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The Oklahoma House Joint Resolution No. 1035 established the Tulsa Race Riot Commission.

The Final Report was submitted to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the Mayor and each member of the City Council of the City of Tulsa, Oklahoma on February 28, 2001.

In addition, THE TULSA RACE RIOT: A SCIENTIFIC, HISTORICAL, AND LEGAL ANALYSIS was attached to this report.
TULSA RACE RIOT
OF 1921

TULSA

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REEL CONTENTS:

1) Historical, Scientific and Legal Analysis
2) Final Report
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2002
THE TULSA RACE RIOT

A Scientific, Historical and Legal Analysis

Compiled and Edited by

John Hope Franklin
and
Scott Ellsworth

A Report
Submitted to the
TULSA RACE RIOT COMMISSION
November 2000
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Introduction

by John Hope Franklin and Scott Ellsworth

As the centennial of Oklahoma statehood draws near, it isn’t difficult to look upon the history of our state with anything short of awe and wonder. In ninety-three short years, whole towns and cities have sprouted upon the prairies, great cultural and educational institutions have risen among the blackjacks, and the state’s agricultural and industrial output has far surpassed even the wildest dreams of the Boomers. In less than a century, Oklahoma has transformed itself from a rawboned territory more at home in the Nineteenth century, into now, as a new millennium dawns about us, a shining example of both the promise and the reality of the American dream. In looking back upon our past, we have much to take pride in.

But we have also known heartaches as well. As any honest history textbook will tell you, the first century of Oklahoma statehood has also featured dust storms and a Great Depression, political scandals and Jim Crow legislation, tumbling oil prices and truckloads of Okies streaming west. But through it all, there are two Twentieth century tragedies which, sadly enough, stand head and shoulders above the others.
For many Oklahomans, there has never been a darker day than April 19, 1995. At two minutes past nine o’clock that morning, when the northern face of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City was blown inward by the deadliest act of terrorism ever to take place on American soil, lives were shattered, lives were lost, and the history of the state would never again be the same.

One-hundred and sixty-eight Oklahomans died that day. They were black and white, Native American and Hispanic, young and old. And during the weeks that followed, we began to learn a little about who they were. We learned about Colton and Chase Smith, brothers aged two and three, and how they loved their playmates at the daycare center. We learned about Captain Randy Guzman, U.S.M.C., and how he had commanded troops during Operation Desert Storm, and we learned about Wanda Lee Howell, who always kept a Bible in her purse. And we learned about Cartney Jean McRaven, a nineteen-year-old Air Force enlistee who had been married only four days earlier.

The Murrah Building bombing is, without any question, one of the great tragedies of Oklahoma history. And well before the last memorial service was held for the last victim, thousands of Oklahomans made it clear that they wanted what happened on that dark day to be remembered. For upon the chain-link fence surrounding the bombsite there soon appeared a makeshift memorial of the heart – of teddy bears and handwritten children’s prayers, key rings and dreamcatchers, flowers and flags. Now, with the construction and dedication of the Oklahoma City National Memorial, there is no doubt but that both the victims and the lessons of April 19, 1995 will not be forgotten.

But what would have come as a surprise to most of the state’s citizens during the sad spring of 1995 was that there were, among them, other Oklahomans who carried within their
hearts the painful memories of an equally dark, though long ignored, day in our past. For seventy-three years before the Murrah Building was bombed, the city of Tulsa erupted into a firestorm of hatred and violence that is perhaps unequaled in the peacetime history of the United States.

For those hearing about the 1921 Tulsa race riot for the first time, the event seems almost impossible to believe. During the course of eighteen terrible hours, more than one-thousand homes were burned to the ground. Practically overnight, entire neighborhoods—where families had raised their children, visited with their neighbors, and hung their wash out on the line to dry—had been suddenly reduced to ashes. And as the homes burned, so did their contents, including furniture and family Bibles, rag dolls and hand-me-down quilts, cribs and photograph albums. In less than twenty-four hours, nearly all of Tulsa’s African American residential district — some forty square blocks in all — had been laid to waste, leaving nearly nine-thousand people homeless.

Gone, too, was the city’s African American commercial district, a thriving area located along Greenwood Avenue which boasted some of the finest black-owned businesses in the entire Southwest. The Stradford Hotel, a modern, fifty-four room brick establishment which housed a drug store, barber shop, restaurant and banquet hall, had been burned to the ground. So had the Gurley Hotel, the Red Wing Hotel, and the Midway Hotel. Literally dozens of family-run businesses—from cafes and mom-and-pop grocery stores, to the Dreamland Theater, the Y.M.C.A. Cleaners, the East End Feed Store, and Osborne Monroe’s roller skating rink — had also gone up in flames, taking with them the livelihoods, and in many cases the life savings, of literally hundreds of people.
The offices of two newspapers -- the *Tulsa Star* and the *Oklahoma Sun* -- had also been destroyed, as were the offices of more than a dozen doctors, dentists, lawyers, realtors, and other professionals. A United States Post Office substation was burned, as was the all-black Frissell Memorial Hospital. The brand new Booker T. Washington High School building escaped the torches of the rioters, but Dunbar Elementary School did not. Neither did more than a half dozen African American churches, including the newly constructed Mt. Zion Baptist Church, an impressive brick tabernacle which had been dedicated only seven weeks earlier.

Harsher still was the human loss. While we will probably never know the exact number of people who lost their lives during the Tulsa race riot, even the most conservative estimates are appalling. While we know that the so-called "official" estimate of nine whites and twenty-six blacks is too low, it is also true that some of the higher estimates are equally dubious. All told, considerable evidence exists to suggest that at least seventy-five to one-hundred people, both black and white, were killed during the riot. It should be added, however, that at least one credible source from the period -- Maurice Willows, who directed the relief operations of the American Red Cross in Tulsa following the riot -- indicated in his official report that the total number of riot fatalities may have run as high as three-hundred.¹

We also know a little, at least, about who some of the victims were. Reuben Everett, who was black, was a laborer who lived with his wife Jane in a home along Archer Street.

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¹ For the so-called "official" estimate, see: Memorandum from Major Paul R. Brown, Surgeon, 3rd Infantry, Oklahoma National Guard, to the Adjutant General of Oklahoma, June 4, 1921, located in the Attorney Generals Civil Case Files, Record Group 1-2, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries.

Killed by a gunshot wound on the morning of June 1, 1921, he is buried in Oaklawn Cemetery. George Walter Daggs, who was white, may have died as much as twelve hours earlier. The manager of the Tulsa office of the Pierce Oil Company, he was shot in the back of the head as he fled from the initial gunfire of the riot that broke out in front of the Tulsa County Courthouse on the evening of May 31st. And Dr. A. C. Jackson, a renowned African American physician, was fatally wounded in his front yard after he had surrendered to a group of whites. Shot in the stomach, he later died at the National Guard Armory. But for every riot victim’s story that we know, there are others -- like the “unidentified Negroes” whose burials are recorded in the now yellowed pages of old funeral home ledgers -- whose names and life stories are, at least for now, still lost.

By any standard, the Tulsa race riot of 1921 is one of the great tragedies of Oklahoma history. Walter White, one of the nation’s foremost experts on racial violence, who visited Tulsa during the week after the riot, was shocked by what had taken place. “I am able to state,” he said, “that the Tulsa riot, in sheer brutality and willful destruction of life and property, stands without parallel in America.”

Indeed, for a number of observers through the years, the term “riot” itself seems somehow inadequate to describe the violence and conflagration that took place. For some, what occurred in Tulsa on May 31 and June 1, 1921 was a massacre, a pogrom, or, to use a more modern term, an ethnic cleansing. For others, it was nothing short of a race war. But whatever term is used, one thing is certain: when it was all over, Tulsa’s African American district had been turned into a scorched wasteland of vacant lots, crumbling storefronts, burned churches, and blackened, leafless trees.
Like the Murrah Building bombing, the Tulsa riot would forever alter life in Oklahoma. Nowhere, perhaps, was this more starkly apparent than in the matter of lynching. Like several other states and territories during the early years of the Twentieth century, the sad spectacle of lynching was not uncommon in Oklahoma. In her 1942 master’s thesis at the University of Oklahoma, Mary Elizabeth Estes determined that between the declaration of statehood on November 16, 1907, and the Tulsa race riot some thirteen years later, thirty-two individuals -- twenty-six of whom were black -- were lynched in Oklahoma. But during the twenty years following the riot, the number of lynchings statewide fell to two.\(^3\) Although they paid a terrible price for their efforts, there is little doubt except by their actions on May 31, 1921, that black Tulsans helped to bring the barbaric practice of lynching in Oklahoma to an end.

But unlike the Oklahoma City bombing, which has, to this day, remained a high profile event, for many years the Tulsa race riot practically disappeared from view. For decades afterwards, Oklahoma newspapers rarely mentioned the riot, the state’s historical establishment essentially ignored it, and entire generations of Oklahoma school children were taught little or nothing about what had happened. To be sure, the riot was still a topic of conversation, particularly in Tulsa. But these discussions -- whether among family or friends, in barber shops or on the front porch -- were private affairs. And once the riot slipped from the headlines, its public memory also began to fade.

\(^2\) New York Call, June 10, 1921.
Of course, anyone who lived through the riot could never forget what had taken place. And in Tulsa's African American neighborhoods, the physical, psychological, and spiritual damage caused by the riot remained highly apparent for years. Indeed, even today there are places in the city where the scars of the riot can still be observed. In north Tulsa, the riot was never forgotten -- because it could not be.

But in other sections of the city, and elsewhere throughout the state, the riot slipped further and further from view. And as the years passed and, particularly after World War II, as more and more families moved to Oklahoma from out-of-state, more and more of the state's citizens had simply never heard of the riot. Indeed, the riot was discussed so little, and for so long, even in Tulsa, that in 1996, Tulsa County District Attorney Bill LaFortune could tell a reporter, "I was born and raised here, and I had never heard of the riot."4

How could this have happened? How could a disaster the size and scope of the Tulsa race riot become, somehow, forgotten? How could such a major event in Oklahoma history become so little known?

Some observers have claimed that the lack of attention given to the riot over the years was the direct result of nothing less than a "conspiracy of silence." And while it is certainly true that a number of important documents relating to the riot have turned up missing, and that some individuals are, to this day, still reluctant to talk about what happened, the shroud of silence that descended over the Tulsa race riot can also be accounted for without resorting to conspiracy theories. But one must start at the beginning.

The riot, when it happened, was front-page news across America. "85 WHITES AND NEGROES DIE IN TULSA RIOTS" ran the headline in the June 2, 1921 edition of the New
York Times, while dozens of other newspapers across the country published lead stories about the riot. Indeed, the riot was even news overseas. “FIERCE OUTBREAK IN OKLAHOMA” declared The Times of London.⁴

But something else happened as well. For in the days and weeks that followed the riot, editorial writers from coast-to-coast unleashed a torrent of stinging condemnations of what had taken place. “The bloody scenes at Tulsa, Oklahoma,” declared the Philadelphia Bulletin, “are hardly conceivable as happening in American civilization of the present day.” For the Kentucky State Journal, the riot was nothing short of “An Oklahoma Disgrace,” while the Kansas City Journal was revolted at what it called the “Tulsa horror”. From both big-city dailies and small town newspapers -- from the Houston Post and Nashville Tennessean to the tiny Times of Gloucester, Massachusetts -- came a chorus of criticism. The Christian Recorder even went so far as to declare that “Tulsa has become a name of shame upon America.”⁵

For many Oklahomans, and particularly for whites in positions of civic responsibility, such sentiments were most unwelcome. For regardless of what they felt personally about the riot, in a young state where attracting new businesses and new settlers was a top priority, it soon became evident that the riot was a public relations nightmare. And nowhere was this felt more acutely than in Tulsa. “I suppose Tulsa will get a lot of unpleasant publicity from this affair,” wrote one Tulsa-based petroleum geologist to family members back East. Reverend Charles W. Kerr, of the city’s all-white First Presbyterian Church, added his own

assessment. “For 22 years I have been boosting Tulsa,” he said, “and we have all been boosters and boasters about our buildings, bank accounts and other assets, but the events of the past week will put a stop to the bragging for a while.” For some, and particularly for Tulsa’s white business and political leaders, the riot soon became something best to be forgotten, something to be swept well beneath history’s carpet.

What is remarkable, in retrospect, is the degree to which this nearly happened. For within a decade after it had happened, the Tulsa race riot went from being a front-page, national calamity, to being an incident portrayed as an unfortunate, but not really very significant, event in the state’s past. Oklahoma history textbooks published during the 1920s did not mention the riot at all -- nor did ones published in the 1930s. Finally, in 1941, the riot was mentioned in the Oklahoma volume in the influential American Guide Series -- but only in one brief paragraph.

Nowhere was this historical amnesia more startling than in Tulsa itself, especially in the city’s white neighborhoods. “For a while,” noted former Tulsa oilman Osborn Campbell, “picture postcards of the victims in awful poses were sold on the streets,” while more than one white ex-rioter “boasted about how many notches he had on his gun.” But the riot, which


some whites saw as a source of local pride, in time more generally came to be regarded as a
local embarrassment. Eventually, Osborn added, "the talk stopped."9

So, too, apparently did the news stories. For while it is highly questionable whether --
as it has been alleged -- any Tulsa newspaper actually discouraged its reporters from writing
about the riot, for years and years on end the riot does not appear to have been mentioned in
the local press.10 And at least one local paper seems to have gone well out of its way, at
times, to avoid the subject altogether.

During the mid-1930s, the Tulsa Tribune -- the city's afternoon daily newspaper -- ran
a regular feature on it editorial page called "Fifteen Years Ago." Drawn from back issues of
the newspaper, the column highlighted events which had happened in Tulsa on the same date
fifteen years earlier, including local news stories, political tidbits, and society gossip. But
when the fifteenth anniversary of the race riot arrived in early June 1936, the Tribune ignored
it completely -- and instead ran the following:

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10 In 1971, a Tulsa Tribune reporter wrote that, "For 50 years The Tribune did not rehash the story [of
the riot]." See: "Murderous Race Riot Wrote Red Page in Tulsa History 50 Years Ago," Tulsa Tribune, June 2,
1971, p. 7A. A very brief account of the riot—which not only gave the wrong dates for the conflict, but also
claimed that "No one knew then or remembers how the shooting began"—appeared in the Tulsa World on
November 7, 1949.
FIFTEEN YEARS AGO

From the Tribune, June 1, 1921

Miss Carolyn Skelly was a charming young hostess of the past week, having entertained at a luncheon and theater party for Miss Kathleen Sinclair and her guest, Miss Julia Morley of Saginaw, Mich. Corsage bouquets of Cecil roses and sweet peas were presented to the guests, who were Misses Claudine Miller, Martha Sharpe, Elizabeth Cook, Jane Robinson, Pauline Wood, Marie Constantin, Irene Buel, Thelma Kennedy, Ann Kennedy, Naomi Brown, Jane Wallace and Edith Smith.

Mrs. O.H.P. Thomas will entertain for her daughter, Elizabeth, who has been attending Randolph Macon school in Lynchburg, Va.

Central high school’s crowning social event of the term just closed was the senior prom in the gymnasium with about 200 guests in attendance. The grand march was led by Miss Sara Little and Seth Hughes.

Miss Vera Gwynne will leave next week for Chicago to enter the University of Chicago where she will take a course in kindergarten study.

Mr. And Mrs. E.W. Hance have as their guests Mr. L.G. Kellermeyer of St. Mary’s, Ohio.

Mrs. C.B. Hough and her son, Ralph, left last night for a three-months trip through the west and northwest. They will return home via Dallas, Texas, where they will visit Mrs. Hough’s homefolk.\textsuperscript{11}

Ten years later, in 1946, by which time the Tribune had added a “Twenty-Five Years Ago” feature, the newspaper once again avoided mentioning the riot. It was as if the greatest catastrophe in the city’s history simply had not happened at all.\textsuperscript{12}

That there would be some reluctance toward discussing the riot is hardly surprising. Cities and states — just like individuals — do not, as a general rule, like to dwell upon their past shortcomings. For years and years, for example, Oklahoma school children were taught only the most sanitized versions of the story of the Trail of Tears, while the history of slavery in Oklahoma was more or less ignored altogether. Moreover, during the World War II years, when the nation was engaged in a life or death struggle against the Axis, history textbooks quite understandably stressed themes of national unity and consensus. And the Tulsa race riot, needless to say, did not qualify.

\textsuperscript{11} Tulsa Tribune, June 2, 1936, p. 16
\textsuperscript{12} Tulsa Tribune, May 31, 1946, p. 8; and June 2, 1946, p. 8.
But in Tulsa itself, the riot had affected far too many families, on both sides of the tracks, ever to sink entirely from view. But as the years passed and the riot grew ever more distant, a mindset developed which held that the riot was one part of the city’s past that might best be forgotten altogether. And, remarkably enough, that is exactly what began to happen.

When Nancy Feldman moved to Tulsa during the spring of 1946, she had never heard of the Tulsa race riot. A Chicagan, and a new bride, she accepted a position teaching sociology at the University of Tulsa. But trained in social work, she also began working with the City Health Department, where she came into contact with Robert Fairchild, a recreation specialist who was also one of Tulsa’s handful of African American municipal employees. A riot survivor, Fairchild told Feldman of his experiences during the disaster, which made a deep impression on the young sociologist, who decided to share her discovery with her students.  

But as it turned out, Feldman also soon learned something else, namely, that learning about the riot, and teaching about it, were two entirely different propositions. “During my first months at TU,” she later recalled:

I mentioned the race riot in class one day and was surprised at the universal surprise among my students. No one in this all-white classroom of both veterans, who were older, and standard

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The Tulsa World, to its credit, did mention the riot in its “Just 30 Years Ago” columns in 1951. Tulsa World: June 1, 1951, p. 20; June 2, 1951, p. 4; and June 4, 1951, p. 6.


On Robert Fairchild see: Oral History Interview with Robert Fairchild, Tulsa, June 8, 1978, by Scott Ellsworth, a copy of which can be found in the Special Collections Department, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa; and, Eddie Faye Gates, They Came Searching: How Blacks Sought the Promised Land in Tulsa (Austin: Eakin Press, 1997), pp. 69-72.
18-year-old freshmen, had ever heard of it, and some stoutly denied it and questioned my facts.

I invited Mr. Fairchild to come to class and tell of his experience, walking along the railroad tracks to Turley with his brothers and sister. Again, there was stout denial and, even more surprising, many students asked their parents and were told, no, there was no race riot at all. I was called to the Dean’s office and advised to drop the whole subject.

The next semester, I invited Mr. Fairchild to come to class. Several times the Dean warned me about this. I do not believe I ever suffered from this exercise of my freedom of speech ... but as a very young and new instructor, I certainly felt threatened.

For Feldman, such behavior amounted to nothing less than “Purposeful blindness and memory blocking.” Moreover, she discovered, it was not limited to the classroom. “When I would mention the riot to my white friends, few would talk about it. And they certainly didn’t want to.”

While perhaps surprising in retrospect, Feldman’s experiences were by no means unique. When Nancy Dodson, a Kansas native who later taught at Tulsa Junior College, moved to Tulsa in 1950, she too discovered that, at least in some parts of the white community, the riot was a taboo subject. “I was admonished not to mention the riot almost
upon our arrival,” she later recalled, “Because of shame, I thought. But the explanation was ‘you don’t want to start another.’”

The riot did not fare much better in local history efforts. While Angie Debo did make mention of the riot in her 1943 history, *Tulsa: From Creek Town to Oil Capital*, her account was both brief and superficial. And fourteen years later, during the summer of 1957, when the city celebrated its “Tulsarama” — a week-long festival commemorating the semicentennial of Oklahoma statehood — the riot was, once again, ignored. Some thirty-five years after it had taken the lives of dozens of innocent people, destroyed a neighborhood nearly a square mile in size in a firestorm which sent columns of black smoke billowing hundreds of feet into the air, and brought the normal life of the city to a complete standstill, the Tulsa race riot was fast becoming little more than a historical inconvenience, something, perhaps, that ought not be discussed at all.

Despite such official negligence, however, there were always Tulsans through the years who helped make it certain that the riot was not forgotten. Both black and white, sometimes working alone but more often working together, they collected evidence, preserved photographs, interviewed eyewitnesses, wrote about their findings, and tried, as best as they could, to ensure that the riot was not erased from history.

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14 Feldman letter, *op cit.*
15 Letter from Nancy Dodson, Tulsa, June 4, 2000, to John Hope Franklin, Durham, North Carolina.

None, perhaps, succeeded as spectacularly as Mary E. Jones Parrish, a young African American teacher and journalist. Parrish had moved to Tulsa from Rochester, New York in 1919 or 1920, and had found work teaching typing and shorthand at the all-black Hunton Branch of the Y.M.C.A.. With her young daughter, Florence Mary, she lived at the Woods Building in the heart of the African American business district. But when the riot broke out, both mother and daughter were forced to abandon their apartment and flee for their lives, running north along Greenwood Avenue amid a hail of bullets.\(^{17}\)

Immediately following the riot, Parrish was hired by the Inter-Racial Commission to “do some reporting” on what had happened. Throwing herself into her work with her characteristic verve — and, one imagines, a borrowed typewriter — Parrish interviewed several eyewitnesses and transcribed the testimonials of survivors. She also wrote an account of her own harrowing experiences during the riot and, together with photographs of the devastation and a partial roster of property losses in the African American community, Parrish published all of the above in a book called *Events of the Tulsa Disaster*. And while only a handful of copies appear to have been printed, Parrish’s volume was not only the first book published about the riot, and a pioneering work of journalism by an African American woman, but remains, to this day, an invaluable contemporary account.\(^{18}\)

It took another twenty-five years, however, until the first general history of the riot was written. In 1946, a white World War II veteran named Loren L. Gill was attending the


University of Tulsa on the G.I. Bill. Intrigued by lingering stories of the race riot, and armed with both considerable energy and estimable research skills, Gill decided to make the riot the subject of his master’s thesis.19

The end result, “The Tulsa Race Riot,” was, all told, an exceptional piece of work. Gill worked diligently to uncover the causes of the riot, and to trace its path of violence and destruction, by scouring old newspaper and magazine articles, Red Cross records, and government documents. Moreover, Gill interviewed more than a dozen local citizens, including police and city officials, about the riot. And remarkably for the mid-1940’s, Gill also interviewed a number of African American riot survivors, including Reverend Charles Lanier Netherland, Mrs. Dimple L. Bush, and the noted attorney, Amos T. Hall. And while a number of Gill’s conclusions about the riot have not withstood subsequent historical scrutiny, few have matched his determination to uncover the truth.20

Yet despite Gill’s accomplishment, the riot remained well-buried in the city’s historical closet. Riot survivors, participants, and observers, to be certain, still told stories of their experiences to family and friends. And at Tulsa’s Booker T. Washington High School, a handful of teachers made certain that their students -- many of whose families had moved to Tulsa after 1921 -- learned at least a little about what had happened. But the fact remains that

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Prior to the publication of Parrish’s book, however, a “booklet” about the riot was issued by the Black Dispatch Press of Oklahoma City in July, 1921. Written by Martin Brown, the booklet was titled, “Is Tulsa Sane?” At present, no copies are known to exist.


20 Ibid. According to his thesis adviser, William A. Settle, Jr., Gill was later highly critical of some of his original interpretations. During a visit to Tulsa during the late 1960s, after he had served as a Peace Corps volunteer, Gill told Settle that he had been “too hard” on black Tulsans.
for nearly a quarter of a century after Loren Gill completed his master’s thesis, the Tulsa race riot remained well out of the public spotlight.\textsuperscript{21}

But beneath the surface, change was afoot. For as the national debate over race relations intensified with the emergence of the modern Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, Tulsa’s own racial customs were far from static. And as the city began to address issues arising out of school desegregation, sit-ins, job bias, housing discrimination, urban renewal, and white flight, there were those who believed that Tulsa’s racial past -- and particularly the race riot -- needed to be openly confronted.

Few felt this as strongly as those who had survived the tragedy itself, and on the evening of June 1, 1971, dozens of African American riot survivors gathered at Mt. Zion Baptist Church for a program commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the riot. Led by W.D. Williams, a longtime Booker T. Washington High School history teacher, whose family had suffered immense property loss during the violence, the other speakers that evening included fellow riot survivors Mable B. Little, who had lost both her home and her beauty shop during the conflagration, and E.L. Goodwin, Sr., the publisher of the Oklahoma Eagle, the city’s black newspaper. And although the audience at the ceremony -- which included a handful of whites -- was not large, the event represented the first public acknowledgment of the riot in decades.\textsuperscript{22}


The lack of public recognition given to the riot during this period was not limited to Tulsa’s white community. A survey of back issues of the Oklahoma Eagle -- long the city’s flagship African American newspaper -- revealed neither any articles about the riot, nor any mention of any commemorative ceremonies, at the time of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the riot in 1946. The same also applied to the thirtieth and fortieth anniversaries in 1951 and 1961.

But another episode that same spring also revealed just how far that Tulsa, when it came to owning up to the race riot, still had to go. The previous autumn, Larry Silvey, the publications manager at the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, decided that on the fiftieth anniversary of the riot, the Chamber’s magazine should run a story on what had happened. Silvey then contacted Ed Wheeler, the host of ‘The Gilcrease Story,” a popular history program which aired on local radio. Wheeler — who, like Silvey, was white — agreed to research and write the article. And so during the winter of 1970-71, Wheeler went to work, interviewing dozens of elderly black and white riot eyewitnesses, and searching through archives in both Tulsa and Oklahoma City for documents pertaining to the riot.  

But something else happened as well. For on two separate occasions that winter, Wheeler was approached by white men, unknown to him, who warned him, “Don’t write that story.” Not long thereafter, Wheeler’s home telephone began ringing at all hours of the day and night, and one morning he awoke to find that someone had taken a bar of soap and scrawled across the front windshield of his car, “Best check under your hood from now on.”

But Ed Wheeler was a poor candidate for such scare tactics. A former United States Army infantry officer, the incidents only angered him. Moreover, he was now deep into trying to piece together the history of the riot, and was not about to be deterred. But to be on the safe side, he sent his wife and young son to live with his mother-in-law.

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Goodwin, Sr., Tulsa, November 21, 1976, in Ruth Sigler Avery, Fear: The Fifth Horseman -- A Documentary of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot, unpublished manuscript.

See also: Mable B. Little, Fire on Mt. Zion: My Life and History as a Black Woman in American (Langston, OK: The Black Think Tank, 1990); Beth Macklin, “‘Home’ Important in Tulsa’s Life,” Tulsa World, November 30, 1975, p. 3H; and Mable B. Little, “A History of the Blacks of North Tulsa and My Life (A True Story),” typescript dated May 24, 1971.


Ed Wheeler interview.
Despite the harassment, Wheeler completed his article and Larry Silvey was pleased with the results. But when Silvey began to lay out the story -- complete with never-before-published photographs of both the riot and its aftermath -- Chamber of Commerce management killed the article. Silvey appealed to the Chamber’s board of directors, but they, too, refused to allow the story to be published.

Determined that his efforts should not have been in vain, Wheeler then tried to take his story to Tulsa’s two daily newspapers, but was rebuffed. In the end, his article -- called “Profile of a Race Riot” -- was published in Impact Magazine, a new, black-oriented publication edited by a young African American journalist named Don Ross.

