans and the Civil Rights Movement in the West*, Bruce A. Glasrud and Cary D. Wintz, eds. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019), 229–30.

³⁵ “Joint Tenancy Warranty Deed,” United States Housing Corporation to Luther and Vivian Pegues, January 26, 1973, Deed Book 4083, 74, Oklahoma County Assessor’s Office, Oklahoma City, OK; Stephanie Pegues, interview by the author, July 22–23, 2018; Finkelman, “Conceived in Segregation,” 229–30.