“Profile of a Race Riot” was a handhitting, pathbreaking story, easily the best piece of writing published about the riot in decades. But is was also a story whose impact was both limited and far from citywide. For while it has been reported that the issue containing Wheeler’s story sold out “virtually overnight,” the magazine’s readership, which was not large to begin with, was almost exclusively African American. Ultimately, “Profile of a Race Riot” marked a turning point in how the riot would be written about in the years to come, but at the time that it was published, few Tulsans -- and hardly any whites -- even knew of its existence.25

One of the few who did was Ruth Sigler Avery, a white Tulsa woman with a passion for history. A young girl at the time of the riot, Avery had been haunted by her memories of the smoke and flames rising up over the African American district, and by the two trucks carrying the bodies of riot victims that had passed in front of her home on East 8th Street.

Determined that the history of the riot needed to be preserved, Avery began interviewing riot survivors, collecting riot photographs, and serving as a one-woman research bureau for anyone interested in studying what had happened. Convinced that the riot had been deliberately covered-up, Avery embarked upon what turned out to be a decades-long personal crusade to see that the true story of the riot was finally told.²⁶

Along the way, Avery met some kindred spirits — and none more important that Mozella Franklin Jones. The daughter of riot survivor and prominent African American attorney Buck Colbert Franklin, Jones had long endeavored to raise awareness of the riot, particularly outside of Tulsa’s black community. And while she was often deeply frustrated by white resistance to confronting the riot, her accomplishments were far from inconsequential. Along with Henry C. Whitlow, Jr., a history teacher at Booker T. Washington High School, Jones had not only helped to desegregate the Tulsa Historical Society, but had mounted the first-ever major exhibition on the history of African Americans in Tulsa. Moreover, she had also created, at the Tulsa Historical Society, the first collection of riot photographs available to the public.²⁷

None of these activities, however, was by itself any match for the culture of silence which had long hovered over the riot, and for years to come, discussions of the riot were often curtailed. But taken together — the fiftieth anniversary ceremony and “Profile of a Race


Riot,” and the work of Ruth Avery and Mozilla Jones — had nudged the riot if not into the spotlight, then at least out of the back reaches of the city’s historical closet.  

Moreover, these local efforts mirrored some larger trends in American society. Nationwide, the decade of the 1970s witnessed a virtual explosion of interest in the African American experience. Millions of television viewers watched Roots, the miniseries adaptation of Alex Haley’s chronicle of one family’s tortuous journey through slavery, while books by black authors climbed to the top of the bestseller lists. Black studies programs and departments were created at colleges from coast-to-coast, while at both the high school and university level, teaching materials began to more fully address issues of race. And as scholars started to re-examine the long and turbulent history of race relations in American — including racial violence — the Tulsa riot began to receive some limited national exposure.  

Similar activities took place in Oklahoma. Kay M. Teall’s Black History in Oklahoma, an impressive collection of historical documents published in 1971, helped to make the history of black Oklahomans far more accessible to teachers across the state.

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28 During this same period, a number of other Tulsans also endeavored to bring the story of the riot out into the open. James Ault, who taught sociology at the University of Tulsa during the late 1960s, interviewed a number of riot survivors and eyewitnesses. So did Bruce Hartnutt, who directed the evening programs at Tulsa Junior College during the early 1970s. Hartnutt’s father, who had managed the truck fleet at a West Tulsa refinery at the time of the riot, later told his son that he had been ordered to help transport the bodies of riot victims.


Teall’s book paid significant attention to the story of the riot, as did Arthur Tolson’s *The Black Oklahomans: A History 1541-1972*, which came out one year later.\(^3\)

Then, in 1975, Northeastern State University historian Rudia M. Halliburton, Jr. published *The Tulsa Race War of 1921*. Adapted from an article he had published three years earlier in the Journal of Black Studies, Halliburton’s book featured a remarkable collection of riot photographs, many of which had had collected from his students. Issued by a small academic press in California, Halliburton’s book received little attention outside of scholarly circles. Nonetheless, as the first book about the riot published in more than a half century, it was another important step toward unlocking the riot’s history.\(^3\)

In the end, it would still take several years -- and other books, and other individuals -- to lift the veil of silence fully which had long hovered over the riot. But by the end of the 1970s, efforts were underway that, once and for all, would finally bring out into the open the history of the tragic events of the spring of 1921.\(^3\)


And more books, it should be added, are on the way. For as of the summer of 2000, at least two journalists were under contract with national publishers to research and write books about the riot and its legacy. Furthermore, a number of Tulsans are also said to be involved with book projects about the riot.
Today, the Tulsa race riot is anything but unknown.

During the past two years, both the riot itself, and the efforts of Oklahomans to come to terms with the tragedy, have been the subject of dozens of magazine and newspaper articles, radio talk shows, and television documentaries. In an unprecedented -- and continuing -- explosion of press attention, journalists and film crews from as far away as Paris and London have journeyed to Oklahoma to interview riot survivors and eyewitnesses, search through archives for documents and photographs, and walk the ground where the killings and burning of May 31 and June 1, 1921 took place.

After years of neglect, stories and articles about the riot have appeared not only in Oklahoma magazines and newspapers, but also in the pages of the Dallas Morning News, The Economist, the Kansas City Star, the London Daily Telegraph, the Los Angeles Times, the National Post of Canada, the New York Times, Newsday, the Philadelphia Inquirer, U.S. News and World Report, USA Today, and the Washington Post, while the riot has also been the subject of wire stories issued by the Associated Press and Reuter's. In addition, news stories and television documentaries about the riot have been produced by ABC News Nightline, Australian Broadcasting, the BBC, CBS News' 60 Minutes II, CNN, Cinemax, The History Channel, NBC News, National Public Radio, Norwegian Broadcasting, South African Broadcasting, and Swedish Broadcasting, as well as by a number of in-state television and radio stations. Various websites and Internet chat rooms have also featured the riot, while in numerous high school and college classrooms across America, the riot has become a subject
of study. All told, for the first time in nearly eighty years, the Tulsa race riot of 1921 has once again become front-page news.33

What has not made the headlines, however, is that for the past two and one-half years, an intensive effort has been quietly underway to investigate, document, analyze, and better understand the history of the riot. Archives have been searched through, old newspapers and government records have been studied, and sophisticated, state-of-the-art scientific equipment has been utilized to help reveal the potential location of the unmarked burial sites of riot victims. And while literally dozens of what appeared to be promising leads for reliable new information about the riot turned out to be little more than dead ends, a significant amount of previously unavailable evidence -- including long-forgotten documents and photographs -- has been discovered.

33 Oklahoma newspapers have, not surprisingly, provided the most expansive coverage of recent riot-related news. In particular, see: the reporting of Melissa Nelson and Christy Watson in the Daily Oklahoman; the numerous non-bylined stories in the Oklahoma Eagle; and the extensive coverage by Julie Bryant, Rik Espinosa, Brian Ford, Randy Krehbiel, Ashley Parrish, Jimmy Pride, Rita Sherrow, Robert S. Walters, and Heath Weaver in the Tulsa World.


The riot has also been the subject of a number of television and radio news stories, documentaries, and talk shows during the past two years. The more comprehensive documentaries include: “The Night Tulsa
None of this, it must be added, could have been possible without the generous assistance of Oklahomans from all walks of life. Scores of senior citizens -- including riot survivors and observers, as well as the sons and daughters of policemen, National Guardsmen, and riot participants -- have helped us to gain a much clearer picture of what happened in Tulsa during the spring of 1921. All told, literally hundreds of Oklahomans, of all races, have given of their time, their memories, and their expertise to help us all gain a better understanding of this great tragedy.

This report is a product of these combined efforts. The scholars who have written it are all Oklahomans -- either by birth, upbringing, residency, or family heritage. Young and not-so-young, black and white, men and women, we include within our ranks both the granddaughter and the son of African American riot survivors, as well as the son of a white eyewitness. We are historians and archaeologists, forensic scientists and legal scholars, university professors and retirees.

For the editors of this report, the riot also bears considerable personal meaning. Tulsa is our hometown, and we are both graduates of the Tulsa Public Schools. And although we grew up in different eras, and in different parts of town -- and heard about the riot, as it were, from different sides of the fence -- both of our lives have been indelibly shaped by what happened in 1921.

But history knows no fences. And while the stories that black Oklahomans tell about the riot often differ from those of their white counterparts, it is the job of the historian to locate the truth wherever it may lie. There are, of course, many legitimate areas of dispute

about the riot — and will be, without a doubt, for years to come. But far more significant is
the tremendous amount of information that we now know about the tragedy — about how it
started and how it ended, about its terrible fury and its murderous violence, about the
community it devastated and the lives it shattered. Neither myth nor “confusion”, the riot was
an actual, definable, and describable event in Oklahoma history, the central truths of which
can, and must, be told.

That won’t always be easy. For despite the many acts of courage, heroism, and
selflessness that occurred on May 31 and June 1, 1921 — some of which are described in the
pages that follow — the story of the Tulsa race riot is a chronicle of hatred and fear, of burning
houses and shots fired in anger, of justice denied and dreams deferred. Like the bombing of
the Murrah Federal Building some seventy-three years later, there is simply no denying the
fact that the riot was a true Oklahoma tragedy, perhaps our greatest.

But, like the bombing, the riot can also be a bearer of lessons — about not only who we
are, but also about who we would like to be. For only by looking to the past can we see not
only where we have been, but also where we are going. And as the first one-hundred years of
Oklahoma statehood draws to a close, and a new century begins, we can best honor that past
not by burying it, but by facing it squarely, honestly, and, above all, openly.
The Tulsa Race Riot

by Scott Ellsworth

History does not take place in a vacuum

And historical events, be they great or small, do not exist in isolation, but are a product of the age during which they occurred. Often times, the reasons why a particular historical incident turned out the way it did can be readily located, while for others, the causes may be more difficult to locate. But in both cases, one rule still holds true: that the events of the past cannot be separated from the era when they occurred.

Such applies to the Tulsa race riot as well. And to understand the riot, one cannot begin with the first shot that was fired, nor even with the seemingly insignificant chain of events that led to the first signs of real trouble. Rather, we must begin with the spirit of the times. For only be seeing the world as Tulsans did in 1921, and by grasping both their passions and their fears, can we comprehend not only how this great tragedy could occur, but why, in the end, that it did.

Of all the qualities that impressed out-of-town visitors about Tulsa in the days before the race riot, one of them was just how new and up-to-date everything seemed. From the modern office buildings that were rising up out of downtown, to the electric trolleys that rumbled back and forth along Main Street, to the rows of freshly painted houses that kept
pushing the city limits further and further into the surrounding countryside, compared to other cities, Tulsa was nothing short of an overnight sensation. Indeed, Tulsa had grown so much and so fast — in a now-you-don’t-see-it, now-you-do kind of fashion — that local boosters called it the Magic City.

The elixir which had fueled this remarkable growth was, of course, oil. For with the discovery of the nearby Glenn Pool — reputed to be the “richest small oil field in the world” — in 1905, and by the farsightedness of local leaders to build a bridge across the Arkansas River one year earlier, the sleepy rural crossroads know as Tulsa, I.T. was suddenly catapulted into the urban age.

By 1910, thanks to the forest of derricks which had risen up over the nearby oil fields, Tulsa had mushroomed into a raucous boomtown of more than 10,000. But, astonishingly, its real growth was only beginning. For as the word began to spread about Tulsa — as a place where fortunes could be made, lives could be rebuilt, and a fresh start could be had — people literally began to pour in from all over the country. Remarkably enough, by 1920, the population of greater Tulsa had skyrocketed to more than 100,000.

And the city that these newcomers had built was, in many ways, equally remarkable.¹ Anchored by the oil industry, and by its new role as the hub of the vast Mid-Continent Field, by 1921 Tulsa was home to not only the offices of more than four-hundred different oil and gas companies, but also to a score of oil field supply companies, tank manufacturers, pipe line

¹ A number of general histories of Tulsa have been written over the years, the most recent being Danney Goble, Tulsa!: Biography of the American City (Tulsa: Council Oaks Books, 1997). In addition, also see: William Butler, Tulsa 75: A History of Tulsa (Tulsa: Metropolitan Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, 1974); Angie Debo, Tulsa: From Creek Town to Oil Capital (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943); Clarence B. Douglas, The History of Tulsa, Oklahoma: A City With a Personality (3 vols.; Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1921); Nina Dunn, Tulsa’s Magic Roots (Tulsa: Oklahoma Book Publishing Company, 1979); James Monroe Hall, The Beginning of Tulsa (Tulsa: Scott-Rice Company, 1928);
companies, and refineries. And while the city also enjoyed its role as a regional commercial center, serving nearby farms and ranches, for good reason it was already being referred to as the Oil Capital of the World.

Moreover, despite its youth, Tulsa had also acquired, by 1921, practically all of the trappings of older, more established American cities. Four different railroads -- the Frisco, the Santa Fe, the Katy, and the Midland Valley -- served the city, as did two separate interurban train lines. A new, all-purpose bridge spanned the Arkansas River near Eleventh Street, while street repair, owing to the ever-increasing numbers of automobiles, was practically constant. And by 1919, Tulsa could also boast of having its own commercial airport.

A new City Hall had been built in 1917, a new Federal Building in 1915, and a new County Courthouse in 1912. New schools and parks had also been dedicated, and in 1914, the city erected a magnificent new auditorium, the 3,500 seat Convention Hall. Tulsa had grown so quickly, in fact, that even the old city cemetery had to be closed to new burials. In its place, the city had designated Oaklawn Cemetery, located at Eleventh Street and Peoria Avenue, as the new city cemetery.²


On the old Tulsa city cemetery, which was located near what is now the intersection of Second Street and Frisco Avenue, see: Jim Downing, “Bulldozers Disturb Pioneers’ Final Rest,” Tulsa World, February 17, 1970, pp. 1B, 6B; Mrs. J.O. Misch, “Last Resting Places Not Always Final” and other undated clippings located in the Tulsa Cemeteries subject files at the Tulsa Historical Society; and, interview with S.R. Lewis, Indian Pioneer History Collection, Federal Writers’ Project, vol. CVI, pp. 351-352, Oklahoma Historical Society.
In 1921, Tulsa could lay claim to two daily newspapers -- the *Tulsa World*, a morning paper, and a newly renamed afternoon daily, the *Tulsa Tribune* -- plus a handful of weeklies. Radio had not arrived yet, but the city was connected to the larger world through four different telegraph companies. Telephone service also existed -- with some ten-thousand phones in use by 1918 -- although long-distance service was still in its infancy. And while the city was linked both to nearby towns and to the state capital at Oklahoma City by a network of roads, rail travel was by far the fastest and most reliable mode of transportation in and out of town.

Seven different banks, some of which were capitalized at more than one million dollars each, were located downtown, as were the offices of dozens of insurance agencies, investment advisers, accounting firms, stock and bond brokerages, real estate agencies, and loan companies. By 1921, more than two-hundred attorneys were practicing in Tulsa, as were more than one-hundred and fifty doctors and sixty dentists.

Frequently awash in money, the citizens of Tulsa had plenty of places to spend it, from furniture stores, jewelry shops, and clothing stores to restaurants and cafes, motion picture theaters, billiard halls and speakeasies. Those who could afford it could find just about anything in Tulsa, from the latest in fashion to the most modern home appliances, including vacuum cleaners, electric washing machines and Victrolas. And for those whose luck had run dry, the city had its share of pawnshops and second hand stores.³

Many Tulsans were especially proud of the city’s residential neighborhoods -- and with good reason. From the workingman’s castles that offered electric lighting, indoor

plumbing, and spacious front porches, to the real castles that were being built by the oil barons, the city could boast of block after block of handsome, modern homes. And while Tulsa was by no means without its dreary rooming houses and poverty stricken side streets, brand new neighborhoods -- with names like Maple Ridge, Sunset Park, Glen Acres, College Addition, Gurley Hill, and Irving Heights -- kept being built year after year. Some of the new homes, in fact, were so palatial that they were regularly featured on picture postcards, Chamber of Commerce pamphlets, and other publications extolling the virtues of life in Tulsa.4

So too, not surprisingly, was downtown. And with its modern office buildings, its graceful stone churches, and its busy nightlife, it is easy to see why Tulsans -- particularly those who worked, played, or worshipped downtown -- were so proud of the city's ever-growing skyline. But what the pamphlets and the picture postcards did not reveal was that, despite its impressive new architecture and its increasingly urbane affectations, Tulsa was a deeply troubled town. And as 1920 turned into 1921, the city would soon face a crossroads that, in the end, would change it forever.

There was also something else that the Chamber of Commerce pamphlets and the picture postcards did not show. For Tulsa was, in some ways, not one city but two. For practically in the shadow of downtown, there sat a community that was no less remarkable than Tulsa itself. Some whites disparagingly referred to it as “Little Africa”, or worse, but it

4 While a complete architectural history of Tulsa as not yet been written, the homes of the oil barons have been the subject of careful study. See: Marilyn Inhofe, Kathleen Reeves, and Sandy Jones, Footsteps Through Tulsa (Tulsa: Liberty Press, 1984); and, especially, John Brooks Walton, One Hundred Historic Tulsa Homes (Tulsa: HCE Publications, 2000).
has become known in later years simply as Greenwood. And in the early months of 1921, it was the home of nearly then-thousand African American men, women, and children.

Many had ties to the region that stretched back for generations. Some were the descendants of African American slaves, who had accompanied the Creeks, the Cherokees, and the Choctaws on the Trail of Tears. Others were the children and grandchildren of runaway slaves who had fled to the Indian Nations in the years prior to and during the Civil War. And a few elderly residents, some of whom were later interviewed by WPA workers during the 1930s, had been born into slavery.

But most of Tulsa’s African American residents had come to Oklahoma, like their white neighbors, in the great boom years just before and after statehood. Some had come from Mississippi, some from Missouri, and others had journeyed all the way from Georgia. For many, Oklahoma represented not only a chance to escape the harsher racial realities of life in the former states of the Old South, but was literally a land of hope, a place worth sacrificing for, a place to start anew. And come they did, in wagons and on horseback, by train and on foot. And while some of the new settlers came directly to Tulsa, many others had first lived in smaller communities — many of which were all-black, or nearly so — scattered throughout the state.

B.C. Franklin was one. Born in a small country crossroads about twenty miles southwest of Pauls Valley, Franklin’s family had roots in Oklahoma that stretched back to the

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days of the old Chickasaw Nation during the Civil War. An intelligent and determined young man, Franklin had attended college in Tennessee and Georgia, but returned to Indian Territory to open up a law practice. He eventually settled in Rentiesville, an all-black town located between Muskogee and Checotah, where he became not only the sole lawyer in town, but also its postmaster, its justice of the peace, and one of its leading businessmen. But, as his son John Hope Franklin later wrote, “there was not a decent living in all those activities”. So, in February 1921, B.C. Franklin moved to Tulsa in the hopes of setting up a more lucrative practice.7

Franklin’s experiences, however, were hardly unique, and scattered about Greenwood were other businessmen and businesswomen who had first tried their luck in smaller communities. In the end, however, their earlier difficulties often proved to be an asset in their new home. Full of energy and well-schooled in entrepreneurialism, these new settlers brought considerable business skills to Tulsa, and, aided by the buoyant local economy, they went to work on building business enterprises that rested upon sturdier economic foundations. And, by early 1921, the community that they built was, by national standards, in many ways quite remarkable.8

Running north out of the downtown commercial district -- and shaped, more or less, like an elongated jigsaw puzzle piece -- Greenwood was bordered by the Frisco railroad yards

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6 The standard work on the history of African Americans in Oklahoma is Jimmie Lewis Franklin, Journey Toward Hope: A History of Blacks in Oklahoma (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982).
8 On the transfer of entrepreneurial experience from the all black towns to Greenwood, credit is due to Professor D.F.G. Williams, an urbanist at Washington University in St. Louis. Professor Williams is currently preparing a scholarly article about Tulsa’s African American community at the time of the riot, and was kind
to the south, by Lansing Street and the Midland Valley tracks to the east, and by Standpipe and Sunset Hills to the west. The section line, now known as Pine Street, had for many years been the northernmost boundary of the African American settlement, but as Tulsa had grown, so had Greenwood. By 1921, new all-black housing developments — such as the Booker T. Washington and Dunbar Additions — now reached past Pine and into the open countryside north of the city.

The backbone of the community, however, was Greenwood Avenue. Running north for more than a mile — from Archer Street and the Frisco yards all the way past Pine — it was not only black Tulsa’s primary thoroughfare, but also possessed considerable symbolic meaning as well. Unlike other streets and avenues in Tulsa, which crisscrossed both white and black neighborhoods, Greenwood Avenue was essentially confined to the African American community.9

The southern end of Greenwood Avenue, and adjacent side streets, was the home of the African American commercial district. Nicknamed “Deep Greenwood”, this several block stretch of handsome one, two, and three-story red brick buildings housed dozens of black-owned and operated businesses, including grocery stores and meat markets, clothing and dry good stores, billiard halls, beauty parlors and barber shops, as well as the Economy Drug Company, William Anderson’s jewelry store, Henry Lilly’s upholstery shop, and A.S. Newkirk’s photography studio. A suit of clothes, purchased at Elliott & Hooker’s clothing

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emporium at 124 N. Greenwood, could be fitted across the street at H.L. Byars’ tailor shop at
105 N. Greenwood, and then cleaned around the corner at Hope Watson's cleaners at 322 E.
Archer.

There were plenty of places to eat, as well, from late night sandwich shops and
barbecue joints to Doc's Beanery and Hamburger Kelly’s place. Lilly Johnson’s Liberty Cafe,
recalled Mabel Little, who owned a beauty shop in Greenwood at the time of the riot, served
home-cooked meals at all hours, while at the nearby Little Cafe, “people lined up waiting for
their specialty -- chicken or smothered steak with rice and brown gravy.” A Coca-Cola, a
sarsaparilla, or a soda could be bought at Rolly and Ada Huff’s confectionery on Archer
between Detroit and Cincinnati. And although both the nation and Oklahoma were nominally
dry, there were also places where a man or a woman could purchase a shot of bootleg
whiskey or a milky-colored glass of Choctaw beer.10

For a community of its size, the Greenwood business district could boast of a number
of impressive commercial structures. John and Loula Williams, who owned the three-story
Williams Building at the northwest corner of Greenwood Avenue and Archer Street, also
operated the seven-hundred and fifty seat Dreamland Theater, which offered live musical and
theatrical revues, as well as silent movies accompanied by a piano player. Across the street
from the Dreamland sat the white-owned Dixie Theater with seating for one-thousand, which
made it the second largest theater in town. And in nearby buildings were the offices of nearly

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interview with Edward L. Goodwin, Sr., Tulsa, November 21, 1976, by Ruth Sigler Avery in Fear: The Fifth
Horsemann: A Documentary of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot, unpublished manuscript.
10 Mabel B. Little, “A History of the Blacks of North Tulsa and My Life”, typescript, dated May 24,
history interviews with: Robert Fairchild, Tulsa, June 8, 1978; V.H. Hodge, Tulsa, June 12, 1978; W.D.
all of Tulsa’s black lawyers, realtors, and other professionals. Most impressively, there were fifteen African American physicians in Tulsa at the time of the riot, including Dr. A.C. Jackson, who had been described by one of the Mayo brothers as the “most able Negro surgeon in America”.

Indeed, the overall intellectual life of Greenwood was, for a community of its size, quite striking. There was not one black newspaper but two — the *Tulsa Star* and the *Oklahoma Sun*. African Americans were discouraged from utilizing the new Carnegie library downtown, but a smaller, all-black branch library had been opened on Archer Street. Nationally recognized African American leaders, such as W.E.B. DuBois, had lectured in Tulsa before the riot. Moreover, Greenwood was also home to a local business league, various fraternal orders, a Y.M.C.A. branch, and a number of women’s clubs, the last of which were often led by the more than thirty teachers who taught in the city’s separate — and, as far as facilities were concerned, decidedly unequal — African American public schools.

The political issues of the day also attracted considerable interest. The *Tulsa Star*, in particular, not only provided extensive coverage of national, state, and local political campaigns and election results, but also devoted significant column space for recording the activities of the local all-black Democratic and Republican clubs. Moreover, the *Star* also paid attention to a number of quasi-political movements as well, including Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association, different back-to-Africa movements, and various

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nationalist organizations. One such group, the African Blood Brotherhood, later claimed to have had a chapter in Greenwood prior to the riot.\textsuperscript{12}

When it came to religious activity, however, there was no question at all where Tulsa's African American community stood. Church membership in Tulsa ran high, and on a per capita basis, there were more churches in black Tulsa than there were in the city's white community — as well as a number of Bible study groups, Christian youth organizations, and chapters of national religious societies. All told, there were more than a dozen African American churches in Tulsa at the time of the riot, including First Baptist, Vernon A.M.E., Brown's Chapel, Morning Star, Bethel Seventh Day Adventist, and Paradise Baptist, as well as Church of God, Nazarene, and Church of God in Christ congregations. Most impressive from an architectural standpoint, perhaps, was the beautiful, brand new home of Mt. Zion Baptist Church, which was dedicated on April 10, 1921 — less than eight weeks before the riot.\textsuperscript{13}

The new Mt. Zion Baptist Church building was also a tangible symbol, in brick and mortar, of the fact that African Americans had also shared, to some degree, in Tulsa's great

\textsuperscript{12} Tulsa Star: May 30, 1913; June 13, 1913; February 7, 1914; March 7, 1914; April 4, 1914; April 11, 1914; September 12, 1914; February 16, 1918; May 4, 1918; and January 4, 1919. Tulsa World, June 6, 1921.


On the African Blood Brotherhood, see: the July and November 1921 issues of The Crusader, the official journal of the organization; "Negroes Brand Story Race Initiated Riot as Fake", New York Call, June 5, 1921; and, interviews with Binkley Wright, Los Angeles, California, February and August 25, 2000, by Eddie Faye Gates; and Tulsa World, March 26, 2000.

On the intellectual and political life of Greenwood prior to the riot, additional credit is due to the most helpful insights of Mr. Paul Lee, a journalist and filmmaker who is currently working on a documentary on early black migration to Oklahoma.

\textsuperscript{15} Tulsa City Directory, 1921. Parrish, Events of the Tulsa Disaster, pp. 41, 78-80. Gates, They Came Searching, pp. 165-167. Tulsa Star, March 6, 1915.

On the dedication of the new Mt. Zion Baptist Church building, see the Tulsa World, April 10, 1921, p. B-8.

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economic boom. And while modest in comparison with the fortunes being amassed by the city’s white millionaires, Greenwood was home to some highly successful business entrepreneurs. O.W. Gurley, a black real estate developer and the owner of the Gurley Hotel, reportedly suffered some $65,000 in losses during the riot. Even more impressive was the business resume of J.B. Stradford, whose assets were said to be nearly twice as large. Stradford, a highly successful owner of rental property, had borrowed $20,000 in order to construct his own hotel. Opened on June 1, 1918, the Stradford Hotel, a modern fifty-four room structure, instantly became not only one of the true jewels of Greenwood Avenue, but was also one of the largest black-owned businesses in Oklahoma.¹⁴

Most of the black-owned businesses in Tulsa were, of course, much more modest affairs. And scattered about the district were numerous small concerns -- from two-seater barber shops to family-run grocery stores -- that helped to make pre-riot Greenwood, on a per capita basis, one of the most business-laden African American communities in the country. Grit, hard work, and determination were the main reasons for this success, as were the entrepreneurial skills that were imported to Tulsa from smaller communities across Oklahoma.

But there were other reasons as well. Tulsa’s booming economy was a major factor, as was the fact that, on the whole, Greenwood was not only the place where black Tulsans chose


to shop, but was also practically the only place that they could. Hemmed in by the city’s residential segregation ordinance, African Americans were generally barred from patronizing white-owned stores downtown -- or ran the risk of insult, or worse, if they tried. And while many black Tulsans made a conscious decision to patronize African American merchants, the fact of the matter was that they had few others places to go.\textsuperscript{15}

And there was no dearth of African American consumers. For despite the growing fame of its commercial district, the vast majority of Greenwood’s adults were neither businessmen nor businesswomen, but worked long hours, under trying conditions, for white employers. Largely barred from employment in both the oil industry and from most of Tulsa’s manufacturing facilities, these men and women toiled at difficult, often dirty, and generally menial jobs -- the kinds that most whites considered beneath them--as janitors and ditch-diggers, dishwashers and maids, porters and day laborers, domestics and service workers. Unsung and largely forgotten, it was, nevertheless, their paychecks that built Greenwood, and their hard work that helped to build Tulsa.\textsuperscript{16}

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\begin{itemize}
\item Significantly, Stradford wrote a memoir -- a few pages of which have turned up in Tulsa -- which, if published, promises to be a most important historical document.
\item African Americans who tried to shop downtown were often the targets of discriminatory and derogatory behavior by white merchants and customers. See, for example, “Colored Woman Insulted”, in the \textit{Tulsa Star}, July 11, 1913.
\item At least one white merchant in an otherwise all-white block of stores did, however, actively seek black customers. See the advertisements for the North Main Department Store in the \textit{Tulsa Star}, March 27 and April 17, 1920.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Equally forgotten perhaps, are the housing conditions that these men and women returned to at the end of the day. For although Greenwood contained some beautiful, modern homes -- particularly those of the doctors, business owners, and educators who lived in the fashionable 500 block of North Detroit Avenue along the shoulder of Standpipe Hill -- most African Americans in pre-riot Tulsa lived in far more meager circumstances. Indeed, according to a study conducted by the American Association of Social Workers of living conditions in black Tulsa shortly before the riot, some “95 per cent of the Negro residents in the Black belt lived in poorly constructed frame houses, without conveniences, and on streets which were unpaved and on which the drainage was all surface”.

Not all black Tulsans, however, lived in Greenwood. For as the city boomed and the newly-minted oil tycoons built mansions, purchased touring cars, and in general sought to mimic the lifestyles of their more established counterparts back East, there was a corresponding boom in the market for domestic help. Such positions were often open to African Americans as well as whites, and by early 1921, upward of two-hundred black Tulsans were residing in otherwise all-white neighborhoods, especially on the city’s ever growing south side. Working as maids, cooks, butlers, and chauffeurs, they lived in servant’s

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17 Tulsa City Directory, 1921. On the lives of the African American men and women who lived in the “Professor’s Row” off of Standpipe Hill, see the forthcoming article by Paul Lee in Essence magazine.

While a complete copy of the study conducted by the American Association of Social Workers has not been located, this report -- and its findings -- was cited in subsequent publications. The quote is from The Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, 56th Annual Session, June 26 to July 3, 1929 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, c1929), pp. 393-394. The study is also cited in Jesse O. Thomas, “American Cities -- Tulsa”, an unidentified 1924 article, a copy of which is located in the Oklahoma subject file of the Schomburg Center Clipping File 1925-1974, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York, NY.
quarters that, more often than not, were attached to garages located at the rear of their employer’s property.

For the men and women who lived and worked in these positions, a visit to Greenwood — be it to attend Sunday services, or simply to visit with family and friends — was often the highlight of the week. And whether they caught a picture show at the Dreamland or the Dixie, or merely window-shopped along Greenwood Avenue, they, too, could take both pride and ownership in what lay before them.¹⁸ For its poverty and lack of services notwithstanding, there was no question that Greenwood was an American success story.

Yet, despite its handsome business district and its brand-new brick church, and the rags-to-riches careers of some of its leading citizens, neither Greenwood’s present, nor its future, was by any means secure. For by the spring of 1921, trouble — real trouble — had been brewing in Tulsa for some time. And when it came to issues of race — not just in Tulsa or in Oklahoma, but all across American — the problems weren’t simply brewing. They had, in fact, already arrived.

In the long and often painful history of race relations in the United States, few periods were as turbulent as the years surrounding the First World War, when the country exploded into an era of almost unprecedented racial strife. In the year 1919 alone, more than two dozen different race riots broke out in cities and towns across the nation. And unlike the racial disturbances of the 1960s and the 1990s, these riots were characterized by the specter

of white mobs invading African American neighborhoods, where they attacked black men and women and, in some cases, set their homes and businesses on fire.\textsuperscript{19}

These riots were set off in different ways. In Chicago, long-simmering tensions between blacks and whites over housing, recreation, and jobs were ignited one Sunday afternoon in late July 1919. A group of teenaged African American boys, hoping to find some relief from the rising temperatures, climbed aboard a homemade raft out on Lake Michigan. But they ended up drifting opposite an all-white beach. The white beachgoers, meanwhile, who were already angered by an attempt by a group of black men and women to utilize that beach earlier that day, began hurling stones at the youths, killing one, and setting off nearly two weeks of racial terror. In the end, more than thirty-eight people -- both black and white -- were killed in Chicago, and scores and scores of homes were burned to the ground.\textsuperscript{20}

A race riot in Washington, D.C., which broke out earlier that summer, followed a more typical pattern. After rumors had been circulating for weeks that rapists were on the loose, a white woman claimed that she had been sexually assaulted by two young African American men. Although she later admitted that her original story was false, the white press built up the incident, and racial tensions rose. Then, on July 19th, the \textit{Washington Post} published yet another story of an alleged assault -- "NEGROES ATTACK GIRL" ran the headline, \textquote{WHITE MEN VAINLY PURSUE". The next day, the nation's capital erupted into


racial violence, as groups of white soldiers, sailors, and Marines began to "molest any black person in sight, hauling them off of streetcars and out of restaurants, chasing them up alleys, and beating them mercilessly on street corners". At least six people were killed and more than a hundred were injured. After whites threatened to set fire to African American neighborhoods, order was finally restored when the Secretary of War called out some two-thousand federal troops to patrol the streets.\textsuperscript{21}

Alleged sexual assaults played a role in two other race riots that broke out that year. In Knoxville, Tennessee, a white mob gathered outside the jail where a black male was being held for supposedly attacking a white female. Troops were called in to quell the disturbance, but the soldiers -- all of whom were white -- instead invaded the African American district and "shot it up". And in Omaha, Nebraska, a similar situation rapidly developed after William Brown, who was black, was arrested for allegedly assaulting a young white girl. A mob of angry whites then stormed the courthouse where Brown was being held, shot him, hung him from a nearby lamppost, and then mutilated his body beyond recognition.\textsuperscript{22}

The savage attack on William Brown brutally demonstrated just how passionately many white Americans felt about situations involving interracial sexual relations. And while this subject -- which has a long and complicated history in the United States -- cannot be dealt with in a detailed fashion here, suffice it to say that during the post- World War I era, and for

\textsuperscript{21} Following the riot, the Chicago Commission on Race Relations conducted an extensive investigation of what had occurred. Its report, The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), is still quite useful.

\textsuperscript{22} Tuttle, Race Riot, pp. 29-30.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., pp. 244-245. Franklin and Moss, From Slavery to Freedom, p. 351.

A number of other World War I era riots have also been the subject of extensive study. See, for example: Elliott M. Rudwick, Race Riot at East St. Louis, July 2, 1917 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964); U.S. House of Representatives, Sixty-Fifth Congress, 2nd Session, "Report of the Special Committee Authorized by Congress to Investigate the East St. Louis Riots" (Washington, D.C.:
many years before and after, perhaps no crime was viewed as more egregious by many whites than the rape, or attempted rape, of a white woman by a black male.\textsuperscript{23}

Riots, however, weren’t the only form of extralegal violence faced by African Americans during the World War I era. In 1919 alone, more than seventy-five blacks were lynched by white mobs — including more than a dozen black soldiers, some of whom were murdered while still in uniform. Moreover, many of the so-called lynchings were growing ever more barbaric. During the first year following the war, eleven African Americans were burned — alive — at the stake by white mobs.\textsuperscript{24}

Across the nation, blacks bitterly resisted these attacks, which were often made worse by the fact that in many instances, local police authorities were unable — or unwilling — to disperse the white mobs. But as the violence continued, and the death count rose, more and more African American leaders came to the conclusion that nothing less than the very future of black men and black women in America hung in the balance.

The First World War had done much to clarify their thinking. In the name of democracy, African Americans had solidly supported the war effort. Black soldiers — who were placed in segregated units — had fought gallantly in France, winning the respect not only of Allied commanders, but also of their German foes. And, having risked their lives and shed

\textsuperscript{23} The literature on interracial sexual relations in America — including historical, sociological, and psychological analyses, as well as the work of some of the country’s finest novelists — is voluminous. For a historical perspective, two places to begin are: Joel Williamson, \textit{The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); and Dan T. Carter, \textit{Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South} (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1969).

their blood in Europe, many black veterans felt even more strongly that not only was it time that democracy was practiced back home, but that it was in fact a long time overdue.25

Instead, they returned home to a nation not only plagued by race riots and lynchings, but also by a poisonous racial climate that, in many ways, was only growing worse. For the very same years that saw the emergence of the United States as a major world power also witnessed, back home, the rise of some aggressive and insidious new forms of white racism.

Moreover, the new racial climate was far from limited to the South. Less than fifty years after the Civil War, a number of Northern cities began to bar African Americans from restaurants and other public establishments, while in the classrooms of Ivy League colleges and universities, a new scientific racism — which held that whites from Northern Europe were innately superior to all other human groups — was all the rage. In Washington, the administration of President Woodrow Wilson proposed dozens of laws which mandated discriminatory treatment against African Americans. And across the country, racist white politicians constantly preyed upon racial fear and hostility.26

And they soon had a new ally. Re-established in Atlanta in 1915, the so-called second Ku Klux Klan had adopted both the name and familiar hooded robes of its Nineteenth century predecessor, but in many ways was a brand new organization. Launched the same year that D.W. Griffith’s anti-black blockbuster, The Birth of a Nation, was released in movie theaters nationwide, Klan organizers fanned out across the country, establishing powerful state

organizations not only in the South, but also in places like New Jersey, Indiana, and Oregon. And while African Americans were often the recipients of the political intimidation, beatings, and other forms of violence meted out by Klansmen, they weren’t the only targets of the new reign of terror. Klan members also regularly attacked Jews, Catholics, Japanese Americans, and immigrants from Southern Europe, as well as suspected bootleggers, adulterers, and other alleged criminals.27

Although still a young state, many of these national trends were well-represented in Oklahoma. Like their counterparts elsewhere, black Oklahomans had rallied strongly behind the war effort, purchasing Liberty Bonds, holding patriotic rallies and taking part in home front conservation efforts. More than a few African American men from Oklahoma — including a large number of Tulsans — had enlisted in the Army. Some, like legendary Booker T. Washington High School football coach Seymour Williams, had fought in France.28

But when Oklahoma’s black World War I veterans finally returned to civilian life, they, too, came home to a state where, sadly enough, anti-black sentiments were alive and well. In 1911, the Oklahoma state legislature passed the infamous “Grandfather Clause”, which effectively ended voting by African Americans statewide. While the law was ruled unconstitutional by a unanimous vote by the U.S. Supreme Court four years later, other methods were soon employed to keep black Oklahomans from the polls. Nor did the Jim Crow legislation stop there. In the end, the state legislature passed a number of segregation

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statutes, including one which made Oklahoma the first state in the Union to segregate its telephone booths. 29

Racial violence, directed against black Oklahomans, was also a grim reality during this period. In large part owing to conditions of frontier lawlessness, Oklahoma had long been plagued by lynchings, and during the territorial days, numerous suspected horse thieves, cattle rustlers, and outlaws, the vast majority of whom were white, had been lynched by white mobs. But from 1911 onward, all of the state’s lynching victims, save one, were African American. And during the next decade, twenty-three black Oklahomans — including two women — were lynched by whites in more than a dozen different Oklahoma communities, including Anadarko, Ardmore, Eufala, Holdenville, Idabel, Lawton, Madill, Mannford, Muldrow, Norman, Nowata, Okemah, Oklahoma City, Purcell, Shawnee, Wagoner, and Wewoka. 30

The Sooner State also proved to be fertile ground for the newly revived Ku Klux Klan. Estimates vary, but at the height of its power in the mid-1920s, it is believed that there were more than 100,000 Klansmen in Oklahoma. Chapters existed statewide, and the organization’s membership rolls included farmers, ranchers, miners, oil field workers, small town merchants, big city businessmen, ministers, newspaper editors, policemen, educators, lawyers, judges, and politicians. Most Klan activities — including cross burnings, parades, night riding, whippings, and other forms of violence and intimidation — tended to be local in nature, although at one point the political clout of the state organization was so great that it

managed to launch impeachment proceedings against Governor John C. Walton, who opposed the Klan.³¹

Tulsa, in particular, became a lively center of Klan activity. And while membership figures are few and far between -- one estimate held that there were some 3,200 members of the Tulsa Klan in December 1921 -- perhaps as many as six-thousand white Tulsans, at one time or another, became members of the Klan, including several prominent local leaders. At one Klan initiation ceremony, which took place in the countryside south of town during the summer of 1922, more than one-thousand new members were initiated, causing a huge traffic jam on the road to Broken Arrow. Tulsa was also home to a thriving chapter of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan, as well as being one of the few cities in the country with an active chapter of the organization's official youth affiliate, the Junior Ku Klux Klan. There were Klan parades, Klan funerals, and Klan fund-raisers -- including one wildly successful 1923 benefit, which netted some $24,000, at which thirteen Ford automobiles were raffled off. In time, the Tulsa Klan grew so solvent that it built its own brick auditorium, Beno Hall -- short, it was said, for "Be No Nigger, Be No Jew, Be No Catholic" -- on Main Street just north of downtown.³²

The local Klan was also highly active in politics in Tulsa. It regularly issued lists of Klan-approved candidates for both state and local political offices, which were prominently displayed in Tulsa newspapers. According to one student of the Klan in Tulsa Country during the 1920s, “mayors, city commissioners, sheriffs, district attorneys, and many other city and country office holders who were either Klansmen or Klan supporters were elected, and re-elected, with regularity.” In 1923, three of the five members of the Oklahoma House of Representatives from Tulsa Country were admitted Klansmen.33

In addition to cross burnings, Tulsa Klan members also routinely engaged in acts of violence and intimidation. Richard Gary, who lived off Admiral Boulevard during the early 1920s, still has vivid memories of hooded Klansmen, a soon-to-be horsewhipped victim sitting between them, heading east in open touring cars. Suspected bootleggers, wife-cheaters, and automobile thieves were among the most common victims — but they weren’t the only ones. In May 1922, black deputy sheriff John Henry Smitherman was kidnapped by Klansmen, who sliced off one of his ears. Fifteen months later, Nathan Hantaman, a Jewish movie projectionist, was kidnapped by Klan members, who nearly beat him to death. The city’s Catholic population was also the target of considerable abuse, as Tulsa Klansmen tried to force local businessmen to fire their Catholic employees.34

Not all white Tulsans, of course, or even a majority, belonged to the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. And among the city’s white Protestants, there were many who disdained both the

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Klan’s tactics and beliefs. Nonetheless, at least until the mid-1920s, and in some ways all the way until the end of the decade, there is no doubt but that the Ku Klux Klan was a powerful force in the life of the city.\textsuperscript{35}

Less easy to document, however, is whether the Klan was organized in Tulsa prior to the 1921 race riot. For while there have been a number of allegations over the years claiming that the Klan was directly involved in the riot, the evidence is quite scanty -- in either direction -- as to whether or not the Klan had an actual organizational presence in the city prior to August 1921, some two months after the riot. But since this is an area of continuing interest, it may prove helpful to examine this evidence a bit more closely.

According to the best available scholarship, the first Klan organizers to officially visit Oklahoma--George Kimbro, Jr. and George C. McCarron, both from Houston -- did not arrive until the summer of 1920. Setting up headquarters in the Baltimore Building in downtown Oklahoma City, McCarron stayed on in the state capital, and began looking for future Klansmen among the membership of the city's various white fraternal orders. Then, according to Carter Blue Clark, whose 1976 doctoral dissertation remains the standard work on the history of the Ku Klux Klan in Oklahoma, McCarron "shortly had twelve Kleagles [assistant organizers] working out of his office selling memberships throughout the city, and very soon throughout the state." While Clark concluded that the Klan "could not be credited


with precipitating the riot" — a finding shared by most scholars of the riot — he also
determined that Klan organizers had been active in the Tulsa region beforehand.36

That Tulsa would have been an early destination for Klan organizers — who, like their
counterparts elsewhere, were paid on a commission basis — is entirely reasonable. For not
only did Tulsa itself offer a large base of potential members, but the city was a likely
jumping-off place for organizing the nearby oil fields.37

Other evidence also points toward there being members of the Klan in Tulsa prior to
the riot. In the sermon he delivered on Sunday evening, June 5, 1921 — only four days after
the riot — Bishop E.D. Mouzon told parishioners at Boston Avenue Methodist Church that,
"There may be some of you here tonight who are members of the Ku Klux Klan."
Furthermore, research conducted by Ruth Avery in the 1960s and 1970s also points toward
pre-riot Klan membership in Tulsa.38

That said, however, other evidence suggests that, if anything, the Klan had a very
limited presence in Tulsa before the riot. Throughout the first five months of 1921, for
example, the Tulsa Tribune did not hesitate to print stories about Ku Klux Klan activities
elsewhere — but gave no hint of there being any in Tulsa.39

Moreover, only one week before the riot, on May 22, 1921, the Tribune carried an
advertisement for the May Brothers clothing store which poked fun at the Klan. Announcing
that the downtown men’s clothiers had created its own “Kool Klad Klan”, the advertisement
went on to explain that this was a “hot weather society” whose members would receive

37 Ibid., pp. 36-38
discounts on their purchases of summer clothing. "Men who join the K.K.K. pay less for their
summer clothes and get more out of them," ran the ad copy, "Palm Beach is the favorite suit
of most members." What went unspoken, however, is that the May brothers -- nee Madansky
-- were Jewish immigrants from Russia, something that made them likely candidates for Klan
harassment. That the brothers ran the advertisement would seem to suggest that on the eve of
the riot, the existence of the Ku Klux Klan in Tulsa was far from common knowledge,
perhaps reflecting membership numbers that were still low.\footnote{The \textit{Tribune}, in particular, paid close attention to Klan activities in Dallas. See the \textit{Tulsa Tribune}:
January 29, 1921, p. 8; February 4, 1921, p. 1; April 2, 1921, p. 1; April 3, 1921, p. 5; May 22, 1921, p.1; and
May 24, 1921, p. 1.}

The riot would change all of that. For beginning with what one student of the history
of the Klan described as "the first open sign of the Klan's presence in Tulsa" in early August
1921, more than two months after the riot, the Klan literally exploded across the city. On
August 10th, more than two-thousand people attended a lecture at Convention Hall by a Klan
spokesman from Atlanta. Three weeks after that, on the evening of August 31st, some three-
hundred white Tulsa men were initiated into the Klan at a ceremony held outside of town.
And three days later, masked Klansmen kidnapped an alleged bootlegger named J.E. Frazier
and took him to a remote spot outside of Owasso and whipped him severely. After the
County Attorney subsequently announced that he would take no action against the Klansmen,
and intimated that the victim probably got what he deserved, more whippings soon followed.
With the attack on J.E. Frazier, Tulsa's Klan era began in earnest.

Despite the lack of convincing evidence linking the Klan to the outbreak of the riot, in
the months that followed, Klan organizers used the riot as a recruiting tool. The Klan lecturer
from Atlanta who visited Tulsa in August 1921 declared that "the riot was the best thing that
ever happened to Tulsa”, while other Klan spokesmen preyed upon the heightened emotional state of the white community after the riot. But however the pitch was made, it soon became abundantly clear that Tulsa was prime recruiting territory for the Ku Klux Klan. And, indeed, it had been for quite some time.\textsuperscript{41}

For despite the fact that segregation appeared to be gaining ground statewide, in the months leading up to the riot, more than a few white Tulsans instead feared, at least in Tulsa itself, that the opposite was true. Many were especially incensed when black Tulsans disregarded, or challenged, Jim Crow practices. Others were both enraged at, and jealous of, the material success of some of Greenwood’s leading citizens -- feelings that were no doubt increased by the sharp drop in the price of crude oil, and the subsequent layoffs in the oil fields, which preceded the riot. Indeed, an unidentified writer for one white Tulsa publication, the \textit{Exchange Bureau Bulletin}, later listed “niggers with money” as one of the so-called causes of the catastrophe. All told, during the weeks and months leading up to the riot, there were more than a few white Tulsans who not only feared that the color line was in danger of being slowly erased, but believed that this was already happening.\textsuperscript{42}

Adding to these fears was the simple reality that, at the time, the vast majority of white Tulsans possessed almost no direct knowledge of the African American community.

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Tulsa Tribune}, May 22, 1921, p. 2. On the May brothers, see also the March 27, 1921 issue, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Tulsa Tribune}, April 17, 1921, p. 5. \textit{Tulsa World}: April 10, 1921, p. B-4; April 14, 1921, p. 4; April 18, 1921, p. 4; April 20, 1921, p. 4; and April 23, 1921, p. 4. [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], “Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors, June 13, 1921,” NAACP Papers, Library of Congress. \textit{Exchange Bureau Bulletin}, I, 26 (July 7?), 1921.

On economic conditions in Tulsa prior to the riot, see: \textit{Harlow’s Weekly}, December 17, 1920 and September 16, 1921; \textit{Tulsa Tribune}, April 14, 1921, p. 6; \textit{Tulsa World}, May 19, 1921, p. 4; Tulsa City Commission, Record of Commission Proceedings, August 26, 1921; Ralph Cassady, Jr., \textit{Price Making and Price Behavior in the Petroleum Industry} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 136; and, U.S. Bureau
whichever. For although a handful of whites owned businesses in Greenwood, and a few others occasionally visited the area for one reason or another, most white Tulsans had never set foot in the African American district, and never would. Living in all-white neighborhoods, attending all-white schools and churches, and working for the most part in all-white work environments, the majority of white Tulsans in 1921 had little more than fleeting contact with the city's black population. And what little they knew, or thought they knew, about the African American community was susceptible not only to racial stereotypes and deeply-ingrained prejudices, but also to rumor, innuendo, and, as events would soon prove, what was printed in the newspaper.

Such conditions, it turned out, proved helpful to the Klan, and both before and after the riot, Klan organizers exploited the racial concerns of white Tulsans as a method of boosting membership. But the organizers also used something else. For race relations wasn't the only major societal issue that weighed heavily on the minds of many Tulsans during the months that led up to the riot. Rather, they were also deeply concerned about something else -- something that, in the end, proved to be a gateway to catastrophe.

Of all the visitors who came to Tulsa in the months preceding the riot, not everyone left town with a positive image. For despite the city's new skyscrapers and impressive mansions, its booming oil industry and its rags-to-riches millionaires, some visitors -- like the federal agent who spent five days undercover in Tulsa in late April, 1921 -- saw a far different side of local life. In his "Report on Vice Conditions in Tulsa", the agent had found that:

Gambling, bootlegging and prostitution are very much in evidence. At the leading hotels and rooming houses the bell hops and porters are pimping for women, and also selling booze. Regarding violations of the law, these prostitutes and pimps solicit without any fear of the police, as they will invariably remind you that you are safe in these houses.

All told, the agent concluded, "Vice conditions in this city are extremely bad."⁴³

Few Tulsans, in those days, would have been surprised by the agent's findings. For in addition to the city's growing fame as the Oil Capital, Tulsa was also gaining something of a reputation — and not just regionally, but also among New York bankers and insurance men — as a wide-open town, a place where crime and criminals were as much a part of the oil boom as well logs and drilling rigs.

Most certainly, there was plenty of evidence to support such a conclusion. Well-known gambling dens — like Dutch Weete's place three miles east of the Fairgrounds, or Puss Hall's roadhouse along the Turley highway — flourished on the outskirts of town, while within the city, both a fortune in oil royalties, or a roughneck's wages, could be gambled away, night after night, in poker games in any number of hotels and rooming houses.

It being the era of Prohibition, both Oklahoma and the nation were supposedly dry — although one would not know it from a visit to Tulsa. One well-known local watering hole

⁴³ "Federal Report on Vice Conditions in Tulsa", April 21-26, 1921, by Agent T.G.F., a copy of which is located in the Attorney General Civil Case Files, Record Group 1-2, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries.
flourished in the Boston Building, less that two blocks from Police Headquarters, while scattered across the city were a number of illegal bars offering corn whiskey, choc beer, or the latest rage, "jake" or jamaica ginger. In Greenwood, customers with a taste for live music with their whiskey might frequent Pretty Belle's place, while on the south side of town, the well-to-do oil set, it was said, purchased their liquor from a woman living at Third and Elgin. Hotel porters and bellhops regularly delivered pints and quarts to their guests, while an active bootlegging network operated out of the city's drug stores and pharmacies. And for customers who placed a premium on discretion, both bootleggers and taxi drivers alike would also make regular home deliveries.44

Illegal drugs were also present. Morphine, cocaine, and opium could all be purchased in Tulsa -- and apparently without much difficulty. Indeed, one month before the riot, another federal agent -- a narcotics officer named Charles C. Post -- declared, "Tulsa is overrun with narcotics."45

Hand-in-hand with this illegal consumption came a plenitude of other crime. Automobile theft was said to be so common in Tulsa prior to the riot, it was claimed, that "a number of companies have canceled all policies on cars in Tulsa." Petty crimes, from housebreaking to traffic violations, were common fodder in the city's newspapers during this period -- but so were more serious offenses. In the year preceding the riot, two Tulsa police

44 Abundant evidence on the illegal consumption of alcohol in Tulsa County can be found in the Attorney General's Civil Case Files, Record Group 1-2, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries. See, in particular: the testimony of E.S. McQueen, L. Medlen, and Mrs. W.H. Clark; "Statement of John Burnett"; "Memo to Major Daily"; and, "Special Report on Vice Conditions in and Around the City of Tulsa, by H.H. Townsend", Tulsa, May 18, 1921.

45 Oral history interview with Elwood Lett, Tulsa, May 28, 1998. Tulsa Tribune: February 7, 1921, p. 1; February 11, 1921, p. 5; February 12, 1921, p. 1; February 13, 1921, p. 3; and April 15, 1921, p. 13.

46 The quote from Charles C. Post is from the Tulsa Tribune, May 8, 1921, p. 1. See also: Tulsa World, April 22, 1921, p. 1; Tulsa Tribune, May 18, 1921, p. 2; and, "Statement of Barney Cleaver," Attorney
officers had been killed on duty, while less than six weeks before the riot, Tulsa police officers were involved in a spectacular shoot-out with armed bandits at an east side rooming house. State Assistant Attorney General George F. Short, who visited Tulsa during this same period, even went so far as to describe the local crime conditions as “apparently grave.”

While not everyone in town would have agreed with such a bleak assessment, there was no denying the fact that, on the eve of the race riot, the city had a serious crime problem. But it was equally true that, in many ways, this was not only nothing new, but had more or less been a constant since the first heady days of the Glenn Pool -- and its attendant land swindles and get-rich-quick schemes. “Tulsans on the whole have had enough of the slime and crime that characterize a new community which draws much of the bad with the good in a rich strike”, mused one local editorial writer, “But Tulsa has outgrown that stage.”

Indeed, a number of Tulsans had attempted -- seemingly without a great deal of success -- for years to do something about the local crime conditions. In 1914, the Ministerial Alliance had mounted a campaign against gambling and other forms of vice. Five years later, a group of well-known white leaders formed a “Committee of One Hundred” to combat local crime problems. Two years after that, in early 1921, the group was revived, vowing to see that a “clean sweep of criminals is made here and that the laws are enforced.”

Generals Civil Case Files, Record Group 1-2, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries.

46 White, “The Eruption of Tulsa”, p. 909. Tulsa World: April 23, 1921, pp. 1, 3; and May 13, 1921, p. 1. Tulsa Tribune: January 13, 1921, p. 12; February 12, 1921, p. 1; March 5, 1921, p. 1; March 9, 1921, p. 10; March 13, 1921, p. 7; March 14, 1921, p. 1; March 21, 1921, p. 1; April 5, 1921, p. 1; April 13, 1921, p. 1; May 1, 1921, p. B-14; May 2, 1921, p. 1; May 11, 1921, p. 1; May 18, 1921, p. 1; May 20, 1921, p. 1; and May 28, 1921, p. 1.

47 Tulsa World: April 4, 1921, p. 4; April 15, 1921, p. 4; May 13, 1921, p. 4; May 18, 1921, pp. 1, 13; May 19, 1921, pp. 1, 4; May 20, 1921, pp. 1, 2; May 21, 1921, pp. 1, 4, 17; and May 22, 1921, pp. 1, 17. Tulsa Tribune, May 1, 1921, p. B-14.

48 Tulsa Tribune: April 17, 1921, p. 1; April 19, 1921, p. 16; and May 25, 1921, p. 16.
But there was a dark side to local anti-crime efforts as well -- for as young as the city of Tulsa was in the spring of 1921, it could already claim a long history of vigilante activity. In 1894, a white man known as “Dutch John”, who was suspected of being a cattle rustler, was reportedly lynched in Tulsa. Ten years later, in 1904, a mob of whites gathered outside of the local jail, intending to lynch an African American prisoner held inside -- but were turned away by the Mayor, a local banker, and, not the least, by the City Marshall, who had drawn both of his guns on the mob.\footnote{Estes, “Historical Survey of Lynchings in Oklahoma and Texas,” p. 131. Interview with George B. Smith, Red Fork, Oklahoma, August 24, 1937, by W.T. Holland, Volume LXIX, pp. 470-475, Indian Pioneer History Collection, Federal Writers’ Project, Oklahoma Historical Society.}

Although violence had been averted, that was far from the end of vigilantism in Tulsa. In 1917, after the United States had entered the First World War, a secret society calling itself the Knights of Liberty unleashed a local campaign of terror and intimidation against suspected slackers, Mennonites and other pacifists, as well as political radicals. The group’s most infamous action -- which gained the attention of the national press -- came in November 1917 when, with the encouragement of the white press and the apparent cooperation of the local authorities, masked members of the Knights tarred and feathered more than a dozen local members of the Industrial Workers of the World, a radical union movement, and forced them out of town at gunpoint.\footnote{William T. Lampe, Tulsa County and the World War (Tulsa: Tulsa Historical Society, 1918). [National Civil Liberties Bureau], “The ‘Knights of Liberty’ Mob and the I.W.W. Prisoners at Tulsa, Okla., November 9, 1917”, pamphlet, 1918. Goble, Tulsa, pp. 118-122.}

Even thought the Knights of Liberty/I.W.W. incident had been an all-white affair, it proved to be an important step along the road to the race riot. For not only did local law enforcement refuse to actively investigate the incident, but the secret society was praised by
the white press for taking the law into its own hands -- an important precedent for more such activities in the future. 31

Nevertheless, it would not be until nearly three years later, during the late summer of 1920, that Tulsa would experience an incident that would prove to be the single most important precursor to the race riot. And while all of its participants also were white, it, too, would have profound reverberations on both sides of the color line.

It began on Saturday night, August 21, 1920, when a Tulsa cab driver named Homer Nida was hired by two young men and one young woman to drive them to a dance in Sapulpa. But along the way, in the countryside past Red Fork, one of the men pulled out a revolver and forced Nida to pull over. Striking the terrified cab driver with the pistol, the gunman demanded money. But when Nida could not produce a sufficient amount of cash, the gunman shot Nida in the stomach and kicked him out onto the highway, as the trio sped off in the now-stolen taxi. A passing motorist discovered Nida a short while later, and rushed the severely wounded driver to a hospital. 32

The next day, police in Nowata -- acting on a tip -- arrested an eighteen-year-old one-time telephone company employee named Roy Belton, who denied having had anything to do with the affair. But when Belton was taken to Tulsa to Homer Nida's hospital room, the cab driver identified Belton as his assailant. Again, Belton denied the accusation.

Two days later, however, Roy Belton -- who was now being held in the jail located on the top floor of the Tulsa County Courthouse -- changed his story. He now admitted that, yes,

he had been in the taxicab, and that he and his accomplices had planned on robbing the driver. But, he insisted, the shooting had been accidental. Instead, Belton claimed that the gun had been damaged when he struck Nida in the head with it, and that it had gone off accidentally while he was trying to repair it.\textsuperscript{53}

Belton’s dubious account, however, only added fuel to the already inflamed emotions that many Tulsans already held about the shooting — a situation made even more tense by the fact that Homer Nida lay languishing in a Tulsa hospital. Indeed, less that forty-eight hours after Belton’s so-called “confession”, Tulsa County Sheriff Jim Woolley had heard rumors that if the cab driver died, the Courthouse would be mobbed and Roy Belton would be lynched.\textsuperscript{54}

Two days later, on Saturday, August 28, 1920, Homer Nida finally succumbed to his wounds and died. In reporting the news of his death in that afternoon’s edition, the \textit{Tulsa Tribune} quoted the driver’s widow as saying that Belton deserved “to be mobbed, but the other way is better.”\textsuperscript{55}

But other Tulsans thought otherwise. By eleven o’clock that same evening, hundreds of whites had gathered outside of the Courthouse. Soon, a delegation of men carrying rifles and shotguns, some with handkerchiefs covering their faces, entered the building and demanded of Sheriff Woolley that he turn Belton over to them. The sheriff later claimed that he tried to dissuade the intruders, but he appears to have done little to stop them. For a little


\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Tulsa Tribune}, August 28, 1920, p. 1
while later, the men appeared on the Courthouse steps with Roy Belton. "We got him boys," they shouted, "We've got him."\textsuperscript{56}

Belton was then placed in Homer Nida's taxicab -- which had been stolen from the authorities -- and was driven out past Red Fork, followed by a line of automobiles "nearly a mile long". Not far from where Nida had been shot, the procession stopped, and Belton was taken from the cab and interrogated. But when a rumor spread that a posse was in hot pursuit, everyone returned to their cars and set out along the road to Jenks.

In truth, the lynch mob had little to fear. For Tulsa police did not arrive at the Courthouse in any appreciable numbers until after Belton had been kidnapped and the caravan of cars had left downtown. "We did the best thing," Police Chief John Gustafson later claimed, "[we] jumped into cars and followed the ever increasing mob."

By the time police officers finally caught up with the lynching party, it had reassembled along the Jenks road about three miles southwest of Tulsa. Once again, Roy Belton was taken from the cab, and then led to a spot next to a roadside sign. A rope was procured from a nearby farmhouse, a noose was thrown around his neck, and he was lynched. Among the crowd -- estimated to be in the hundreds -- were members of the Tulsa police, who had been instructed by Chief Gustafson not to intervene. "Any demonstration from an officer," he later claimed, "would have started gun play and dozens of innocent people would have been killed and injured."\textsuperscript{57}

In the days that followed, however, Gustafson practically applauded the lynching. While claiming to be "absolutely opposed" to mob law, the police chief also stated "it is my

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., August 29, 1920, pp. 1-2. Tulsa World: August 29, 1920, p.1; and August 30, 1920, p. 3.


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honest opinion that the lynching of Roy Belton will prove of real benefit to Tulsa and the vicinity. It was an object lesson to the hijackers and auto thieves." Sheriff Woolley echoed the chief, claiming that the lynching showed criminals "that the men of Tulsa mean business." 58

Nor were Tulsa's top lawmen alone in their sentiments. The Tulsa Tribune, the city's afternoon daily, also claimed to be opposed to mob law, but offered little criticism of the actual lynching party. The Tulsa World, the morning daily, went even further. Calling the lynching a "righteous protest", the newspaper added: "There was not a vestige of the mob spirit in the act of Saturday night. It was citizenship, outraged by government inefficiency and a too tender regard for the professional criminal." The World went on to blast the current state of the criminal justice system, ominously adding, "we predict that unless conditions are speedily improved", that the lynching of Roy Belton "will not be the last by any means." 59

With the death of Roy Belton, Tulsa had not simply joined the list of other Oklahoma cities and towns where, sadly enough, a lynching had occurred. For of equal importance was the fact that, as far as anyone could tell, the local law enforcement authorities in Tulsa had done precious little to stop the lynching. And so, the question arose, if another mob ever gathered in Tulsa to lynch someone else, who was going to stop them?

58 Tulsa World, August 30, 1920, pp. 1-3.
59 Both the lynching of Roy Belton, and how Tulsans responded to the event, was covered extensively in both of Tulsa's daily newspapers. See: Tulsa Tribune: August 31, 1920, p. 12; September 6, 1920, p. 1; September 9, 1920, p. 1; September 10, 1920, p. 1; September 21, 1920, p. 2; September 24, 1920, p. 1; and September 29, 1920, p. 4. Tulsa World: August 30, 1920, p. 4; August 31, 1920, pp. 1, 4; September 1, 1920, pp. 1, 4, 12; September 2, 1920, pp. 1, 4; September 3, 1920, pp. 1, 18; September 5, 1920, p. A-1; September 6, 1920, p. 1; and September 10, 1920 pp. 1, 13.
The lynching of Roy Belton cast a deep pall over black Tulsa. For even though Homer Nida, Roy Belton, and the lynching party itself had all been white, there was simply no escaping the conclusion that if Belton had been black, he would have been lynched just the same, and probably sooner. And what about the next time that an African American was charged with a serious crime in Tulsa, particularly if it involved a white victim? What would happen then?

A.J. Smitherman, the outspoken editor of the *Tulsa Star*, the city’s oldest and most popular African American newspaper, was absolutely resolute on the matter of lynching. “There is no crime, however atrocious,” he wrote following the lynching of Roy Belton, “that justifies mob violence.” For Smitherman, lynching was not simply a crime to be condemned, but was literally a “stain” upon society.⁶¹

Nor was Smitherman alone in his sentiments. For if there was one issue which united African Americans all across the nation, it was opposition to mob law. Moreover, that opposition was particularly strong in Oklahoma, as many blacks had immigrated to the state in no small measure to escape the mob mentality that was far from uncommon in some other parts of the country.

That said, however, both the lynching of Roy Belton in Tulsa, and that of a young African American in Oklahoma City that same week, brought to the surface some dire practical issues. For in a situation where a black prisoner was being threatened by a white mob, what should African Americans do? Smitherman, for one, was quite clear on the answer.

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As early as 1916, it has been reported, “a group of armed blacks prevented the lynching of one of their number in Muskogee.”\(^{62}\) In a similar situation, which happened only five months prior to the Tulsa riot, Smitherman had strongly praised a group of black men who had first armed themselves, and then set out in pursuit of a white mob that was en route to lynch an African American prisoner at Chandler. “As to the Colored men of Shawnee,” Smitherman wrote,

...they are the heroes of the story. If one set of men arm themselves and chase across the country to violate the law, certainly another set who arm themselves to uphold the supremacy of the law and prevent crime, must stand out prominently as the best citizens. Therefore the action of the Colored men in this case is to be commended. We need more citizens like them in every community and of both races.\(^{63}\)

And five months later, when a group of African Americans in the state capital had not gathered until after a black youth had been lynched by a white mob, Smitherman was unsparing in his criticism. “It is quite evident,” he wrote, “that the proper time to afford protection to any prisoner is BEFORE and during the time he is being lynched.”\(^{64}\)

And it was also clear that there were black Tulsans who were prepared to do just that. For a little more than a year before Roy Belton was lynched, an incident occurred in Tulsa that – while it received little press coverage at the time – gave a clear indication as to what

\(^{62}\) Clark, “History of the Ku Klux Klan in Oklahoma”, p. 17.
\(^{63}\) *Tulsa Star*, March 6, 1920, p. 8.
actions some black Tulsans would take if they feared that an African American was in danger of becoming the victim of mob violence.

The incident began on the evening of March 17, 1919, when a white ironworker was shot by two armed stick-up men on the outskirts of downtown. The ironworker died of his wounds some twelve hours later, but before he succumbed, he told Tulsa police detectives that his assailants were black, and he provided the officers with a rather sketchy description of each man. “Violence is feared,” wrote the Tulsa Democrat of the shooting, “if the guilty pair is taken in charge.”

Some forty-eight hours later, Tulsa police officers arrested not two, but three, African American men in connection with the shooting. And despite proclamations by the police that the accused men would be protected, concerns for their safety quickly spread across the black community, and rumors began to circulate that the trio might be in danger of being lynched. The rumors reached a crescendo the day after the ironworker’s funeral, when a delegation of African American men — some of them armed — led by Dr. R.T. Bridgewater, a well-known physician, paid an evening visit to the city jail, where the accused men were being held.

“We understand there is to be some trouble here,” Dr. Bridgewater reportedly informed a police captain.

But the police officer was adamant that nothing of the kind was going to occur. “There is not going to be any trouble here,” the captain allegedly replied, “and the best thing you fellows can do is beat it back and drop the firearms.” Despite his confidence, however,

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*Tulsa Times: March 20, 1919, p. 1; March 21, 1919, p. 1; and March 22, 1919, p. 3. Tulsa World,* March 21, 1919, p. 1; *Tulsa Democrat: March 19, 1919, p. 11; March 20, 1919, p. 9; and March 21, 1919, pp. 10, 16.
the officer allowed a small contingent to visit with the prisoners in their cells. Apparently satisfied with the situation, Dr. Bridgewater and the other African American men returned to Greenwood. There was no lynching.\textsuperscript{67}

But whatever relief black Tulsans may have felt following this affair did not last long. For with the lynching of Roy Belton some seventeen months later, the door to mob violence in Tulsa was suddenly pushed wide open. Because if a white could by lynched in Tulsa, why couldn’t a black suffer the same fate? Moreover, as editor Smitherman observed, the Belton lynching had also clarified another matter -- one that would prove to be of vital importance on May 31, 1921. "The lynching of Roy Belton," Smitherman wrote in the \textit{Tulsa Star}, "explodes the theory that a prisoner is safe on the top of the Court House from mob violence."\textsuperscript{68}

The death of Roy Belton shattered any confidence that black Tulsans may have had in the ability, or the willingness, of local law enforcement to prevent a lynching from taking place in Tulsa. But it had also done something else. Now, for more than a few black Tulsans, the bottom line on the matter had become clearer than ever: namely, that the only ones who might prevent the threatened lynching of an African American prisoner in Tulsa would be black Tulsans themselves.

Yet despite the clarity of these conclusions, it is important to note that white Tulsans were utterly unaware of what their black neighbors were thinking. For even though A.J. Smitherman's editorials regarding lynching were both direct and plainspoken, white Tulsans did not read the \textit{Tulsa Star}, and Smitherman's opinions weren't reported in the white press. And as dramatic and as significant as the visit of Dr. Bridgewater and the others was to the

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Tulsa Tribune}, June 12, 1921, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Tulsa Star}, September 4, 1920, pp. 1, 4.
city jail during the 1919 incident, it received little coverage in the city’s white newspapers at the time, and was no doubt quickly forgotten.

Rather, when it came to the matter of lynching, black Tulsa and white Tulsa were like two separate galaxies, with one quite unaware of what the other was thinking. But as the year 1921 began to unfold, events would soon bring them crashing into one another.

In 1921, most Tulsans received their news through either one or both of the city’s two daily newspapers -- the Tulsa World, which was the morning paper, or the Tulsa Tribune, which came out in the afternoon. While the World went all the way back to 1905, the Tribune was only two years old. It was the creation of Richard Lloyd Jones, a Wisconsin-born newspaperman who had also worked as a magazine editor in New York. Hoping to challenge the more established -- and, in many ways, more restrained -- Tulsa World, Jones had fashioned the Tribune as a lively rival, unafraid to stir up an occasional hornet’s nest. And, as it turned out, Tulsa’s vexing crime problem proved to be an ideal local arena in which the Tribune could hope to make a name for itself.

Sensing just how frustrated many Tulsans were with the local crime conditions, the Tribune launched a vigorous anti-crime campaign that ran throughout the early months of 1921. In addition to giving broad coverage to both local criminal activity, and to sensational murders from across the state, the Tribune also published a series of hard-hitting editorials. With titles such as “Catch the Crooks”, “Go After Them”, “Promoters of Crime”, “To Make

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69 Biographical sketch of Richard Lloyd Jones by Hazel S. Hone, May 10, 1939; “Richard Lloyd Jones” from Who’s Who in Tulsa, 1950, by Clarence Allen; and, miscellaneous newspaper clippings on Jones, all located in the “Tulsa” vertical subject files, Oklahoma Historical Society.
Every Day Safe”, “The City Failure”, and “Make Tulsa Decent”, the editorials called for nothing less than an aggressive citywide clean-up campaign.⁷⁰

Not surprisingly, the Tribune’s campaign ruffled the feathers of some local law enforcement figures along the way, including the County Attorney, the Police Commissioner, and several members of the Tulsa Police Department. And while it is uncertain as to how much of the Tribune’s campaign had been motivated by partisan political concerns, both the paper’s news stories and its editorials caused considerable commotion. Allegations of police corruption -- particularly regarding automobile theft -- received a great amount of attention, and ultimately led to formal investigations of local law enforcement by both the State of Oklahoma and the City of Tulsa.⁷¹

By the middle of May 1921, the Tribune’s anti-crime and anti-corruption campaign seemed to be on the verge of reaching some sort of climax. Branding the city government’s investigation of the Police Department as a “whitewash”, the newspaper kept hammering away at the alleged inability of, or refusal by, local law enforcement to tackle Tulsa’s crime problem. “The people of Tulsa are becoming awake to conditions that are no longer tolerable,” argued a May 14th editorial. Two days later, in an editorial titled “Better Get

⁷⁰ Tulsa Tribune: January 13, 1921, p. 12; February 12, 1921, p. 8; March 5, 1921, p. 10; April 5, 1921, p. 16; April 7, 1921, p. 16; May 1, 1921, p. B-14; May 3, 1921, p. 18; and May 13, 1921, p. 24.
⁷¹ Ibid.: January 3, 1921, p. 12; March 2, 1921, p. 1; March 4, 1921, p. 1; March 5, 1921, p. 1; March 28, 1921, p. 1; March 29, 1921, p. 1; March 31, 1921, p. 1; April 4, 1921, p. 1; April 5, 1921, p. 1; April 13, 1921, p. 1; May 8, 1921, p. 1; May 16, 1921, p. 12; May 17, 1921, p. 1; May 19, 1921, pp. 1, 2; May 20, 1921, pp. 1, 22; May 21, 1921, pp. 1, 2; May 22, 1921, p. B-14; May 24, 1921, pp. 1, 18; and May 25, 1921, pp. 1, 3, 16.

The Tulsa World painted a somewhat rosier portrait of crime conditions in Tulsa. See, for example: April 15, 1921, p. 4; April 17, 1921, p. 16; May 19, 1921, pp. 1, 3; May 19, 1921, pp. 1, 4; May 20, 1921, pp. 1, 2; May 21, 1921, pp. 1, 4, 17; and May 22, 1921, pp. 1, 17.

Busy”, the *Tribune* warned that if the Mayor and the City Commission did not fulfill their campaign pledges to “clean up the city”, and “do it quick”, that “an awakened community conscience will do it for them.”

And just what that might entail was also becoming clearer and clearer. For the very same months during which the *Tribune* waged its anti-crime campaign, the newspaper also gave prominent attention to news stories involving vigilante activities from across the Southwest. Front-page coverage was given to lynching threats made against African Americans in Okmulgee in March, Oktaha in April, and Hugo in May. The horsewhipping of an alleged child molester in Dallas by a group of masked men believed to be members of the Ku Klux Klan, which also took place in May, was also given front-page treatment. And, not surprisingly, the specter of Tulsa’s own recent lynching also re-emerged in the pages of the *Tribune* in a May 26th editorial. While asserting that “Lawlessness to fight lawlessness is never justified”, the editorial went on to claim “Tulsa enjoyed a brief respite following the lynching of Roy Belton.” Moreover, the *Tribune* added that Belton’s guilt had been “practically established.”

But a revived discussion of the pros and cons of vigilante activity was not the only new element to be added to the ongoing conversation about crime that was taking place in Tulsa in late May. For despite latter claims to the contrary, for much of early 1921, race had not been much of a factor in the *Tribune*’s vigorous anti-crime and anti-corruption campaign. Crimes in Greenwood had not been given undue coverage, nor had black Tulsans been

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72 *Tulsa Tribune*: May 14, 1921, p. 10; May 16, 1921, p. 12; and May 25, 1921, p. 16.
73 *Ibid.*: March 3, 1921, p. 1; April 17, 1921, p. 1; May 24, 1921, p. 1; May 26, 1921, p. 14; and May 27, 1921, p. 1.
singled out with providing the city with a disproportionate share of the city’s criminal element.

But beginning on May 21, 1921 — only ten days before the riot — that was all to change. For in a lengthy, front-page article concerning the ongoing investigation of the Police Department, not only did racial issues suddenly come to the foreground, but even more importantly, they did so in a manner that featured the highly explosive subject of relations between black men and white women. Commenting on the city’s rampant prostitution industry, a former judge flatly told the investigators that black men were at the root of the problem. “We’ve got to get to the hotels,” he said, “We’ve got to kick out the negro pimps if we want to stop this vice.”

Echoing these sentiments was the testimony of Reverend Harold G. Cooke, the white pastor of Centenary Methodist Church. Accompanied by a private detective, Cooke had led a small group of white men on an undercover tour of the city’s illicit nightlife — and had been, it was reported, horrified at what he had discovered. Not only was liquor available at every place that they visited, but at hotels and rooming houses across the city, it was said, African American porters rather routinely offered to provide the men with the services of white prostitutes. And just beyond the city limits, the Tribune reported, the group visited a roadhouse where the color lines seemed to have disappeared entirely. “We found whites and negroes singing and dancing together,” one member of Reverend Cooke’s party testified, “Young, white girls were dancing while negroes played the piano.”

77 Tulsa Tribune, May 21, 1921, pp. 1, 2. Typescript reports by members of Cooke’s party can be found in the Attorney Generals Civil Case Files, Record Group 1-2, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries.
In the Oklahoma of the 1920s, the effect of this testimony should not be taken lightly. Many white Tulsans no doubt found Reverend Cooke’s revelations to be both shocking and distasteful. But, perhaps even more importantly, they now had a convenient new target for their growing anger over local crime conditions -- namely, African American men who, at least far as they were concerned, had far too much contact with white women.

As it tuned out, however, Tulsans did not have much time to digest the new revelations. For only five days later, on May 26, 1921, the city was rocked by the news of a spectacular jailbreak at the County Courthouse. Sawing their way through their cell doors and through the one-inch steel bars that were set in an outer window, and then lowering themselves four stories to the ground on a rope that they had made by tying their blankets together, no less than twelve prisoners had escaped from the top floor jail.\(^76\) Remarkably, however, that was not the last jailbreak that month. For only four days later, early on the morning of Memorial Day, May 30, 1921, six more prisoners -- sawing through the same hastily repaired cell doors and window bars -- also escaped from the Courthouse jail.\(^77\)

Although some of the escapees were quickly apprehended, the jailbreaks were one more ingredient in what had become, by the end of May 1921, an unstable and potentially volatile local atmosphere. For more than a few white Tulsans, local conditions regarding crime and punishment were fast becoming intolerable. Frustrated over the amount of lawbreaking in the city, and by the apparent inability of the police to do anything about it, they had helped turn the city into a ticking time bomb, where anger and frustration sat just beneath the surface, waiting to explode. Moreover, during the last ten days of the month, they

\(^{76}\) Tulsa Tribune: May 26, 1921, p. 1; and May 27, 1921, p. 1. Tulsa World: May 26, 1921, p. 1; and May 27, 1921, p. 8.

\(^{77}\) Tulsa Tribune, May 30, 1921, p. 1.
had also been presented with, however fleetingly, a compelling new target for their fury, namely, black men who, to their eyes, had an undue familiarity with white women.

But as Tulsa prepared to celebrate Memorial Day, May 30, 1921, there was also something else in the air. For as notions of taking the law into their own hands began to once again circulate among some white Tulsans, across the tracks in Greenwood, there were black Tulsans who were more determined than ever that in their city, no African American would fall victim to mob violence. World War veterans and newspaper editors, common laborers and businessmen, they were just as prepared as they had been two years earlier to make certain that no black person was ever lynched in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

And it was at this precise moment, in this highly charged atmosphere, that two previously unheralded Tulsans, named Dick Rowland and Sarah Page, walked out of the wings, and onto the stage of history.

Although they played a key role in the events which directly led to Tulsa's race riot, the truth of the matter is that very little is known for certain about either Dick Rowland or Sarah Page. Rumors, theories, and unsubstantiated claims have been plentiful throughout the years, but hard evidence has been much more difficult to come by.

Dick Rowland, who was black, was said to have been nineteen years old at the time of the riot. He had apparently not begun life, however, as Dick Rowland, but as Jimmie Jones. And while we don't know where he was born, by about 1908 he and his two sisters had evidently been orphaned, and were living "on the street of Vinita, sleeping wherever they could, and begging for food." An African American woman named Damie Ford, who ran a
tiny one-room-grocery store, took pity on young Jimmie and took him in. “That’s how I became Jimmie’s ‘Mama,’” she told an interviewer decades afterwards.

About one year later, Damie and her adopted son moved to Tulsa, where they were reunited with Damie’s family, the Rowlands. Eventually, little Jimmie took Rowland as his own last name, and selected his favorite first name, Dick, as his own. Growing up in Tulsa, Dick attended the city’s separate all-black schools, including Booker T. Washington High School, where he played football.78

Dick Rowland did not, however, graduate from high school, but dropped out to take a job shining shoes in a white-owned and white-patronized shine parlor located downtown on Main Street. Shoe shines usually cost a dime in those days, but the shoe shiners -- or bootblacks, as they were sometimes called -- were often tipped a nickel for each shine, and sometimes considerably more. Over the course of a busy working day, a shoe shiner could pocket a fair amount of money -- especially if he was a teenaged African American youth with few other job prospects.

There were no toilet facilities, however, for blacks at the shine parlor where Dick Rowland worked, so the owner had arranged for his African American employees to be able to use a “Colored” restroom that was located, nearby, in the Drexel Building at 319 S. Main Street. In order to gain access to the washroom, which was located on the top floor, Rowland

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Dick Rowland’s last name is sometimes spelled “Roland”. Similarly, Sarah Page’s surname is sometimes given as “Paige”.

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and the other shoe shiners would ride in the building's sole elevator. In those days, elevators weren't automatic, but required an operator, a job that was usually reserved for women. 79

In late May 1921, the elevator operator at the Drexel Building was a seventeen-year-old white woman named Sarah Page. Thought to have come to Tulsa from Missouri, she apparently lived in a rented room on North Boston Avenue. It has also been reported that Page was attending a local business school, which, if anything, would have made good career sense. For even though Tulsa was still riding upon its construction boom, some building owners were evidently hiring African American women to replace their white elevator operators. 80

Whether -- and to what extent -- Dick Rowland and Sarah Page knew each other has long been a matter of speculation. It seems reasonable that they would have least been able to recognize each other on sight, as Rowland would have regularly rode in Page's elevator on his way to and from the restroom. Others, however, have speculated that the pair might have been lovers -- a dangerous and potentially deadly taboo, but not an impossibility, in 1921-era Tulsa. Damie Ford later suggested that this might have been the case, as did Samuel M. Jackson, who operated a funeral parlor in Greenwood at the time of the riot. "I'm going to tell you the truth," Jackson told riot historian Ruth Avery a half century later, "He could have been going with the girl. You go through life and you find that somebody likes you. That's all there is to it." But Robert Fairchild, who shined shoes with Rowland, disagreed. "At that

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80 *Tulsa Tribune*: April 17, 1921, p. 5; May 31, 1921, p. 1; and June 1, 1921, p. 4. White, "Eruption of Tulsa", pp. 909-910.
time,” Fairchild later recalled, “the Negro had so much fear that he didn’t bother with integrated relationship[s].”

Yet, whether they knew each other or not, it is clear that both Dick Rowland and Sarah Page were downtown on Monday, May 30, 1921 -- although this, too, is cloaked in some mystery. It being Memorial Day, most -- but not all -- stores and businesses in Tulsa were closed, yet both Rowland and Page were apparently working that day. A large Memorial Day parade passed along Main Street that morning, and perhaps Sarah Page had been required to work in order to transport Drexel Building employees and their families to choice parade-viewing spots on the building’s upper floors. As for Dick Rowland, perhaps the shine parlor he worked at may have been open, if nothing else, to draw in some of the parade traffic. One post-riot account suggest another alternative, namely, that Rowland was making deliveries of shined shoes that day. What is certain, however, is that at some point on Monday, May 30, 1921, Dick Rowland entered the elevator operated by Sarah Page that was situated at the rear of the Drexel Building.

But what happened next is anyone’s guess. After the riot, the most common explanation was that Dick Rowland tripped as he got onto the elevator and, as he tried to catch his fall, he grabbed onto the arm of Sarah Page, who then screamed. Or, perhaps, it has also been suggested that Rowland and Page had a lovers’ quarrel. But the fact of the matter is that we simply don’t know what happened. Yet, in the days and years that followed, everyone


who knew Dick Rowland agreed on one thing: that he would never have been capable of rape.83

A clerk from Renberg’s, a clothing store located on the first floor of the Drexel Building, however, reached the opposite conclusion. Hearing what he thought was a woman’s scream, and apparently seeing Dick Rowland hurriedly flee the building, the clerk rushed to the elevator, where he found a distraught Sarah Page. Evidently deciding that the young elevator operator had been the victim of an attempted sexual assault, the clerk then summoned the police.

While it appears that the clerk stuck to his interpretation that there had been an attempted rape — and of a particularly incendiary kind — no record exists as to what Sarah Page actually told the police when they initially interviewed her. Whatever she said at the time, however, it does not appear that the police officers who interviewed her necessarily reached the same potentially explosive conclusion as that made by the Renberg’s clerk, namely, that a black male had attempted to rape a white female in a downtown office building. Rather than issue any sort of an all-points bulletin for the alleged assailant, it appears that, instead, the police launched a rather low-key investigation into the affair.84

But whatever had or had not happened in the Drexel Building elevator, Dick Rowland had become a justly terrified young man. For of all the crimes that African American men would be accused of in early Twentieth century America, none seemed to bring a white lynch


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mob together faster than an accusation of the rape, or attempted rape, of a white woman. Frightened and agitated, Rowland hastened to his adopted mother’s home, where he stayed inside with blinds drawn.85

The next morning, Tuesday, May 31, 1921, Dick Rowland was arrested on Greenwood Avenue by two Tulsa police officers, Detective Henry Carmichael, who was white, and by Patrolman Henry C. Pack, who was one of a handful of African Americans on the city’s approximately seventy-five man police force. Rowland was booked at Police Headquarters, and then taken to the jail on the top floor of the Tulsa County Courthouse. Informed that her adopted son was in custody, Damie Ford seems to have lost no time in hiring a prominent white attorney to defend him.86

Word of both the alleged incident in the Drexel Building, and of the subsequent arrest of the alleged perpetrator, quickly spread throughout the city’s legal circles. Black attorney B.C. Franklin was sitting in the courtroom during a recess in a trial when he overheard some other lawyers discussing what he later concluded was the alleged rape attempt. “I don’t believe a damn word of it,” one of the men said, “Why I know that boy and have known him a good while. That’s not in him.”87


In early May 1921, the Tulsa Tribune reported that the Tulsa Police Department had eighty-eight officers; Tulsa Tribune, May 2, 1921, p. 1. The Tulsa City Directory, 1921, however, lists only fifty-seven officers, four of whom are identified as African American.

87 Franklin and Franklin, My Life and An Era, pp. 195-196.
Not surprisingly, word of both the alleged incident and of the arrest of Dick Rowland had also made it to the offices of Tulsa’s two daily newspapers, the Tribune and the World. But because of the timing of the events, the Tulsa Tribune would have the first crack at the story. For not only had the alleged Drexel Building incident gone without notice in that morning’s Tulsa World -- perhaps, one is tempted to surmise, because word of the alleged incident had not yet made it to the paper’s news desk, which may have been short-staffed due to the holiday -- but Rowland’s arrest had apparently occurred after that morning’s edition had already been printed. Being an afternoon paper, however, the Tulsa Tribune had enough time to break the news in its regular afternoon editions -- which is exactly what it did.

But precisely what the Tulsa Tribune printed in its May 31, 1921 editions about the Drexel Building incident is still a matter of some conjecture. The original bound volumes of the now defunct newspaper apparently no longer exist in their entirety. A microfilm version is, however, available, but before the actual microfilming was done some years later, someone had deliberately torn out of the May 31, 1921 city edition both a front-page article and, in addition, nearly all of the editorial page.

We have known what the front-page story, titled “Nab Negro for Attacking Girl in Elevator”, said for some time. In his 1946 master’s thesis on the riot, Loren Gill printed the entire text of the missing -- and what he believed was no less than “inflammatory” -- story, which read:

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*Tulsa World, May 31, 1921.*
Nab Negro for Attacking

Girl in Elevator

A Negro delivery boy who gave his name to the public as “Diamond Dick” but who has been identified as Dick Rowland, was arrested on South Greenwood avenue this morning by Officers Carmichael and Pack, charged with attempting to assault the 17-year-old white elevator girl in the Drexel Building early yesterday.

He will be tried in municipal court this afternoon on a state charge.

The girl said she noticed the Negro a few minutes before the attempted assault looking up and down the hallway on the third floor of the Drexel Building as if to see if there was anyone in sight but thought nothing of it at the time.

A few minutes later he entered the elevator she claimed, and attacked her, scratching her hands and face and tearing her clothes. Her screams brought a clerk from Renberg’s store to her assistance and the Negro fled. He was captured and identified this morning both by the girl and the clerk, police say.
Tenants of the Drexel Building said the girl is an orphan who works as an elevator operator to pay her way through business college.\textsuperscript{89}

Since Gill’s thesis first appeared, additional copies of this front-page article have surfaced. A copy can be found in the Red Cross papers that are located in the collections of the Tulsa Historical Society. A second copy, apparently from the “State Edition” of the Tulsa Tribune, could once be found in the collections of the Oklahoma Historical Society, but has now evidently disappeared.\textsuperscript{90}

This front page article was not, however, the only thing that the Tulsa Tribune seems to have printed about the Drexel Building incident in its May 31st edition. W.D. Williams, who later taught for years at Booker T. Washington High School in Tulsa, had a vivid memory that the Tribune ran a story titled “To Lynch Negro Tonight”.\textsuperscript{91} In fact, however, what Williams may be recalling is not another news article, but an editorial from the missing editorial page.

Other informants, both black and white, buttress Williams’ account. Specifically, they recalled that the Tribune mentioned the possibility of a lynching -- something that is entirely absent from the “Nab Negro for Attacking Girl in Elevator” story, and thus must have appeared elsewhere in the May 31st edition. Robert Fairchild later recalled that the Tribune “came out and told what happened. It said to the effect that ‘there is likely to be a lynching in

\textsuperscript{89} Gill, “The Tulsa Race Riot”, pp. 21-22
\textsuperscript{90} Red Cross Collection, Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, Tulsa Historical Society.
The State Edition copy of “Nab Negro for Attacking Girl in Elevator” was uncovered by Bruce Hartman, a Tulsa-based researcher, in the collections of the Oklahoma Historical Society sometime prior to 1996.
\textsuperscript{91} Oral history interview with W.D. Williams, Tulsa, June 7, 1978.
Tulsa tonight". One of Mary Parrish's informants, whom she interviewed shortly after the riot, provided a similar account:

The Daily Tribune, a white newspaper that tries to gain its popularity by referring to the Negro settlement as "Little Africa", came out on the evening of Tuesday, May 31, with an article claiming that a Negro had had some trouble with a White elevator girl at the Drexel Bldg. It also said that a mob of whites was forming in order to lynch the Negro.

And Adjutant General Charles F. Barrett, who led National Guard troops from Oklahoma City into Tulsa the next day, recalled that there had been a "fantastic write-up of the [Drexel Building] incident in a sensation-seeking newspaper."92

Given the fact that the editorial page from the May 31st Tulsa Tribune was also deliberately removed, and that a copy has not yet surfaced, it isn’t difficult to conclude that whatever else the paper had to say about the alleged incident, and what should be done in response to it, would have appeared in an editorial. "To Lynch Negro Tonight" certainly would have fit as the title to a Tribune editorial in those days. Moreover, given the seriousness of the charges against Dick Rowland, the aggressiveness of the paper’s anti-crime campaign, and the fact that a Tribune editorial had mentioned the lynching of Roy Belton only four days earlier, it is highly likely that any editorial the paper would have run concerning the alleged Drexel Building incident would have surely mentioned lynching as a

possible fate for Dick Rowland. Exactly what the newspaper would have said on the matter, however, can only be left to conjecture.

The Tuesday, May 31, 1921 edition of the Tulsa Tribune hit the streets at about 3:15 p.m.. And while the “Nab Negro for Attacking Girl in Elevator” was far from being the most prominent story on the front page of the city edition, it was the story that garnered the most attention. Making his way through downtown toward his office in Greenwood shortly after the Tribune rolled off the presses, attorney B.C. Franklin later recalled that “as I walked leisurely along the sidewalk, I heard the sharp shrill voice of a newsboy, ‘A Negro assaults a white girl’”.93

Indeed, lynch talk came right on the heels of the Tribune’s sensational reporting. Ross T. Warner, the white manager of the downtown offices of the Tulsa Machine and Tool Company, wrote that after the Tribune came out that afternoon, “the talk of lynching spread like a prairie fire.” Similar memories were shared by Dr. Blaine Waynes, an African American physician, and his wife Maude, who reported that after the Tribune was issued that day, that rumors of the “intended lynching of the accused Negro” spread so swiftly and ominously that even “the novice and stranger” could readily sense the fast-approaching chain of events that was about to unfold. By 4:00 p.m., in fact, the talk of lynching Dick Rowland had already grown so ubiquitous that Police and Fire Commissioner J.M. Adkison telephoned Sheriff Willard McCullough and alerted him to the ever-increasing talk on the street.94

93 Franklin and Franklin, My Life and Era, p. 196.
And that talk, not surprisingly, soon turned into action. For as word of the alleged sexual assault in the Drexel Building spread, a crowd of whites began to gather on the street outside of the Tulsa County Courthouse, in whose jail Dick Rowland was being held. And as people got off of work, and the news of the alleged attack reported in the Tribune became more widely dispersed across town, more and more white Tulsans, infuriated by what had supposedly taken place in the Drexel Building, began to gather outside the Courthouse at Sixth and Boulder. By sunset – which came at 7:34 p.m. that evening – observers estimated that the crowd had grown into the hundreds. And not long afterwards, cries of “Let us have the nigger” could be heard echoing off of the walls of the massive stone Courthouse.95

Willard M. McCullough, who had only recently been sworn in as the new sheriff of Tulsa County, however, had other ideas. Determined that there would be no repeat of the Roy Belton affair during his time in office, he quickly took steps to insure the safety of Dick Rowland. Organizing his small force of deputies into a defensive ring around his now terrified prisoner, McCullough positioned six of his men, armed with rifles and shotguns, on the roof of the Courthouse. He also disabled the building’s elevator, and had his remaining men barricade themselves at the top of the stairs, with orders to shoot any intruders on sight.

McCullough also went outside, on the Courthouse steps, and tried to talk the would-be lynch mob into going home, but was “hooted down” when he spoke. At about 8:20 p.m., in a near replay of the Belton incident, three white men entered the Courthouse and demanded

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that the Sheriff turn over Rowland – but were angrily turned away. Even though his small force was vastly outnumbered by the ever-increasing mob out on the street, McCullough, unlike his predecessor, was determined to prevent another lynching.96

Word of the alleged incident at the Drexel Building, and of the white mob that was gathering outside of the Courthouse, meanwhile, had also raced across Greenwood. After reading the stories in the afternoon’s Tribune, Willie Williams, then a popular junior at Booker T. Washington High School, had hurried over to his family’s flagship business, the Dreamland Theater, at 127 N. Greenwood. Inside, he found a scene of tension and confusion. “We’re not going to let this happen,” declared a man who had leapt up onto the theater’s stage, “We’re going to go downtown and stop this lynching. Close this place down.”

Outside, similar discussions were taking place up and down Greenwood Avenue, as black Tulsans debated how to respond to the increasingly dire threat to Dick Rowland. B.C. Franklin later recalled two Army veterans out in the street, urging the crowd gathered about them to take immediate action, while perhaps the most intense discussions were held in the offices of the Tulsa Star, the city’s premier African American newspaper.

What went unspoken was the fact an African American had never been lynched in Tulsa. But how to prevent one from taking place now was no easy matter. It wasn’t simply the crime that Dick Rowland had been charged with – although that, by itself, made the situation particularly dire. Rather, with the lynching of Roy Belton only nine months earlier, there was now no reason at all to place much confidence in the ability of the local authorities

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to protect Dick Rowland from the mob of whites that was gathering outside the Courthouse. That said, however, exactly how to respond was of utmost concern.

For A.J. Smitherman, the editor of the *Tulsa Star*, there was no question whatsoever that a demonstration of resolve was necessary – that black Tulsans needed to let the white mob know that they were determined to prevent this lynching from taking place, and by force of arms if necessary. Others, including a number of war veterans as well as various local leaders, the most prominent being J.B. Stradford, the hotel owner, vigorously agreed. And, moreover, when Dr. Bridgewater had led a group of armed men downtown to where three accused African American men were being held only two years later, a rumored lynching did not take place. “Come on boys”, Smitherman is said to have urged his audience, “let’s go downtown.”

But not everyone agreed with the plan of action. O.W. Gurley, the owner of the Gurley Hotel, for one, seems to have argued for a more cautious approach. So, too, apparently, did Barney Cleaver, a well-respected African American Deputy Sheriff, who had been trying to keep in telephone contact with Sheriff McCullough, and therefore have something of a handle on the actual conditions down at the Courthouse.97

Despite some entreaties to the contrary, at about 9:00 p.m. a group of approximately twenty-five African American men decided to cast their lot not only with an endangered fellow member of the race, but also, literally, upon the side of justice. Leaving Greenwood by automobile, they drove down to the Courthouse, where the white mob had gathered. Armed

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with rifles and shotguns, the men got out of their automobiles, and marched to the Courthouse steps. Their purpose, they announced to the no doubt stunned authorities, was to offer their services toward the defense of the jail – an offer that was immediately declined. Assured that Dick Rowland was safe, the men then returned to their automobiles, and drove back to Greenwood.98

The visit of the African American veterans had an electrifying effect, however, on the white mob, now estimated to be more than one thousand strong. Denied Rowland by Sheriff McCullough, it had been clear for some time that this was not to be an uncomplicated repetition of the Belton affair. But the visit of the black veterans had not at all been foreseen. Shocked, and then outraged, some members of the mob began to go home to fetch their guns.99

Others, however, made a beeline for the National Guard Armory, at Sixth and Norfolk, where they intended to gain access to the rifles and ammunition stored inside. Major James A. Bell, an officer with the local National Guard units – “B” Company, the Service Company, and the Sanitary Detachment, all of the Third Infantry Regiment of the Oklahoma National Guard – had already been notified of the trouble brewing down at the Courthouse, and had telephoned the local authorities in order to better understand the overall situation. “I then went to the Armory and called up the Sheriff and asked if there was any indications of

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98 Oklahoma City Black Dispatch, June 3, 1921, p. 1. Tulsa World: June 2, 1921, p. 7; June 3, 1921, p. 1; June 6, 1921, p. 3; June 9, 1921, p. 4; and June 10, 1921, p. 8. Major James A. Bell to Lieutenant Colonel L.J.F. Rooney, “Report on the Activities of the National Guard”; typescript notes on the testimony of John Henry Potts; and miscellaneous handwritten notes; all in Attorney Generals Civil Case Files, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries. White, “Eruption of Tulsa:”, pp. 909-910. Oral history interviews with: W.D. Williams, Tulsa, June 7, 1978; and Seymour Williams, Tulsa, June 1, 1978.
99 Barrett, Oklahoma After Fifty Years, p. 207. Laurel Buck testimony, Attorney Generals Civil Case Files, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries.
trouble down there”, Bell later wrote, “The sheriff reported that there were some threats but
did not believe it would amount to anything, that in any event he could protect his prisoner.”
Bell also phoned Chief Gustafson, who reported, “Things were a little threatening.”

Despite such vague answers, Major Bell took the initiative and began to quietly
instruct local Guardsmen – who were scheduled to depart the next day for their annual
summer encampment – to report down at the Armory in case they were needed that evening.
But just as this was happening, a Guardsman informed Bell that a mob of white men was
attempting to break into the Armory. As Bell later reported:

Grabbing my pistol in one hand and my belt in the other I
jumped out of the back door and running down the west side of
the Armory building I saw several men apparently pulling at the
window grating. Commanding these men to get off the lot and
seeing this command obeyed I went to the front of the building
near the southwest corner where I saw a mob of white men
about three or four hundred strong. I asked them what they
wanted. One of them replied, “Rifles and ammunition”, I
explained to them that they could not get anything here.
Someone shouted, “We don’t know about that, we guess we
can.” I told them that we only had sufficient arms and
ammunition for our own men and that not one piece could go
out of there without orders from the Governor, and in the name

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100 Bell, “Report on the Activities of the National Guard”, op cit. Tulsa Tribune: January 16, 1921, p. 5;
and March 20, 1921, Magazine Section, p. 2.
of the law demanded that they disperse at once. They continued
to press forward in a threatening manner when with drawn
pistol I again demanded that they disperse and explained that
the men in the Armory were armed with rifles loaded with ball
ammunition and that they would shoot promptly to prevent any
unauthorized person entering there.

"By maintaining a firm stand," Bell added, "...this mob was dispersed."

Major Bell's actions were both courageous and effective – but as the night wore on,
similar efforts would be in exceedingly short supply. And with each passing minute, Tulsa
was a city that was quickly spinning out of control.

By 9:30 p.m., the white mob outside the Courthouse had swollen to nearly two-
thousand persons. They blocked the sidewalks as well as the streets, and had spilled over
onto the front laws of nearby homes. There were women as well as men, youngsters as well
as adults, curiosity seekers as well as would-be lynchers. A handful of local leaders,
including the Reverend Charles W. Kerr of the First Presbyterian Church, as well as a local
judge, had tried, unsuccessfully, to talk the crowd into going home.102

Police Chief John A. Gustafson later claimed that he, too, tried to talk the lynch mob
into dispersing. But at no time that afternoon or evening did he order a substantial number of

101 Bell, "Report on Activities of the National Guard." See also: Major Paul R. Brown to the Adjutant
General of Oklahoma, "Work of the Sanitary Detachment During the Riot in Tulsa", Attorney Generals Civil
Case Files, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries; and, Robert D. Norris, Jr.,
102 John A. Gustafson testimony; and handwritten notes to the testimony of W.M. Ellis; both in Attorney
Generals Civil Case Files, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries. Stephen P.
Tulsa policemen to appear, fully armed, at the Courthouse. Gustafson, in his defense, would later claim that because there was a regular shift change that very day, that only thirty-two officers were available for duty at eight o’clock on the evening of May 31st. But as subsequent testimony—as recorded in handwritten notes to a post-riot investigation—later revealed, there were apparently only “5 policemen on duty between court house & Brady hotel notwithstanding lynching imminent.” Moreover, by 10:00 p.m., when the drama at the Courthouse was approaching its climax, Gustafson was no longer at the scene, but had returned to his office at Police Headquarters.103

In the city’s African American neighborhoods, meanwhile, tension continued to mount over the increasingly ugly situation down at the Courthouse. Alerted to the potentially dangerous conditions, both school and church groups broke up their evening activities early, while parents and grandparents tried to reassure themselves that the trouble would quickly blow over. Down in Deep Greenwood, a large crowd of black men and women still kept their vigil outside of the offices of the Tulsa Star, awaiting word on the latest developments downtown.104

Some of the men, however, decided that they could wait no longer. Hopping into cars, small groups of armed African American men began to make brief forays into downtown, their guns visible to passersby. In addition to reconnaissance, the primary intent of these trips appears to have been to send a clear message to white Tulsans that these men were

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103 John A. Gustafson testimony; and miscellaneous handwritten notes; both in Attorney Generals Civil Case Files, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries.
104 Oral history interviews with Ernestine Gibbs, Augusta Mann, Rosa Davis Skinner, Robert Fairchild, and Alice Andrews, all by Eddie Faye Gates, in They Came Searching, pp. 42-43, 71, 85-86, 151, 165-166. Handwritten notes to the testimony of O.W. Gurley; typescript notes to the testimony of W.C. Kelley; and John
determined to prevent, by force of arms if necessary, the lynching of Dick Rowland. But whether the whites who witnessed these excursions understood this message is, however, an open question. Many, apparently, thought that they were instead witnessing a “Negro uprising” — a conclusion that others would soon share.

In the midst of all of this activity, rumors began to circulate as well — and particularly with regards to what might or might not be happening down at the Courthouse. Possibly spurred on by a false report that whites were storming the Courthouse, at a little after 10:00 p.m., a second contingent of armed African American men, perhaps seventy-five in number this time, decided to make a second visit to the Courthouse. Leaving Greenwood by automobile, they got out of their cars near Sixth and Main and marched, single file, to the Courthouse steps. As before, they offered their services to the authorities to help protect Dick Rowland. Once again, their offer was refused.105

And then it happened. As the black men were leaving the Courthouse for the second time, a white man approached a tall African American World War veteran who was carrying an Army-issue revolver.

“Nigger”, the white man said, “What are you doing with that pistol?”

“I’m going to use it if I need to,” replied the black veteran.

“No, you give it to me.”

A. Gustafson testimony; all in Attorney Generals Civil Case Files, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries.

105Following the riot, some claimed that Sheriff McCullough had actually requested that this second contingent of African American men come down to the Courthouse — a highly unlikely possibility. It is, however, possible to envision a scenario whereby a telephone call by McCullough to Deputy Sheriff Barney Cleaver — perhaps made to the offices of the Tulsa Star — might have been misinterpreted, in the heat of the moment, as a request for assistance. Tulsa Tribune, June 3, 1921, pp. 1, 3. Tulsa World, June 10, 1921, p. 8. New York Evening Post, June 11, 1921. White, ‘Eruption of Tulsa”, pp. 909-910. John A. Gustafson testimony; Laurel Buck testimony; and, handwritten notes to W.N. Ellis testimony; all in Attorney Generals Civil Case
“Like hell I will.”

The white man tried to take the gun away from the veteran, and a shot rang out.106

America’s worst race riot had begun.

While the first shot fired at the Courthouse may have been unintentional, those that followed were not. Almost immediately, members of the white mob – and possibly some law enforcement officers – opened fire on the African American men, who returned volleys of their own. The initial gunplay lasted only a few seconds, but when it was over, an unknown number of people – perhaps as many as a dozen – both black and white, lay dead or wounded.107

Outnumbered more than twenty-to-one, the black men began a retreating fight toward the African American district. With armed whites in close pursuit, heavy gunfire erupted again along Fourth Street, two blocks north of the Courthouse.108

Dr. George H. Miller, a white physician who was working late that evening in his office at the Unity Building at 21. W. Fourth Street, rushed outside after hearing the gunshots, only to come upon a wounded black man, “shot and bleeding, writhing on the street,” surrounded by a group of angry whites. As Dr. Miller later told an interviewer:

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I went over to see if I could help him as a doctor, but the crowd was gathering around him and wouldn’t even let the driver of the ambulance which just arrived to even pick him up. I saw it was an impossible situation to control, that I could be of no help. The crowd was getting more and more belligerent. The Negro had been shot so many times in his chest, and men from the onlookers were slashing him with knives.

Unable to help the dying man, Dr. Miller got into his car and drove home.109

A short while later, a second – and deadlier – skirmish broke out at Second and Cincinnati. No longer directly involved with the fate of Dick Rowland, the beleaguered second contingent of African American men were now fighting for their own lives. Heavily outnumbered by the whites, and suffering some casualties along the way, most were apparently able, however, to make it safely across the Frisco railroad tracks, and into the more familiar environs of the African American community.110

Back at the Courthouse, the sudden and unexpected turn of events had a jolting effect on the would-be lynch mob, and groups of angry, vengeance-seeking whites soon took the streets and sidewalks of downtown. “A great many of these persons lining the sidewalks,” one white eyewitness later recalled, “were holding a rifle or shotgun in one hand, and grasping the neck of a liquor bottles with the other. Some had pistols stuck into their belts.”111

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And some were about to become, at least temporarily, officers of the law. For shortly after the fighting had broken out at the Courthouse, a large number of whites – many of whom had only a little while earlier been members of the would-be lynch mob – gathered outside of Police Headquarters on Second Street. There, perhaps as many as five-hundred white men and boys were sworn-in by police officers as “Special Deputies”. Some were provided with badges or ribbons indicating their new status. And many, it appears, were also given specific instructions. According to Laurel G. Buck, a white bricklayer who was sworn-in as one of these ‘Special Deputies’, a police officer bluntly told him to “Get a gun and get a nigger.”

Shortly thereafter, whites began breaking into downtown sporting goods stores, pawnshops, and hardware stores, stealing – or “borrowing” as some would later claim – guns and ammunition. Dick Bardon’s store on First Street was particularly hard hit. So was the J.W. McGee Sporting Goods shop at 22. W. Second Street, even though it was located literally across the street from Police Headquarters. Indeed, the owner later testified that a Tulsa police officer helped to dole out the guns that were taken from his store.

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Who actually performed the swearing-in of the “Special Deputies” is unclear, as is what may have been the “official policy” – if any – of both the Police Department and the city government in response to the violence during the early hours of the riot. The latter was often prominently featured in a number of lawsuits filed after the riot. See, in particular: “Brief of Plaintiff in Error” and “Answer Brief of Defendant in Error”, William Redfern vs. American Central Insurance Company (1925), Oklahoma State Supreme Court; and documents involving various cases filed by individuals who suffered property losses during the riot, including C.L. Netherland vs. City of Tulsa, Loula T. Williams vs. Fire Association of Philadelphia, Osborne Monroe vs. Mechanics and Traders Insurance Company of New Orleans, and H.J. Caver vs. T.D. Evans, et al..

More bloodshed soon followed, as whites began gunning down any African Americans that they discovered downtown. William R. Holway, a white engineer, was watching a movie at the Rialto Theater when someone ran into the theater, shouting “Nigger fight, nigger fight”. As Holway later recalled:

Everybody left that theater on high, you know. We went out the door and looked across the street, and there was Younkman’s drug store with those big pillars. There were two big pillars at the entrance, and we got over behind them. Just got there when a Negro ran south of the alley across the street, the minute his head showed outside, somebody shot him.

“We stood there for about half-an-hour watching,” Holway added, “which I shall never forget. He wasn’t quite dead, but he was about to die. He was the first man that I saw shot in that riot.”

Not far away, at the Royal Theater – which was showing a movie called “One Man in a Million” that evening – a similar drama played itself out. Among the onlookers was a white teenager named William “Choc” Phillips, who later became a well-known Tulsa police officer. As described by Phillips in his unpublished memoir of the riot:

The mob action was set off when several [white] men chased a Negro man down the alley in back of the theater and out onto Fourth Street where he saw the stage door and dashed

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114 Oral history interview with W.R. Holway, by Ruth Sigler Avery, in Fear: The Fifth Horseman.
inside. Seeing the open door the Negro rushed in and hurried forward in the darkness hunting a place to hide.

Suddenly he was on the stage in front of the picture screen and blinded by the bright flickering light coming down from the operator’s booth in the balcony. After shielding his eyes for a moment, he regained his vision enough to locate the steps leading from the stage down past the orchestra pit to the aisle just as the pursuing men rushed the stage. One of them saw the Negro and yelled, “there he is, heading for the aisle”. As he finished the sentence, a roaring blast from a shotgun dropped the Negro man by the end of the orchestra pit.115

Not all of the victims of the violence which broke out downtown were white. Evidence suggests that after the fighting broke out at the Courthouse, that carloads of black Tulsans may have exchanged gunfire with whites on streets downtown, possibly resulting in casualties on both sides. And at least one white man in an automobile was killed by a group of whites, who had mistaken him to be black.116

Around midnight, a small crowd of whites gathered – once again – outside of the Courthouse, yelling “Bring the rope” and “Get the nigger”. But they did not rush the

building, and nothing happened. Because the truth of the matter was that, by then, most of Tulsa's rioting whites no longer particularly cared about Dick Rowland anymore.

They now had much bigger things in mind.

While darkness slowed the pace of the riot, sporadic fighting took place throughout the nighttime hours of May 31st and June 1st. The heaviest occurred alongside the Frisco railroad tracks, one of the key dividing lines between Tulsa's black and white commercial districts. From about midnight until around 1:30 a.m., scores of blacks and whites exchanged gunfire across the Frisco yards. At one point during the fighting, an inbound train reportedly arrived, its passengers forced to take cover on the floor as the shooting continued, raking both sides of the train.

A few carloads of whites also made brief excursions into the African American district, firing indiscriminately into houses as they roared up and down streets lined with black residences. But there were deliberate murders as well. As Walter White, who visited Tulsa immediately after the riot, later reported:

Many are the stories of horror told to me — not by colored people — but by white residents. One was that of an aged colored couple, saying their evening prayers before retiring in

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their little home on Greenwood Avenue. A mob broke into the house, shot both of the old people in the backs of their heads, blowing their brains out and spattering them over the bed, pillaged the home, and then set fire to it.\textsuperscript{120}

It appears that the first fires set by whites in black neighborhoods began at about 1:00 a.m.. African American homes and businesses along Archer were the earliest targets, and when an engine crew from the Tulsa Fire Department arrived and prepared to douse the flames, white rioters forced the firemen away at gunpoint. By 4:00 a.m., more than two-dozen black-owned businesses, including the Midway Hotel, had been put to the torch.\textsuperscript{121}

The nighttime hours of May 31\textsuperscript{st} and June 1\textsuperscript{st} also witnessed the first organized actions taken by the Tulsa units of the National Guard. While evidence indicates that Sheriff McCullough may have requested of local Guard officers that they send men down to the Courthouse at around 9:30 p.m.,\textsuperscript{122} it was not until more than an hour later – that is, about the time that the fighting broke out at the Courthouse – that the local National Guard units were specifically ordered to take action with regards to the riot. According to the after action report later submitted by Major James Bell to Lieutenant Colonel L.J.F. Rooney, the local National Guard commander:


\textsuperscript{120} White, “Eruption of Tulsa,” p. 910.


About 10:30 o’clock, I think it was, I had a call from the Adjt. General asking about the situation. I explained that it looked pretty bad. He directed that we continue to use every effort to get the men in so that if a call came we would be ready. I think it was only a few minutes after this, another call from the Adjt. General directed that “B” Co., the Sanitary Det. and the Service Co. be mobilized at once and render any assistance to the civil authorities we could in the maintenance of law and order and the protection of life and property. I think this was about 10:40 o’clock and while talking to the General you appeared and assume command.123

By about 11:00 p.m., perhaps as many as fifty local National Guardsmen – nearly all of whom had been contacted at their homes – had gathered at the Armory on Sixth Street. Some were World War veterans. But it is unclear whether any of the men had been trained in riot control. For although various official and unofficial manuals were available in 1921 on the use of National Guard soldiers during riots, it is uncertain whether the Tulsa units had received any training in this area.124

But there was also something else about the guardsmen who gathered at the Armory. For not only were the Tulsa units of the National Guard exclusively white, but as the evening wore on, it became increasingly clear that they would not play an impartial role in the

123 Bell, “Report on Activities of the National Guard”. See also: Kirkpatrick, “Activities on Night of May 31, 1921”; and, Barrett, Oklahoma After Fifty Years, pp. 207-210.
“maintenance of law and order.” Like many of their white neighbors, a number of the local guardsmen also came to conclude that the race riot was, in fact, a “Negro uprising” – a term used throughout their various after action reports. But at least one National Guard officer went even further, using the term “enemy” in reference to African Americans. Given the tenor of the times, it is hardly surprising that Tulsa’s all-white National Guardsmen might view black Tulsans antagonistically. But as the riot continued to unfold, this would also prove to be far from irrelevant.\[125\]

Initially, the local guardsmen were deployed downtown. Sometime before midnight, one detachment was stationed in front of Police Headquarters, where they blocked off Second Street. Guardsmen also led groups of armed whites on “patrols” of downtown streets, an activity that was later taken over by members of the – similarly all-white – local chapter of the American Legion. Tulsa police officials also presented the guardsmen with a machine gun, which Guard officers then had mounted on the back of a truck. This particular gun, possibly a war trophy, it turned out, was in poor operating condition, and could only be fired one shell at a time.\[126\]

Taking the machine gun along with them, about thirty guardsmen then headed north, and positioned themselves along Detroit Avenue between Brady Street and Standpipe Hill –


that is, along one of the borders separating the city’s white and black neighborhoods. But their deployment was far from impartial, for the “skirmish line” that the National Guard officers established was set-up facing – or soon would be – the African American district. Moreover, the guardsmen also began rounding up black Tulsans, whom they handed over – as prisoners – to the police, and they also briefly exchanged fire with gunmen to the east. Far from being utilized as a neutral force, Tulsa’s local National Guardsmen along Detroit Avenue were, even in the early hours of the riot, being deployed in a manner which would eventually set them in opposition to the black community.\textsuperscript{127}

In Tulsa’s black neighborhoods, meanwhile, word of what had happened down at the Courthouse was soon followed by even more disturbing news. A light-complexioned African American man, who could “pass” for white, had mingled with the crowds of angry whites downtown, where he overhead talk of invading the African American district. Carefully making his way back home, the man then passed on what he had heard to Seymour Williams, a teacher at Booker T. Washington High School. Williams, who had served with the Army in France, grabbed his service revolver and began to spread the news among his neighbors living just off of Standpipe Hill.\textsuperscript{128}


\textsuperscript{128} Oral history interview with Seymour Williams, Tulsa, June 2, 1978.
All along the southern edge of Greenwood, in fact, a great amount of activity was in progress. Alarmed to the news of the violence which had broken out downtown, garage and theater owner John Wesley Williams wasted no time in preparing for the possibility of even greater trouble. Loading his 30-30 rifle and a repeating shotgun, he positioned himself along a south-facing window of his family’s second floor apartment at the corner of Greenwood and Archer. Later telling his son that he was “defending Greenwood,” he was one of scores of other African American residents who were preparing to do exactly the same.\(^{129}\)

Other black Tulsans, however, reached a different conclusion on what was the best course of action. For despite the fact that many of the city’s African American residents undoubtedly hoped that daylight would bring an end to the violence, others decided not to wait and find out. In the early hours of June 1st, a steady stream of black Tulsans began to leave the city, hoping to find safety in the surrounding countryside. “Early in the evening when there was first talk of trouble,” Irene Scofield later told the Black Dispatch, “I and about forty others started out of the town and walked to a little town about fifteen miles away.” Others joining the exodus, however, weren’t as fortunate. Billy Hudson, an African American laborer who lived on Archer, hitched up his wagon as conditions grew worse, and set out — with his grandchildren by his side — for Nowata, but was killed by whites along the way.\(^{130}\)

Adding to the confusion over what to do was the simple reality that, for most black Tulsans, it was by no means clear as to what, exactly, was going on throughout the city. This


was particularly the case during the wee hours of June 1st. On the one hand, intermittent gunfire continued along the southernmost edges of the African American district throughout the night, while down along Archer Street, the fires had not yet burned themselves out. But on the other hand, as far as anyone could determine, Dick Rowland was still safe inside the Courthouse. There had been no lynching.

But there was also something else. At about 2:00 a.m., the fierce fighting along the Frisco railroad yards had ended — and, most importantly, with the white would-be invaders still south of the tracks. As a result, some of Greenwood’s defenders not only concluded that they had “won” the fight, but also that the riot was, in fact, over. “Nine p.m. the trouble started,” A.J. Smitherman later wrote, “two a.m. the thing was done.”

Nothing could have been further from the truth.

For regardless of whatever was, or wasn’t, happening down by the Frisco tracks, crowds of angry, armed whites were still very much in evidence on the streets and sidewalks of downtown Tulsa. Stunned, and then outraged, by what had occurred down at the Courthouse, they had only begun to vent their anger.

Like black Tulsans, the whites weren’t exactly certain as to what exactly was happening in the city — a situation that was, not surprisingly, tailor-made for rumors. Indeed, at about 2:30 a.m., the word spread quickly across downtown that a train carrying five-hundred armed blacks from Muskogee was due to arrive shortly at the Midland Valley

\[131\] Smitherman, “The Tulsa Race Riot and Massacre”.

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Railway passenger station off of Third Street. Scores of armed whites – including a National Guard patrol – then rushed to the depot, but nothing happened. There was no such train.\textsuperscript{132}

A half hour or so later, reports reached the local National Guard officers that African American gunman were firing on white residences on Sunset Hill, just north of Standpipe Hill. Moreover, it was said that white woman had been shot and killed. Responding to the news, guardsmen – including the crew manning the semi-defective machine gun – were then deployed along Sunset Hill, which overlooked black homes to the east.\textsuperscript{133}

But in other white neighborhoods across Tulsa, a different kind of activity was taking place, particularly during the first hours following midnight. For as word of what some would later call the “Negro uprising” began to spread across the white community, groups of armed whites began to gather at hastily-arranged meeting places, to discuss what to do next.\textsuperscript{134}

For “Choc” Phillips and his other young companions, word of this activity came while they were sitting in an all-night restaurant. “Everybody”, they were told, “go to Fifteenth and Boulder”. Then, as Phillips wrote:

\begin{displayquote}
Many people were drifting out of the restaurant so we decided to go along and see what happened at the meeting place. Driving south on Boulder we realized that many trucks and automobiles were headed for the same location, and near Fifteenth Street people had abandoned their vehicles because
\end{displayquote}

\textsuperscript{132} Letter from Lieutenant Colonel L.J.F. Rooney and Charles W. Daley to the Adjutant General, June 3, 1921.

\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Ibid.}

the streets and intersections were filled to capacity. We left the car more than a block away and began walking toward the crowded intersection. There were already three or four hundred people there and more arriving when we walked up.

Once there, a man stood up on top of a touring car and announced, “We have decided to go out to Second and Lewis Streets and join the crowd that is meeting there.”

Returning to their automobiles, Phillips and his companions blended in with the long line of cars headed east. This time, he later estimated, the crowd that had gathered was about six-hundred strong. Once again, men stood up on top of cars and began shouting instructions to the crowd. “Men,” once man announced, “we are going in at daylight.” Another man declared that they would be having, right then and there, an ammunition exchange. “If any of you have more ammunition that you need, or if what you have doesn’t fit your gun, sing out,” he said. “Be ready at daybreak,” another man insisted, claiming that meetings like this were taking place all over town. “Nothing can stop us,” he added, “for there will be thousands of others going in at the same time.”

The Tulsa police also appear to have been scattered all over town. No doubt responding to rumors that armed blacks were supposedly en route to Tulsa from various towns across eastern Oklahoma, Tulsa police officers had been dispatched to guard various roads leading into the city. Indeed, no less than a half dozen officers – which, by Chief Gustafson’s subsequent calculations, was nearly one-fifth of the regularly scheduled available


130 Phillips, “Murder in the Streets.”
police force that evening—had apparently been posted at the ice plant overlooking the
Eleventh Street bridge. Some local National Guardsmen were also deployed to stand guard at
various public works as well, including the city water works along the Sand Springs road, and
the Public Service Company’s power plant off of First Street.137

Word of what was happening in Tulsa was also making its way to state officials in
Oklahoma City. At 10:14 p.m., Adjutant General Charles F. Barrett, the commandant of the
Oklahoma National Guard, had received a long distance telephone call from Major Byron
Kirkpatrick, a Tulsa guard officer, advising him of the worsening conditions in Tulsa.
Kirkpatrick phoned again at 12:35 a.m., at which point he was instructed by Governor J.B.A.
Robertson to prepare and send a telegram—signed, as required by Oklahoma state law, by the
Chief of Police, the County Sheriff, and a local judge—requesting that state troops be sent to
Tulsa. Kirkpatrick, however, ran into some problems as he tried to collect the necessary
signatures, particularly that of Sheriff McCullough, who was still barricaded with his men—and Dick Rowland—on the top floor of the Courthouse. But Kirkpatrick persevered, and at
1:46 a.m., the needed telegram arrived at the state capital.138 It read:

136 Ibid., p. 51.
137 Typescript notes on the testimony of Norman Bickers, Attorney Generals Civil Case Files, Case
1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries. Bell, “Report on Activities of the National
Guard.” Daley, “Information on Activities During Negro Uprising”.
Guard.” Barrett, Oklahoma After Fifty Years, pp. 206-217. Telegram from John A. Gustafson to Governor
Tulsa, Okla.

June 1, 1921

Governor J.B.A. Robertson

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Race riot developed here. Several killed. Unable handle situation. Request that National Guard forces be sent by special train. Situation serious.

Jno. A. Gustafson,
Chief of Police

Wm. McCullough,
Sheriff

V.W. Biddison,
District Judge

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J.B.A. Robertson, June 1, 1921, Attorney Generals Civil Case Files, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries.

139 Copy of telegram from John A. Gustafson, W.M. McCullough, and V.W. Biddison to Governor J.B.A. Robertson, Attorney Generals Civil Case Files, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries.
Twenty-nine minutes later, at 2:15 a.m., Major Kirkpatrick spoke again by phone with Adjutant General Barrett, who informed him that the Governor had authorized the calling out of the state troops. A special train, carrying approximately one-hundred National Guard soldiers based in the state capital, would leave Oklahoma City, bound for Tulsa, at 5:00 a.m. that morning.\textsuperscript{140}

By then, Tulsa’s longest night would finally be ending – but its longest day would have only begun.

In the pre-dawn hours of June 1\textsuperscript{st}, thousands of armed whites had gathered in three main clusters along the northern fringes of downtown, opposite Greenwood. One group had assembled behind the Frisco freight depot, while another waited nearby at the Frisco and Santa Fe passenger station. Four blocks to the north, a third crowd was clustered at the Katy passenger depot. And while we do not know, for certain, how many people were in each group, some contemporary observers estimated the total number of armed whites who had gathered as high as five or ten thousand.\textsuperscript{141}

Smaller bands of whites had also been active. One group hauled a machine gun to the top of the Middle States Milling Company’s grain elevator off of First Street, and set it up to fire to the north up Greenwood Avenue.\textsuperscript{142} And shortly before daybreak, five white men in a green Franklin automobile pulled up alongside the crowd of whites who were massed behind

\textsuperscript{140} Kirkpatrick, “Activities on Night of May 31, 1921”. Barrett, \textit{Oklahoma After Fifty Years}, pp. 206-217. Copy of telegram from Adjutant General Charles F. Barrett to Lieutenant Colonel L.J.F. Rooney, June 1, 1921, Attorney Generals Civil Case Files, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries.

the Frisco freight depot. "What the hell are you waitin' on?" one of the men hollered, "let's go get 'em." But the crowd would not budge, and the men in the car set off alone toward Deep Greenwood. Their bodies, and the bullet-ridden Franklin, were later seen in the middle of Archer Street, near Frankfort.\textsuperscript{143}

Across the tracks, in Greenwood, considerable activity had also been taking place. While some black Tulsans prepared themselves to face the onslaught, others decided that it was time to go. "About this time Officers Pack and Lewis pushed up to us and said it would not be safe for us to remain any longer," recalled Mrs. Dimple Bush, who was with her husband at the Red Wing Hotel. "So," she added, "We rushed out and found a taxi which took us straight north on Greenwood.\textsuperscript{144}

Not far away, along North Elgin, Julia Duff, a teacher at Booker T. Washington High School, faced a similar crisis. Awakened by loud voices outside of her rented room shortly before dawn, the young teacher was soon nearly overcome with fear. Then, as later described in a letter published in the \textit{Chicago Defender}:

Mrs. S. came into her room and told her to dress—there was something wrong for soldiers were all around, and she looked out the window and saw them driving the men out of the houses on Detroit. Saw Mr. Woods running with both hands in the air and their 3-month-old baby in one hand and three brutes behind him with guns.

\textsuperscript{143} Parrish, \textit{Events of the Tulsa Disaster}," pp. 19-21. \textit{Tulsa City Directory, 1921}.
\textsuperscript{144} Phillips, "Murder in the Streets," pp. 68-73.
“She said her legs gave way from under her,” the letter continued, “and she had to crawl about the room, taking things from her closet, putting them in her trunk, for she thought if anything happened she’d have her trunk packed, and before she got everything in they heard footsteps on their steps and there were six out there and they ordered Mr. Smart to march, hands up, out of the house.”

Several eyewitnesses later recalled that when dawn came—at 5:08 a.m.—that morning, an unusual whistle or siren sounded, perhaps as a signal for the mass assault on Greenwood to begin. And although the source of this whistle or siren is still unknown, moments later, the white mobs made their move. While the machine gun in the grain elevator opened fire, crowds of armed whites poured across the Frisco tracks, headed straight for the African American commercial district. As later described by one eyewitness:

With wild frenzied shouts, men began pouring from behind the freight depot and the long string of boxcars and evidently from behind the piles of oilwell easing which was at the other end and on the north side of the building. From every place of shelter up and down the tracks came screaming, shouting men to join in the rush toward the Negro section. Mingled with the shouting were a few rebel-yells and Indian gobblings as the

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144 Oklahoma City Black Dispatch, June 10, 1921. Patrolmen Henry C. Pack and Robert Lewis were two of the approximately four African Americans who served on the Tulsa Police force at the time of the riot.

145 Chicago Defender, June 11, 1921.

great wave of humanity rushed forward totally absorbed in
thoughts of destruction.\footnote{Phillips, “Murder in the Streets”, p. 70.}

Meanwhile, over at the Katy depot, the other crowd of armed whites also moved
forward. Heading east, they were soon joined by dozens of others in automobiles, driving
along Brady and Cameron Streets. As one unidentified observer later told reporter Mary
Parrish, “Tuesday night, May 31st, was the riot, and Wednesday morning, by daybreak, was
the invasion.”\footnote{Parrish, 	extit{Events of the Tulsa Disaster}, p. 65. Phillips, “Murder in the Streets”, pp. 70-71. 	extit{New York World}, June 2, 1921.}

While black Tulsans fought hard to protect their homes and businesses, the sheer
numerical advantage of the invading whites soon proved to be overwhelming. After a valiant,
nightlong effort, John Wesley Williams had to flee from his family’s apartment once whites
began to riddle the building with gunfire. Squeezing off a few final rounds a little further up
Greenwood Avenue, Williams then faced the inevitable, and began walking north along the
Midland Valley tracks, leaving his home and businesses behind.\footnote{Phillips, “Murder in the Streets”, p. 70.}

He was hardly alone. Not far away, in her apartment in the Woods Building at 105 N.
Greenwood, Mary E. Jones Parrish – and her young daughter Florence Mary – had sat up
much of the night, uncertain of what to do. “Finally,” she later wrote,

My friend, Mrs. Jones, called her husband, who was trying to
take a little rest. They decided to try to make for a place of
safety, so called to me that they were leaving. By this time the
enemy was close upon us, so they ran out of the south door,
which led out onto Archer Street, and went east toward Lansing. I took my little girl, Florence Mary, by the hand and fled out of the west door on Greenwood. I did not take time to get a hat for myself or Baby, but started out north on Greenwood, running amidst showers of bullets from the machine gun located in the granary and from men who were quickly surrounding our district. Seeing that they were fighting at a disadvantage, our men had taken shelter in the buildings and in other places out of sight of the enemy. When my daughter, Florence Mary, and I ran into the street, it was vacant for a block or more. Someone called to me to “Get out of the street with that child or you both will be killed.” I felt that it was suicide to remain in the building, for it would surely be destroyed and death in the street was preferred, for we expected to be shot down at any moment. So we placed our trust in God, our Heavenly Father, who seeth and knoweth all things, and ran out of Greenwood in the hope of reaching a friend’s home who lived over the Standpipe hill in Greenwood Addition.¹⁵⁰

For Dimple Bush, the flight from Greenwood had bordered upon the indescribable. “It was just dawn; the machine guns were sweeping the valley with their murderous fire and my heart

was filled with dread as we sped along,” she recalled, “Old women and men, children were running and screaming everywhere.”\textsuperscript{151}

Soon, however, new perils developed. For as the mobs of armed whites rushed into the southern end of the African American district, airplanes — manned by whites — also appeared overhead. As Dr. R.T. Bridgewater, a well-respected black Tulsa physician, later described what happened:

Shortly after we left a whistle blew. The shots rang from a machine gun located on Standpipe Hill near my residence and aeroplanes began to fly over us, in some instances very low to the ground. A cry was heard from the women saying, “Look out for the aeroplanes, they are shooting upon us.”\textsuperscript{152}

Numerous other eyewitnesses —both black and white — confirm the presence of an unknown number of airplanes flying over Greenwood during the early daylight hours of June 1\textsuperscript{st}. And while certain other assertions made over the years—such as that the planes dropped streams of “liquid fire” on top of African American homes and businesses—appear to have been technologically improbable, particularly during the early 1920s, there is little doubt but that some of the occupants of the airplanes fired upon black Tulsans with pistols and rifles. Moreover, there is evidence, to suggest that men in at least one airplane dropped some form

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\textsuperscript{151} Oklahoma City \textit{Black Dispatch}, June 10, 1921.
\textsuperscript{152} Testimonial of Dr. R.T. Bridgewater in Parrish, \textit{Events of the Tulsa Disaster}, p. 45.
\end{flushright}
of explosives, probably sticks of dynamite, upon a group of African American refugees as they were fleeing the city.153

Gunfire soon erupted along the western boundary of the black community as well. Sharp fighting broke out along Standpipe Hill, where the local National Guardsmen positioned there traded fire with armed African Americans, who had set up defensive lines off of Elgin and Elgin Place. Nearby, on Sunset Hill, the white guardsmen opened fire on the black neighborhood to the east, using both their standard issue thirty-caliber 1906 Springfield rifles, as well as the semi-defective machine gun provided to them by the Tulsa police.154

As the waves of white rioters descended upon the African American district, a deadly pattern soon emerged. First, the armed whites broke into the black homes and businesses, forcing the occupants out into the street, where they were led away, at gunpoint, to one of a growing number of internment centers. Anyone who resisted was shot, as were, apparently, African American men in homes where firearms were discovered. Next, the whites looted the homes and businesses, pocketing small items, and hauling away larger items either on foot or by car or truck. And finally, the white rioters then set the homes and other buildings on fire.


Black Tulsa was not destroyed—as some have alleged—from the air, but by fires set by whites on the ground. And similar, latter-day claims that Mt. Zion Baptist Church was specifically targeted and bombed must also be viewed with a healthy dose of skepticism, given the rather primitive aerial bombing capabilities that existed, worldwide, in 1921. That said, however, the evidence does indicate that some form of aerial bombardment took place in Tulsa on the morning of June 1, 1921—thus making Tulsa, in all probability, the first U.S. city bombed from the air.

using torches and oil-soaked rags. House by house, block by block, the wall of flame crept northward, engulfing the city’s black neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{155}

Atrocities occurred along the way. According to one account, published ten days after the riot in a Chicago newspaper,

Another cruel instance was when they [white rioters] went to the home of an old couple and the old man, 80 years old, was paralyzed and sat in a chair and they told him to march and he told them he was crippled, but he’d go if someone would take him, and they told his wife (old, too) to go, but she didn’t want to leave him, and he told her to go on anyway. As she left one of the damn dogs shot the old man and then they fired the house.\textsuperscript{156}

There were near-atrocities as well. After armed whites had led his mother away at gunpoint, five-year-old George Monroe was hiding beneath his parents’ bed with his two older sisters and his one older brother when white men suddenly entered the room. After rifling through the dresser, the men then set the curtains on fire. But as the men began to leave, one of them stepped on George’s hand. George started to cry out, but his sister Lottie threw her hand over

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\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Chicago Defender}, June 11, 1921.
his mouth, preventing their discovery. A few minutes later, the children were able to escape from their home before it burst into flame.\textsuperscript{157}

Some of the fires in Greenwood appear to have been set by whites wearing khaki uniforms. But the actual identity of these men remains, to this day, unclear. Most likely, they were World War I veterans who had donned their old Army uniforms when the riot erupted—which, it should be recalled, came but one day after Memorial Day—rather than an officially organized group.\textsuperscript{158}

They were not, however, the only uniformed whites observed setting fires in Tulsa’s African American neighborhoods. According to black deputy Sheriff V.B. Bostic, a white Tulsa police officer “drove him and his wife from his home,” and then “poured oil on the floor and set a lighted match to it.”\textsuperscript{159}

Deputy Sheriff Bostic was not, however, the only eyewitness to report acts of criminal misconduct by Tulsa police officers during the course of the riot. According to one white eyewitness, a “uniformed [white] policeman on East Second Street went home, changed his uniform to plainclothes, and went to the negro district and led a bunch of whites into negro houses, some of the bunch pilfering, never offered to protect men, women or children, or

\textsuperscript{157} Oral history interviews with George Monroe, Tulsa, 1997-2000.

The entire issue of fires being set in Greenwood by whites in military-style uniforms is further—and perhaps hopelessly—complicated by the use of the ambiguous term, “Home Guards.” When used by whites, it usually refers to a loose organization of white veterans. When employed by African Americans, however, the term also appears to refer, at times, to the local, Tulsa-based units of the National Guard. See, also: Robert D. Norris, Jr., “The Home Guard”, unpublished manuscript, ca 2000; and, Ellsworth, \textit{Death in a Promised Land}, p. 131, n13.

\textsuperscript{159} Typescript note on the testimony of V.B. Bostic in letter of June 8, 1921, Attorney Generals Civil Case Files, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries. See also John A. Oliphant testimony, \textit{ibid}.  

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property.” This particular account was buttressed by the testimony of an African American witness, who reported that he had seen the same officer in question “on the morning of the riot, June 1st, kicking in doors of negro homes, and assisting in the destruction of property.”

Despite the daunting odds against them, black Tulsans fought back valiantly. African American riflemen had positioned themselves in the belfry of the newly-built Mt. Zion Baptist Church, whose commanding view of the area just below Standpipe Hill allowed them to temporarily stem the tide of the white invasion. But when white rioters set up a machine gun—probably the same weapon that had been used earlier that morning at the grain elevator—and unleashed its deadly fire on the church belfry, the black defenders were quickly overwhelmed. As “Choc” Phillips later described what happened:

In a couple of minutes pieces of brick started falling, then whole bricks began tumbling from the narrow slits in the cupola. Within five or six minutes the openings were large jagged holes with so many bricks flying from that side of the cupola wall that it seemed ready to fall.

The men stopped firing the machine gun and almost immediately the houses on the outer rim of the area that had been protected by the snipers, became victims of the arsonists. We watched the men take the machine gun from the tripod, wrap it in a canvas cover then lay it on the bed of the truck. They rolled up the belts with the empty shell casings, put away

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160 Typescript notes on the testimony of Jack Krueger and Rich Rickard in letter of June 8, 1921, Attorney Generals Civil Case Files, Case 1062, States Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries.
those that were still unused, and in what seemed less than ten
minutes from the time the truck was parked at the location,
drove away.

While standing on the high ground where the machine
gun had been firing, we watched the activity below for a few
minutes. Most of the houses were beginning to burn and smoke
ascended slowly in to the air while people flitted around as busy
as bees down there. From the number that ran in and out of the
houses and the church, there had evidently been a couple of
hundred who remained behind when the mob bypassed the area.

A short while later, Mt. Zion was put to the torch.\textsuperscript{161}

Attempts by black Tulsans to defend their homes and property were undercut by the
actions of both the Tulsa police and the local National Guard units, who, rather than focus on
disarming and arresting the white rioters, instead took steps that led to the eventual
imprisonment of practically all of the city’s African American citizens. Guardsmen deployed
on Standpipe Hill made at least one eastward march in the early hours of June 1\textsuperscript{st}, rounding
up African Americans along the way, before they were fired upon—apparently by whites as

Riot,” pp. 32-33. John A. Oliphant testimony, Attorney Generals Civil Case Files, Case 1062, State Archives
Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries. See also: oral history interview with W.D. Williams, Tulsa, June
7, 1978; and oral history interview with Dr. Raymond Knight, Oklahoma City, February 10, 1971, by Ben
Woods, Living Legends Library, Oklahoma Christian College.
well as blacks—near Greenwood Avenue. The Guardsmen then marched to Sunset Hill, where they handed over their black prisoners to local police officers.\textsuperscript{162}

Nor was an arrest by a white officer in itself a guarantee of safety for black Tulsans. According to Thomas Higgins, a white resident of Wichita, Kansas who happened to be visiting Tulsa when the riot broke out, “I saw men of my own race, sworn officers, on three occasions, search Negroes while their hands were up, and not finding weapons, extracted what money they found on them. If the Negro protested, he was shot.”\textsuperscript{163}

White civilians also took black prisoners. When the invasion began, Carrie Kinlaw, an African American woman who lived out toward the Section Line, had to run toward the fighting in order to help her sisters retrieve their invalid mother. Reaching the elderly woman in a “rain of bullets”, Kinlaw later wrote:

My sisters and I gathered her up, placed her on a cot, and three of us carried the cot and the other one carried a bundle of clothes; thus we carried Mother about six blocks, with bullets falling on all sides. About six squads of rioters overtook us, asked for men and guns, made us hold up our hands.


\textsuperscript{163} From the \textit{Wichita Daily Eagle}, reprinted in the \textit{Chicago Defender}, June 11, 1921.
Not all of her captors, however, were adults. "There were boys in that bunch," she added, "from about 10 years upward, all armed with guns."  

Black Tulsans also faced dangers while in the custody of white civilians as well—probably even more so. James T. West, a teacher at Booker T. Washington High School, was arrested by whites at his home on Easton Street that morning. "Some men appeared with drawn guns and ordered all of the men out of the house," he recalled immediately after the riot,

I went out immediately. They ordered me to raise my hands, after which three or four men searched me. They told me to line up in the street. I requested them to let me get my hat and best shoes, but they refused and abusively ordered me to line up. They refused to let one of the men put on any kind of shoes. After lining up some 30 or 40 of us men, they ran us through the streets to Convention Hall, forcing us to keep our hands in the air all the while. While we were running, some of the ruffians would shoot at our heels and swore at those who had difficulty keeping up. They actually drove a car into the bunch and knocked down two or three men.  

Harold M. Parker, a white bookkeeper for the Oklahoma Producing and Refining Corporation at the time of the riot, later corroborated how armed whites sometimes shot at the

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heels of their black prisoners. "Sometimes they missed and shot their legs," Parker recalled a half century later, "It was sheer cruelty coming out."\textsuperscript{166}

But the most infamous incident involving white civilians imprisoning African Americans was that which concerned Dr. A.C. Jackson, Tulsa's noted black surgeon. Despite the increasing gunfire, Dr. Jackson had decided to remain inside of his handsome home at 523 N. Detroit, along the shoulder of Standpipe Hill. But when a group of armed whites arrived on his front lawn, Jackson apparently walked out the side door of his home with his hands up, saying, "Here I am boys, don't shoot."\textsuperscript{167} What happened next was later recounted by John A. Oliphant, a white attorney who lived nearby, in testimony he provided after the riot:

Q. About what time in the morning did you say it was Dr. Jackson was shot?

A. Right close to eight o'clock, between seven thirty and eight o'clock.

Q. Dr. Jackson was a negro?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And he was coming toward you and these other men at the time he was shot?

A. Yes, Sir, coming right between his house, right in his yard between his home and the house below him.

Q. What did these men say at the time he was shot?

\textsuperscript{166} Testimonial of J.T. West in Parrish, \textit{Events of the Tulsa Disaster}, p. 37.

\textsuperscript{167} Oral history interview with Harold Madison Parker, Tulsa, January 3, 1972, by Ruth Sigler Avery, in \textit{Fear: The Fifth Horseman}. 

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A. They didn’t say anything but they pulled down on him; I kept begging him not to shoot him, I held him a good bit and I thought he wouldn’t shoot but he shot him twice and the other fellow on the other side—and he fell—shot him and broke his leg.

Q. One man shot him twice?

A. Yes, sir, this is my recollection now.

Q. Then another one shot him through the leg?

A. Yes, I didn’t look at that fellow.

Q. These same men that shot him carried him to the hospital?

A. No, they didn’t.

Q. What did they do?

A. I have never seen them after that, I don’t know a thing about what became of them.

Dr. Jackson died of his wounds later that day.\textsuperscript{168}

Not all black Tulsans, however, countenanced surrender. In the final burst of fighting off of Standpipe Hill that morning, a deadly firefight erupted at the site of an old clay pit, where several African American defenders were said to have gone to their deaths fighting off the white invaders. Stories have also been passed down over the years regarding the exploits of Peg Leg Taylor, a legendary black defender who is said to have singlehandedly fought off

\textsuperscript{167} Parrish, \textit{Events of the Tulsa Disaster}, p. 55.
more than a dozen white rioters. And along the northern face of Sunset hill, the white National Guardsmen posted there found themselves, at least for a while, under attack.  

Black Tulsa, it was clear, was not going without a fight.

Despite their gallant effort, however, Tulsa’s African American minority was simply outgunned and outnumbered. And as the white mobs continued to move northward, into the heart of the black residential district, some of the worst violence of the riot appears to have taken place. “Negro men, women and children were killed in great numbers as they ran, trying to flee to safety,” one unidentified informant later told Mary E. Parrish, “…the most horrible scenes of this occurrence was to see women dragging their children while running to safety, and the dirty white rascals firing at them as they ran.”

In the wake of the invasion came a wall of flame, steadily moving northward. “Is the whole world on fire?” asked a young playmate of eight-year-old Kinney Booker, who was fleeing with his family from their home on North Frankfort. Not far away, a fiery horror was underway. As later recounted by Walter White in The Nation magazine:

One story was told to me by an eyewitness of five colored men trapped in a burning house. Four burned to death. A fifth attempted to flee, was shot to death as he emerged from the burning structure, and his body was thrown back into the flames.


170 Parrish, Events of the Tulsa Disaster, pp. 62-63.
Humans, however, weren't the only victims of the conflagration. More than a few black Tulsans kept pigs and chickens in their backyards in those days. They, too, perished in the flames—as did some dogs and other family pets.\(^{171}\)

Efforts made by the Tulsa Fire Department to halt the burning were of little effect. The earliest attempts by firemen to put out fires in the African American district were halted, at gunpoint, by crowds of white rioters. Thereafter, what efforts that were made appear to have been directed towards keeping the flames away from nearby white neighborhoods. This may have also played a role in how another new black church, the First Baptist Church located at Archer and Jackson, was spared. "Yonder is a nigger church, why ain't they burning it?" a white woman allegedly asked on the morning of June 1st. Because, she was told, "It's in a white district."\(^{172}\)

As the morning wore on, and the fighting moved northward across Greenwood, there was a startling new development. For on the heels of their brief gun battle with African American riflemen to their north, the National Guardsmen who were positioned along the crest of Sunset Hill then joined in the invasion of black Tulsa, with one detachment heading north, the other to the northeast. As later described by Captain John W. McCuen in the after action report he submitted to the commander of Tulsa's National Guard units:

> We advanced to the crest of Sunset Hill in skirmish line and then a little further north to the military crest of the hill where


\(^{172}\) Guthrie Daily Leader, June 1, 1921. Tulsa Tribune: June 1, 1921, p. 6; and June 3, 1921, p. 1. Tulsa World, June 2, 1921, p. 2. Affidavit of Albert Herring, December 2, 1921, Attorney Generals Civil Case
our men were ordered to lie down because of the intense fire of
the blacks who had formed a good skirmish line at the foot of
the hill to the northeast among the out-buildings of the negro
settlement which stops at the foot of the hill. After about 20
minutes “fire at will” at the armed groups of blacks the latter
began falling back to the northeast, thus getting good cover
among the frame buildings of the negro settlement.
Immediately we moved forward, “B” Company advancing
directly north and the Service company in a north-easterly
direction.¹⁷³

But even more remarkable was what happened next, when the guardsmen came upon
a group of African Americans, barricaded inside a store, who were attempting to hold off a
mob of armed white rioters. For rather than attempt to get the two groups—that is, the white
invaders and the black defenders—to disengage, the guardsmen instead joined in on the
attack. Again, as described by Captain McCuen:

At the north-east corner of the negro settlement 10 or more
negroes barricaded themselves in a concrete store and dwelling
and stiff fight ensued between these negroes on one side and
guardsmen and civilians on the other. Several whites and
blacks were wounded and killed at this point. We captured,

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¹⁷³ McCuen, “Duty Performed by [“B”] Company.”
arrested and disarmed a great many negro men in this settlement and then sent them under guard to the convention hall and other points where they were being concentrated.\textsuperscript{174}

No longer remotely impartial, the men of “B” Company, Third Infantry, Oklahoma National Guard, had now joined in on the assault on black Tulsa.

As African Americans fled the city, new dangers sometimes appeared. Mary Parrish later reported that as the group of refugees she was with “had traveled many miles into the country and were turning to find our way to Claremore,” they were warned to stay clear of a nearby town, where whites were “treating our people awfully mean as they passed through.”\textsuperscript{175} Similar stories have persisted for decades.

Not all white Tulsans, however, shared the racial views of the white rioters. Mary Korte, a white maid who worked for a wealthy Tulsa family, hid African American refugees at her family’s farm east of the city.\textsuperscript{176} And along the road to Sand Springs, a white couple named Merrill and Ruth Phelps hid and fed black riot victims in the basement of their home for days. Indeed, the Phelps home—which still stands—became something of a “safe house” for black Tulsans who had managed not to be imprisoned by the white authorities. Traveling through the woods and along creek beds at night, dozens of African American refugees were apparently hidden by the Phelpses during the daylight hours.\textsuperscript{177}

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{175} Parrish, \textit{Events of the Tulsa Disaster}, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{177} Oral history interview with Merrill A. “Red” Phelps II, Tulsa, August 12, 1999.
Other white Tulsans also hid blacks, or directly confronted the white rioters. Mary Jo Erhardt, a young stenographer who roomed at the Y.W.C.A. Building at Fifth and Cheyenne, did both. After a sleepless night, punctuated by the sounds of gunfire, Erhardt arose early on the morning of June 1st. Heading downstairs, she then heard a voice she recognized as belonging to the African American porter who worked there. “Miss Mary! Oh, Miss Mary!” he said, “Let me in quick.” Armed whites, he told her, were chasing him. Quickly secreting the man inside the building’s walk-in refrigerator, Erhardt later recalled,

Hardly had I hidden him behind the beef carcasses and returned to the hall door when a loud pounding at the service entrance drew me there. A large man was trying to open the door, fortunately securely locked, and there on the stoop stood three very rough-looking middle-aged white men, each pointing a revolver in my general direction!

“What do you want?”, I asked sharply. Strangely, those guns frightened me not at all. I was so angry I could have torn those ruffians apart—three armed white men chasing one lone, harmless Negro. I cannot recall in all my life feeling hatred toward any person, until then. Apparently my feelings did not show, for one answered, “Where did he go?” “Where did WHO go?”, I responded.

“That nigger,” one demanded, “did you let him in here?”

“Mister,” I said, “I’m not letting ANYBODY in here!”, which was perfectly true. I had already let in all I intended.
“It was at least ten minutes before I felt secure enough to release Jack,” Erhardt added, “He was nearly frozen, dressed thinly as he was for the hot summer night, but he was ALIVE!”\(^{178}\)

Some whites, in their efforts to protect black Tulsans from harm put themselves at risk — and none, perhaps, more so than a young Hispanic woman named Maria Morales Gutierrez. A recent immigrant from Mexico, she and her husband were living, at the time of the riot, in a small house off of Peoria Avenue, near Independence Street. Hearing a great deal of noise and commotion on the morning of June 1\(^{st}\), Morales ventured outside, where she saw two small African American children, who had evidently been separated from their parents, walking along the street. Then, suddenly, an airplane appeared on the horizon, bearing down on the two frightened youngsters. Morales ran out into the street, and scooped the little ones into her arms, and out of danger.

But that was not yet the final hazard, for a group of armed whites later demanded that Morales hand the two terrified children over to them. “In her English, she told them ‘No’,” her daughter Gloria Lough, later recalled. “Somehow or other,” she added, “they didn’t shoot her.” The youngsters were safe.\(^{179}\)

As the battle for black Tulsa continued to rage, it soon became evident, even in neighborhoods far removed from the fighting, that on June 1, 1921, there would be very little business as usual in the city of Tulsa. When Guy Ashby, a young white employee at Cooper’s Grocery on Fourteenth Street, showed up for work that morning, his boss was on his way out the door. “The boss told me there would be no work that day as he was declaring it ‘Nigger

\(^{178}\) Mary Jo Erhardt, “My Most Hideous Birthday,” unpublished memoir.

\(^{179}\) Oral history interview with Gloria Lough, Tulsa, June 4, 1999.
Day’ and he was going hunting niggers,” Ashby later remembered, “He took a rifle and told me to lock up the store and go home.”

Downtown, normal activities were even more in disarray, as business owners found themselves shorthanded, and crowds of onlookers took to the streets, or climbed up on rooftops, to stare at the great clouds of smoke billowing over the north end of town. At the all-white Central High School, several male students bolted from class when gunfire was heard nearby and, one of the students later recalled, “struck out for the riot area.” Along the way, he added, they were met by a white man who handed them a new rifle and a box of shells. “You can have it,” the man told them, “I’m going home and going to bed.”

The riot was felt along the southern edge of the city as well, particularly in the well-to-do white neighborhoods off of 21st Street, as carloads of armed white vigilantes went door to door, rounding up live-in African American cooks, maids, and butlers at gunpoint, and then hauling them off toward downtown. A number of white homeowners, however, fearing for the safety of their black employees, stood in the way of this forced evacuation. When Charles and Amy Arnold refused to hand over their housekeeper, cries of being “nigger lovers” were followed by a brick being thrown through their front window.

Even out in the countryside, miles from town, people knew that something was happening in Tulsa. For ever since daybreak, huge columns of black smoke had been rising up, hundreds of feet into the air, over the north end of the city.

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180 Oral history interview with Guy Ashby, Tulsa, November 5, 1971, by Bruce Hartnitt.
The smoke was still there, some four hours later, when the State Troops finally arrived in town.

The special train from Oklahoma City, carrying Adjutant General Charles F. Barrett and the approximately 109 soldiers and officers under his command, pulled into Tulsa’s bullet-scarred Frisco and Santa Fe passenger depot at approximately 9:15 a.m. on the morning of June 1, 1921. The soldiers, who arrived armed and in uniform, were all-members of an Oklahoma City-based National Guard unit. But in Tulsa, they soon became known, by both blacks and whites, as the “State Troops” – a term which had the intrinsic benefit of helping to distinguish the out-of-towners from the local National Guard units. Like the local guardsmen, the State Troops were also all-white.183

By the time the State Troops arrived, Tulsa’s devastating racial conflagration was already ten and one-half hours old. Dozens of blacks and whites had been killed, while the wards of the city’s four remaining hospitals – the all-black Frissell Memorial Hospital had already been burned to the ground by white rioters—were filled with the wounded. Most of the city’s African American district had already been put to the torch, while looting continued in those black homes and businesses that were still standing. “One very bad thing was the way whites delved into the personal belongings of the Negroes, throwing their possessions from trunks and otherwise damaging them,” reported M.J. White, a Denver dental supply

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dealer who was visiting Tulsa at the time of the riot. "This lawless looting continued from about 9 until 11 o’clock," he added, "when martial law prevented further spoilation."¹⁸⁴

There were ongoing horrors as well. "One Negro was dragged behind an automobile, with a rope around his neck, through the business district," reported the Tulsa World in its "Second Extra" edition on the morning of June 1st. Decades later, both former Tulsa mayor L.C. Clark, and E.W. "Gene" Maxey of the Tulsa County Sheriff’s Department, confirmed this report. "About 8 a.m. on the morning of June 1, 1921," Maxey told riot chronicler Ruth Avery,

I was downtown with a friend when they killed that good, old, colored man that was blind. He had amputated legs. His body was attached at the hips to a small wooden platform with wheels. One leg stub was longer than the other, and hung slightly over the edge of the platform, dragging along the street. He scooted his body around by shoving and pushing with his hands covered with baseball catcher mitts. He supported himself by selling pencils to passerbys, or accepting their donations for his singing of songs.

The street car tracks ran north and south on Main Street, and the tracks were laid on pretty rough bricks. The fellow that was driving the car I knew—an outlaw and a bootlegger. But I won’t give his name because he has some folks here. There

were two or three people with him. They got that old colored man that had been here for years. He was helpless. He'd carry an old tin cup, sing, and mooched for money. One of them thuggy, white people had a new car, so he went to the depot, and came back up Main Street between First and Second Streets. We were on the east side of the street. These white thugs had roped this colored man on the longer stump of his one leg, and were dragging him behind the car up Main Street. He was hollering. His head was being bashed in, bouncing on the steel rails and bricks.

“They went on all the speed that the car could make,” Maxey added, “...a new car, with the top down, and 3 or 4 of them in it, dragging him behind the car—all in broad daylight on June 1st, right through the center of town on Main Street.”

When the State Troops arrived in Tulsa, the majority of the city’s black citizenry had either fled to the countryside, or were being held—allegedly for their own protection—against their will in one of a handful of hastily set-up internment centers, including Convention Hall, the Fairgrounds, and McNulty baseball park. There were still, however, some pockets of armed black resistance to the remnants of the white invasion, especially along the northern reaches of the African American district. And in certain borderline areas, such as the residential neighborhood that lay just to the east of the Santa Fe tracks, where the

Jim Crow line ran right down the center of the street, a number of African American homes had escaped destruction, sometimes through the efforts of sympathetic white neighbors.\textsuperscript{186}

Upon their arrival in Tulsa, the State Troops apparently did not proceed immediately to where the fighting was still in progress, although it is uncertain how long this delay lasted. The reasons for this seeming hold-up appear to be largely due to the fact that certain steps needed to be fulfilled—either through protocol or by law—in order for martial law to be declared in Tulsa. Accordingly, after detraining at the Frisco and Santa Fe station, Adjutant General Barrett led a detachment of soldiers to the Courthouse, where an unsuccessful attempt was made to contact Sheriff McCullough. Barrett then went to City Hall, where, after conferring with city officials, he contacted Governor Robertson in Oklahoma City and asked to be granted the authority to proclaim martial law in Tulsa County. Other detachments of State Troops, meanwhile, appear to have begun taking charge of black Tulsans who were being held by armed white civilians.\textsuperscript{187} But another account of the riot, published a decade later, alleges that upon their arrival in Tulsa, the State Troops wasted valuable minutes by taking time to prepare and eat breakfast.\textsuperscript{188}

As it turned out, while the State Troops were occupied downtown, not far away, some of the finest African American homes in the city were still standing. Located along North Detroit Avenue, near Easton, they included the homes of some of Tulsa’s most prominent black citizens, among them the residences of *Tulsa Star* editor A.J. Smitherman, Booker T.


Washington High School principal Ellis W. Woods, and businessman Thomas R. Gentry and his wife, Lottie.¹⁸⁹

For several hours that morning, John A. Olyphant, a white attorney who lived nearby, had been telephoning Police Headquarters in an effort to save these homes, which had been looted but not burned. Olyphant believed that a handful of officers, if sent over immediately, could see to it that the homes were spared. As he later recounted in sworn testimony:

Q. Judge, when you phoned the police station what reply did you get?

A. He said—somebody in there, I thought I knew the voice but I am not certain, he said, “I will do the best I can for you.” I told him who I was, I wanted some policemen, I says, “If you will send me ten policemen I will protect all this property and save a million dollars worth of stuff they were burning down and looting.” I asked the fire department for the fire department to be sent over to help protect my property and they said they couldn’t come, they wouldn’t let them.¹⁹⁰


¹⁹⁰ John A. Olyphant testimony, Attorney Generals Civil Case Files, Case 1062, State Archives Division, Oklahoma Department of Libraries.
Oliphant's hopes were raised, however, when he observed the arrival of the State Troops, figuring that they might be able to save the homes along North Detroit. "I sent for them," he testified, "I sent for the militia to come, send over fifteen or twenty of them, that is all I wanted." But, instead, at around 10:15 or 10:30 a.m., a party of three or four white men—probably so-called 'Special Deputies'—each wearing badges arrived, and then set fire to one of the very homes that Oliphant had been trying to protect. By the time the State Troops arrived in the neighborhood later that morning, it was too late. Most of the homes were already on fire.191

One of the few that wasn't was the residence of Dr. Robert Bridgewater and his wife, Mattie, at 507 N. Detroit. Returning to his home—after being held at Convention Hall—in order to retrieve his medicine cases, Dr. Bridgewater later wrote,

On reaching the house, I saw my piano and all of my elegant furniture piled in the street. My safe had been broken open, all of the money stolen, also my silverware, cut glass, all of the family clothes, and everything of value had been removed, even my family Bible. My electric light fixtures were broken, all of the window lights and glass in the doors were broken, the dishes that were not stolen were broken, the floors were covered (literally speaking) with glass, even the phone was torn from the wall.192

191 Ibid.
192 Testimonial of Dr. R.T. Bridgewater in Parrish, Events of the Tulsa Disaster, pp. 46, 120. Tulsa City Directory, 1921.
And the Bridgewaters, as they well knew, were among the fortunate few. Most black Tulsans no longer had homes anymore.

By the time that marital law was declared in Tulsa County at 11:29 a.m. on June 1st, the race riot had nearly run its course. Scattered bands of white rioters—some of whom had been awake for more than twenty-four hours straight—still continued to loot and burn, but most had already gone home. Along the northern and eastern edges of black Tulsa, where homes were mixed in with stretches of farmland, it had become difficult for the rioters to distinguish the homes of African Americans from those of their white neighbors. The home that riot survivor Nell Hamilton shared with her mother out near the Section Line was, perhaps, spared for just that reason.\textsuperscript{193}

A final skirmish appears to have occurred a little after Noon, when the remaining members of the white mob exchanged fire with a group of African Americans not far from where the Santa Fe railroad tracks cut across the Section Line, just off of Peoria Avenue. The black defenders had apparently held off the whites—who were gathered along the railroad embankment—for some time. But when a second group of whites, armed with high-powered rifles, arrived on the scene, the African Americans were soon overrun.\textsuperscript{194}

Most of the city’s black population, meanwhile, was being held under armed guard. Many families had been sent, at first, to Convention Hall, but as it filled to capacity, black Tulsans were taken to the baseball park and to the Fairgrounds. And as the day wore on,


\textsuperscript{194} Phillips, “Murder in the Streets”, pp. 97-103.
hundreds would soon join them. For as the men, women, and children who had fled to the
countryside, or had taken refuge at Golden Gate Park, began to wander back toward town,
they, too, were taken into custody. And while the white authorities would later argue, and not
without some validity, that this was a protective measure designed to save black lives, other
reasons—including a lingering white fear of a “Negro uprising”—undoubtedly played a role
in their rationale. In any event, following the destruction of their homes and businesses on
May 31st and June 1st, black Tulsa now found itself, for all practical purposes, under arrest.\(^{195}\)

Following the declaration of martial law, the State Troops began to move into what
little remained of Tulsa’s African American neighborhoods, disarming whites and sending
them away from the district. After the riot, a number of black Tulsans strongly condemned,
in no uncertain terms, the actions of both the Tulsa Police Department and the local National
Guard units during the conflict. But the State Troops were largely praised. “Everyone with
whom I met was loud in praise of the State Troops who so gallantly came to the rescue of
stricken Tulsa,” wrote Mary Parrish, “They used no partiality in quieting the disorder. It is
the general belief that if they had reached the scene sooner, many lives and valuable property
would have been saved.”\(^{196}\)

Additional detachments of State Troops—that is, National Guard units from other
Oklahoma cities and towns—arrived in Tulsa throughout June 1st, and with their help, the

\(^{195}\) Some black Tulsans also found refuge in the First Presbyterian Church and other white churches.
Testimonials of James T. West, Jack Thomas, Mrs. Rosetta Moore, Dr. R.T. Bridgewater, and C.L. Netherland,
Ernestine Gibbs and Robert Clark Frayer, by Eddie Faye Gates, in *They Came Searching*, pp. 86, 247. Oral
history interviews with: W.D. Williams, Tulsa, June 7, 1978; and Nell Hamilton Hampton, Tulsa, September 16,

\(^{196}\) *Tulsa Tribune*, June 1, 1921, pp. 1, 2. *Tulsa World*, June 2, 1921, pp. 1, 2. Barrett, *Oklahoma After
Fifty Years*, p. 214. Parrish, *Events of the Tulsa Disaster*. 137
streets were eventually cleared. All businesses were ordered to close by 6:00 p.m., and one hour later, only members of the military or civil authorities—or physicians or relief workers—were allowed on the streets. It was later claimed that by 8:00 p.m. on the evening of June 1st, order had been restored.  

The Tulsa race riot was over.

Doctors, relief workers, and members of the military and civil authorities were not, however, the only ones who were active in Tulsa on Wednesday evening, June 1, 1921. For as Walter White later reported:

O.T. Johnson, commandant of the Tulsa Citadel of the Salvation Army, stated that on Wednesday and Thursday the Salvation Army fed thirty-seven Negroes employed as grave diggers and twenty on Friday and Saturday. During the first two days these men dug 120 graves in each of which a dead Negro was buried. No coffins were used. The bodies were dumped into the holes and covered over with dirt.  

Other written evidence, including funeral home records that had lain unseen for more than seventy-five years, would later confirm that African American riot victims were buried in unmarked graves at Oaklawn Cemetery. But oral sources would also point to additional unmarked burial sites for riot victims in Tulsa County, including Newblock Park, along the

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Sand Springs road, and the historic Booker T. Washington Cemetery, located some twelve miles southeast of the city. 200

Conducted, no doubt, under trying circumstances, the burial of Tulsa’s African American riot dead would nevertheless bear little in common with the interment of white victims. Largely buried by strangers, there would be no headstones or graveside services for most of black Tulsa’s riot dead. Nor would family members be present at the burials, as most of them were still being held under armed guard at the various detention centers. It appears that in some cases, not only did some black Tulsa families not learn how their loved ones died, but not even where they were buried.

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200 Burial record ledgers for Stanley & McCune Funeral Directors, Tulsa, 1921.
201 Preliminary scientific tests—primarily involving ground-penetrating radar—were performed at Oaklawn Cemetery, Newblock Park and Booker T. Washington Cemetery (now a part of Rolling Oaks Memorial Park) in 1998 and 1999. It is hoped that further—and more definitive—tests will be performed in 2001.

The principal historical sources for each of the three sites include the following:

Oaklawn Cemetery. Oaklawn Cemetery burial records, Public Works Department, City of Tulsa.


Additional information has been collected on other potential burial sites, including one other eyewitness account, and on the transportation of the bodies of the dead. “Historical Information About the Tulsa Race Riot,” telephone log, January through March 1999. Oral history interviews with: Richard Gary, Tulsa, March 16, 1999; Ellen Prater Lasson, Tulsa, August 12, 1999; and Wade Foor and Charlie Anderson, Tulsa, June 5, 1999.
In the week following the riot, nearly all of Tulsa’s African American citizenry had managed to win their freedom, by one way or another, from the internment centers. Largely homeless, and in many cases now penniless, they made their way back to Greenwood. But Greenwood was gone.

What they found, instead, was a blackened landscape of vacant lots and empty streets, charred timbers and melted metal, ashes and broken dreams. Where the African American commercial district once stood was now a ghost town of crumbling brick storefronts and the burned-out hulks of automobiles. Gone was the Dreamland and the Dixie, gone was the *Tulsa Star* and the black public library, gone was the Liberty Café and Elliott & Hooker’s clothing store, H.L. Byars’ cleaners and Mabel Little’s beauty salon. Gone were literal lifetimes of sweat and hard work, and hard-won rungs on the ladder of the American Dream.

Gone, too, were hundreds of homes, and more than a half dozen African American churches, all put to the torch by the white invaders. Nearly ten-thousand Tulsans, practically the entire black community, was now homeless.

Across the tracks and across town, in Tulsa’s white neighborhoods, no homes had been looted and no churches had been burned. And from the outside, life looked much the same as it had been prior to the riot—but even here, beneath the surface, there was little normalcy.

In one way or another, white Tulsans had been stunned by what had happened in their city. More than a few whites, including those whose homes now featured stolen goods, had undeniably, taken great joy in what had occurred, particularly the destruction of Greenwood. Some whites had even applauded as black families had been led through the streets, at
gunpoint, toward the various internment centers. And some would soon find a new outlet for their racial views in the hooded order that was about to sweep across the white community.

But other white Tulsans were horrified by what had taken place. Immediately following the riot, Clara Kimble, a white teacher at Central High School opened up her home to her black counterparts at Booker T. Washington High School, as did other white families. Others donated food, clothing, money, and other forms of assistance. And for many whites, the riot was a horror never to be forgotten, a mark of shame upon the city that would endure forevermore.

But for black Tulsans, the trials and tribulations had only just begun. Six days after the riot, on June 7th, the Tulsa City Commission passed a fire ordinance designed to prevent the rebuilding of the African American commercial district where it had formerly stood, while the so-called Reconstruction Commission, an organization of white business and political leaders, had been turning away offers of outside aid. In the end, black Tulsans did rebuild their community, and the fire ordinance was declared unconstitutional by the Oklahoma Supreme Court. But the damage had been done, and the tone of the official local response to the disaster had already been set. And despite the Herculean efforts of the

201 "Old and young had to pile on trucks," wrote Mrs. Rosetta Moore after the riot, "and when we were being driven through town, men were seen clapping their hands, rejoicing over our condition." Testimonial of Mrs. Rosetta Moore, in Parrish, Events of the Tulsa Disaster, p. 42.


203 On the aftermath of the riot, including relief efforts, local political maneuverings, and various legal actions, see: Ellsworth, Death in a Promised Land, pp. 71-97.
American Red Cross,²⁰⁴ thousands of black Tulsans were forced to spend the winter of 1921-22 living in tents. Others simply left. They had had enough of Tulsa, enough of Oklahoma.

And, for some, staying was not an option. For it soon became clear, both in the grand jury that had been impaneled to look into the riot, and in various other legal actions that, by and large, languished in the courts, that African Americans would be blamed for causing the riot. Nowhere, perhaps, was this stated more forcefully than in the June 25th final report of the grand jury, which stated:

We find that the recent race riot was the direct result of an effort on the part of a certain group of colored men who appeared at the courthouse on the night of May 31, 1921, for the purpose of protecting one Dick Rowland then and now in the custody of the Sheriff of Tulsa Country for an alleged assault upon a young white woman. We have not been able to find any evidence either from white or colored citizens that any organized attempt was made or planned to take from the Sheriff’s custody any prisoner; the crowd assembled about the courthouse being purely spectators and curiosity seekers resulting from rumors circulated about the city.

²⁰⁴ The extensive post-riot relief efforts by the American Red Cross, and its intrepid local relief director, Maurice Willows, is well-documented in Robert A. Hower, “Angels of Mercy”: The American Red Cross and the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot.
“There was no mob spirit among the whites, no talk of lynching and no arms,” the report added, “The assembly was quiet until the arrival of armed negroes, which precipitated and was the direct cause of the entire affair.”

A few other court cases, largely involving claims against the city and various insurance companies, lingered on for a number of years afterward. But in the end, while a handful of African Americans were charged with riot-related offenses, no white Tulsan was ever sent to prison for the murders and burnings of May 31st and June 1st, 1921. In the courtrooms and halls of government in the Oklahoma of the 1920s, there would be no day of reckoning for both the perpetrators, and the victims, of the Tulsa race riot. Now, some seventy-nine years later, the aged riot survivors can only wonder if, indeed, that day will ever come.

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Airplanes and the Riot

by Richard S. Warner

There is no question that airplanes were in the air over Tulsa during and after the Tulsa race riot. The question is: what were they being used for?

We cannot entirely believe all the reports that have appeared over the years in newspapers, or as recounted by survivors, descendants of survivors, and others. The problem is to separate the probable from the improbable. For example, in one unidentified newspaper account from June 12, 1921, it was alleged that, "The planes used during the riot and which set fire to brick buildings are owned by the United States Government." Subsequent research, however, casts considerable doubt upon this claim. While researching for his article, "Profile of a Race Riot," that appeared in the June-July, 1971 issue of Impact Magazine, Brigadier General Ed Wheeler (ret.) looked into the possible involvement of U.S. military aircraft in the riot. Wheeler, who had access to military records which are no longer available, learned that there were only six U.S. military airplanes in Oklahoma at the time of the riot. Based at Ft. Sill, which is some 212 miles from Tulsa, these six planes were World War I Jennys, with a range of about 190 miles. Of the six planes, the records showed that two were

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1 "Search Homes for Loot Taken During the Conflict", unidentified article, Tuskegee Institute News Clipping Files, "1921—Riots, Tulsa."
inoperable and undergoing maintenance while two had just been delivered and were not yet in flying condition. Only two were serviceable planes of which neither was in the air on May 31 or June 1, 1921.² It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that the airplanes reported over Tulsa during the riot were not U.S. military aircraft. Hence, they must have been privately or commercially owned airplanes, probably based in Tulsa.

The story of aircraft in Tulsa goes back to July 4, 1903, when the first recorded local flight took place—a balloon ascent.³ Three years later, during the summer of 1906, Jimmy Jones constructed an airplane of his own design at his home in Tulsa. He and his partner, Bill Stigler, disassembled the plane and took it to a pasture near Red Fork. There they reassembled it, except for the installation of the control cables to make a test flight. It was a hot day and Jones and Stigler decided to go home and finish the job the next day. That afternoon, however, a strong wind came up and destroyed the plane.⁴

The next airplane in Tulsa was designed and constructed by Herman DeVry, who owned a machinery repair business. DeVry hired A. C. Beach, an English pilot then living in Tulsa, to test the airplane. After four tries, it finally took off from a field southwest of Sand Springs and rose to 800 feet, staying aloft for 20 minutes. After several other attempts to fly, the engine blew up and DeVry quit the aircraft business.⁵

The first airfield in Tulsa was established in 1917 by Harold Breene on the south side of Federal Drive (now East Admiral Place), at approximately South Hudson Avenue. A spur


³ Tulsa Division Skywriter, April 26, 1968, a publication of the North American-Rockwell Corporation.

⁴ David Moncrief, "Early Tulsa Takes Flight" an unidentified October 1981 article located in the files of The Tulsa Historical Society.

⁵ Ibid.
railway line was the west border of the field. There was one hangar. Mr. Breene purchased a number of surplus Curtis Jenny airplanes that he later sold to aviation enthusiasts. 6

In 1920 Mr. Breene sold his Tulsa aviation interests to B.L. Brookins and Bill Campbell. The new company, called the Curtiss-Southwest Airplane Company, was the agency for Curtis and Waco airplanes. 7

In early 1921, the airfield was moved to a new location on a farm owned by Mr. Brookins located just east of North Memorial Avenue and north of East Apache Street. It was situated in what is today a corner of Tulsa International Airport. According to the January 1, 1922 issue of the Tulsa Spirit, a publication of the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, the airfield contained two large steel hangars, 90' x 60' in size and capable of holding eighteen airplanes, a motor repair shop, a wing and fuselage shop, and a gasoline and oil service station. Fourteen airplanes were based there. 8

Sometime in 1921, a second airfield was established in Tulsa by Paul Arbon, a World War I British pilot and dealer for the British-manufactured, Bristol aircraft. Arbon’s airfield was located at the northwest corner of Federal Drive and Sheridan Road, and featured only one hangar. 9

Registration of airplanes by the U.S. Government was not required in 1921, so no records exist of actual airplane ownership during the time of the riot. Without government records, you can assume that if there were fourteen planes at the Curtiss-Southwest Air Field

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 The Tulsa Spirit, January 1, 1922.
9 Tulsa Division Skywriter, April 26, 1968.
at the end of 1921, and probably no more than one (a demonstrator) at the Paul Arbon Air Field, the total number of airplanes based in Tulsa at the time of the riot would not have been more than fifteen.

Most of these were probably owned by the Curtiss-Southwest Airplane Company, but a few were probably owned by individuals or companies. There is really no way to determine the ownership of the planes, but it is very likely that at least one was owned by the Sinclair Oil Company. A “St. Clair Oil Company plane” is mentioned in some accounts of the riot and there is a photograph in the files of the Tulsa Historical Society of a Jenny refueling at the Curtiss-Southwest Air Field from barrels marked “Sinclair Oils”. Tulsa was at the headquarters of the Sinclair Oil Company at that time and the top executives lived here.10

Among the planes in Tulsa at the time of the riot apparently were a Stinson Detroiter, a single engine plane with an enclosed cabin capable of holding several people—as well as another tri-motor, make unknown. Stinson did manufacture a tri-motor at that time according to personnel at the Tulsa Air and Space Center.11

There are many references to airplanes during the riot, but few can be additionally documented through further research. Mary E. Jones Parrish included a number of references to airplanes in her book, *Events of the Tulsa Disaster*. In her own account of her experiences during the riot, she mentions seeing “fast approaching aeroplanes”. Moreover, in her escape from the riot area, Parrish tells of nearing the “aviation fields”—in all likelihood the Curtiss-Southwest Air Field—and seeing the “planes out of their sheds, all in readiness for flying, and these men with high-powered rifles getting into them.” Parrish adds that “The aeroplanes


11 Interview with Beryl Ford and personnel of the Tulsa Air and Space Center, Tulsa, 1999.
continued to watch over the fleeing people like great birds of prey watching for a victim, but I have not heard of them doing any harm to the people out in the direction where we were.” Events of the Tulsa Disaster also includes interviews including one with Mr. James T. West, a teacher at Booker T. Washington High School, who reported that airplanes “flew over very low; what they were doing I cannot say, for I was in my room.” Dr. R. T. Bridgewater, an Assistant County Physician, stated that he was “near my residence and aeroplanes began to fly over us, in some instances very low to the ground,” and that he heard a woman say, “look out for the aeroplanes, they are shooting upon us.” Mrs. Parrish also wrote that “more than a dozen aeroplanes went up and began to drop turpentine balls upon the Negro residences,” but she gives no source for this statement nor does it appear that she witnessed this herself. Lastly, Parrish also included the testimonial of an anonymous eyewitness, who stated, “Then I saw aeroplanes, they flew very low. To my surprise, as they passed over the business district, they left the entire block a mass of flame.”

Other contemporary sources also reported the presence of airplanes. Walter White wrote in the June 29, 1921 issue The Nation that “eight aeroplanes were employed to spy on the movements of the Negroes and according to some were used in bombing the colored section.”

Mabel E. Little, in her unpublished biography, wrote that, “airplanes dropped incendiary bombs to enhance the burning of Mt. Zion Baptist Church and business buildings.”

A reporter for the Black Dispatch of Oklahoma City wrote that “Airplanes were

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14 “A History of the Blacks in North Tulsa and My Life (A True Story)” by Mabel E. Little, unpublished manuscript.
seemingly everywhere. They seemed to fly low and I could see the men in the planes as they passed us.” In an interview with Dr. Payne and Mr. Robinson that appeared in the same issue, it was stated that, “These two men with their wives succeeded in reaching the open country. They were finally spotted by the air murders who showered load after load of leadened missiles upon them.” W.I. Brown, a porter on the Katy Railroad who reached Tulsa Wednesday morning (June 1) with the National Guard, recited this story: “We reached Tulsa about 2 o’clock. Airplanes were circling all over Greenwood. We stopped our cars north of the Katy depot, going towards Sand Springs. The heavens were lightened up as plain as day from the many fires over the Negro section. I could see from my car window that two airplanes were doing most of the work. They would every few seconds drop something and every time they did there was a loud explosion and the sky would be filled with flying debris.”

Bruce Hartnitt, of Tulsa Junior College, interviewed Mabel Bonner Little in 1969 and 1971. He asked Mrs. Little, “Do you remember during the time of the riot itself, if there were any airplanes, people dropping stuff?” Mrs. Little replied, “Oh yes, they dropped those incendiary bombs, that’s what burned those big buildings down, they couldn’t have destroyed them with anything else…”

In case No. 23, 331 filed in the District Court of Tulsa County between Barney Cleaver, plaintiff, and The City of Tulsa, one of the defendants was “The St. Clair Oil Company”. The fourth paragraph of the plaintiff’s petition alleges that “the St. Clair Oil Company, a corporation, did, at the request and insistence of the city’s agents, and in furtherance of the conspiracy, aforementioned and set out, furnish airplanes on the night of

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13 Oklahoma City Black Dispatch, June 10, 1921.

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May 31, 1921, and on the morning of June 1, 1921, to carry the defendant's city's agents, servants, and employees, and other persons, being part of said conspiracy and other conspirators. That the said J.R. Blaine, captain of the police department, with others, was carried in said airplane which dropped turpentine balls and bombs down and upon the houses of the plaintiff..." The 1921 Tulsa City Directory does not list a J.R. Blaine, but it does list a G.H. Blaine, a police captain. Captain Blaine appears in a number of newspaper articles concerning airplanes and there is no question that he was a pilot or passenger on a number of flights. The same source does not list a "St. Clair Oil Company", but its phonetic similarity to the Sinclair Oil Company is too close to be ignored. It is interesting to note that the attorney for the plaintiff in 1937 when this case was dismissed was Elisha Scott. This is the same Elisha Scott, a prominent African American attorney of Topeka, Kansas, who, according to an October 14, 1921 article in the Chicago Defender, claimed to have a thirty-one page affidavit signed by Van B. Hurley, supposedly a white former Tulsa policeman, that told of a meeting between local aviators and officials prior to the invasion of black Tulsa on the morning of June 1st. These individuals were supposed to have planned an attack on the black area by airplanes. There is no record that a "Van B. Hurley" ever was a policeman or even existed. This affidavit was never made public or apparently used in any of the lawsuits. After his death, Mr. Scott's home burned and his personal papers evidently were destroyed.

Beryl Ford, an authority on Tulsa's photographic history, after examining photographs of the Greenwood damage, has stated that the buildings were not destroyed by explosives. The debris shown in photographs, he believes, is located inside the shells of the buildings, where it had fallen after the rafters had burned, and not outside where it would have been

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16 Transcript of interview between Bruce Hartnitt and Mabel Bonner Little, circa 1969-1971.
scattered if explosives had been used. Outbuildings are also shown to be largely undamaged, something that was unlikely had explosives been used.\(^\text{17}\)

An unidentified newspaper reported that Ed Lockett was shot from an airplane that had followed him for about eight miles from Tulsa. It was reported that “several hundred persons saw the aviator shoot Lockett and were later fired on by the same plane themselves.” The body of a man was found on June 6, 1921 near the Curtiss-Southwest Air Field. Although there is no record of an “Ed Lockett”, there is a funeral home record of an Ed Lockard who was found eight miles from Tulsa on June 6, 1921, and is buried in Oaklawn Cemetery in Tulsa.

The *Chicago Defender*, on June 11, 1921, reported that “at 4:30 a steam whistle sounded three times. With the coming of daylight, airplanes from the local aviation field, in which the Cadillac company is interested, directed the movement of the oncoming army. At 6:15 a.m. men in the planes dropped fire bombs of turpentine or other inflammable material on the property.” The articles goes on to say, “One man, leaning far out from an airplane, was brought down by the bullet of a sharpshooter and his body burst upon the ground.” Other newspapers published similar claims.

The *St. Louis Argus*, on June 10, 1921, reported that “The Negroes held their own until about 6 o’clock in the morning when a fierce attack was made upon them from the hill by cannons, and airplanes soared over the Negro section dropping fire on their houses.” And J.W. Hughes, principal of Dunbar Grade School, wrote a statement that said that “at five o’clock a whistle was blown, seven aeroplanes were flying over the colored district…”\(^\text{18}\)

As some newspaper accounts mention nitroglycerin bombs, it is interesting to note

\(^\text{17}\) Telephone interview with Beryl Ford, Tulsa, 1999.

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that the *Tulsa World* published an article on April 20, 1921 titled, “Tulsa Man First to Transport Nitro by Means of an Airplane”. The article discusses the great danger in transporting nitroglycerin and notes that a careless movement “may only leave a grease spot.”

There is quite a bit of information that the police used airplanes to search the outskirts of the black area for fleeing people. When individuals were seen, a message was placed in a container and dropped to search parties on the ground. These containers may have been thought to be bombs by some. In reply to a request for information from people concerning the riot, one man called in and said that his uncle, Charles Foor, a Tulsa policeman, flew one of these search planes. He said that three planes were used and they flew in a “V” formation with his uncle in the lead. The planes, he believed, were used for reconnaissance only.

On June 7, 1921, the *Tulsa World* reported that Captain George Blaine of the Tulsa Police Department had flown over a number of black communities around Tulsa to see if any armed mobs were forming. This was in answer to persistent rumors that an attack upon Tulsa was being planned by African Americans in these communities. His flight took him over Boley, Red Bird, Taft, Wybark and others. Blaine, it was reported, found no evidence of any such activity.

Although it is within reason to believe that some individuals did drop inflammables or explosives on the riot area, there is very little to support this. The newspapers targeted to black readers were full of stories of turpentine or nitroglycerin bombs being dropped and men shooting from planes. Mary E. Jones Parrish mentions bombing

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19 *Chicago Defender*, June 11, 1921. *St. Louis Argus*, June 10, 1921.
20 *Tulsa World*, April 20, 1921
incidents, but one is from an anonymous source and the other may have not been witnessed by her. In Barney Cleaver’s lawsuit, his petition alleges that turpentine bombs were dropped on his house, thereby destroying it. However, he apparently did not witness this.

Allen Yowell stated that in 1950 or 1951 he was having his hair cut in a barber shop in Tulsa. There he heard a man who looked to be 50 or 60 years old who said that during the time of the riot, he and a friend obtained some dynamite, commandeered an airplane, flew over the riot area and dropped the dynamite on a group of fleeing African American refugees not far from where some railroad tracks cross East Pine Street. Yowell said the man was bragging about this, and while he didn’t know if the story was correct or not, he felt that the man was telling the truth. He did not know the man’s name and never saw him again.22

Another oral informant, Lillian Lough, reported that her grandmother, a recent immigrant from Mexico, lived on the edge of the black area in 1921. At the time of the riot, she saw two young black boys running down the street being followed by a two-seater airplane. The man in the rear seat was shooting at the boys. She then ran out and grabbed the boys and took them into the house. The man in the airplane stopped shooting when she appeared.23

It is within reason that there was some shooting from planes and even the dropping of incendiaries, but the evidence would seem to indicate that it was of a minor nature and had no

22 Telephone interview with Allen Yowell. Tulsa, 1999

real effect in the riot. While it is certain that airplanes were used by the police for reconnaissance, by photographers, and by sightseers, there probably were some whites who fired guns from planes or dropped bottles of gasoline or something of that sort, but they were probably few in numbers. It is important to note that a number of prominent African Americans at the time of the riot, including James T. West, Dr. R.T. Bridgewater, and Walter White of the NAACP, did not speak of any aggressive actions by airplanes during the conflict.
Confirmed Deaths in the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921: A Preliminary Report

by Clyde Collins Snow

Introduction

A Cautionary Foreword

It should be emphasized that this report is, as indicated in the title, *preliminary*. While collecting data for this study, it has become obvious that much critical information on how many people were killed and who they were is lacking. Much of this information, we suspect, still resides in the memories and family records and other personal documents of the survivors and participants of the riot -- both black and white -- and their descendants. For this reason, we are reaching out, both locally and nationally, for more information on possible persons killed in the riot whose deaths were never recorded. We also suspect much additional information of importance is contained in still unexamined documents such as life insurance claims, will probates, census records, etc. which, hopefully, still survive in obscure archives. Until this data is collected and
analyzed, no final report can be completed.

Acknowledgments

In my final report, I will include a full list of the many persons who have helped me. In this preliminary effort acknowledgments must be limited to the wise and indefatigable Mr. Dick Warner and Ms. Sue Bordeau of the Oklahoma State Department of Health. Much of the basic information upon which this report is based was originally compiled by Dick; he is also a magnificent fact-checker. Sue Bordeau’s vast knowledge of the vital records system and her enthusiasm in putting it to work in this project was invaluable. Naturally, neither one of them are responsible for any factual errors or eccentric opinions which may appear in this preliminary report -- they are all my own.

The Need for Accurate Casualty Counts

During the past half-century, it has become increasingly common for major disasters, natural and man-made, to become the subject of public investigation. Such investigations may be official -- that is, conducted by any governmental branch, judicial, executive or legislative and at any level, federal, state or local. Unofficial, but no less searching and revealing, investigations may be conducted by the press or private entities. Examples of such inquiries in the recent past include the several investigations of the deaths of the followers of David Koresh in the Branch Davidian Compound in Waco, Texas in 1994. Such inquiries are designed to shed light on the
causes of such disasters, establish culpability when possible and appropriate and provide guidelines to prevent or, if they do occur again, design procedures for effectively dealing with them in the future. When conducted objectively, they generally attain these goals.

Unfortunately, no impartial investigation was conducted of the 1921 Tulsa race riot in its immediate aftermath, while memories of the participants and victims were still fresh, and the physical evidence, including the bodies of the dead, could be forensically examined. Today, eight decades after the event, only the documentary evidence — much of it lost or of doubtful authenticity — and the fading memories of the rapidly dwindling survivors remains.

A key piece of information in any investigation of incidents involving loss of human life is an accurate assessment of the number of victims. Such determinations are important for several reasons. For example, where preliminary estimates of the number of dead are part of an ongoing investigation they can be used to make reasonable allotments of often-scarce manpower, equipment and financial resources to the task and to determine the overall investigative strategy.

Accurate estimates of the dead and injured can also help identify factors contributing to such disasters and, thus, provide guidelines for ameliorating the loss of life in similar future cases. For example, in Honduras, the immigration of the rural poor to urban areas resulted in large numbers of them building small houses on “waste” land along the steep banks of major river courses and other areas subject to flooding. As a consequence, many thousands of such settlers drowned or died in mud slides during the massive hurricane of 1998. This loss of life could be minimized by governmental or private aid to provide housing sites in safer areas or, at
the least, assure the prompt evacuation of people from such vulnerable places when warnings of impending hurricanes are received in the future.

When the disasters are man-made, such as acts of terrorism, war crimes or other massive human rights violations, an accurate assessment of the number of victims is a necessary step in any forensic investigation conducted to exhume the victims so that they may be identified and returned to the families, make suitable reparations to the persons affected and, hopefully and above all, provide evidence to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Before the ashes of Greenwood had cooled, disagreements over the number of dead began to surface. Estimates of the total number of dead have varied by an order of magnitude, ranging from about fifty to as many as five hundred. They also vary greatly in the reliability of the sources on which they are based. Here, I have chosen a more conservative approach by compiling a list of persons who have, at one time or another, been named as victims of the Tulsa race riot. At the outset, I should point out that this compilation is not likely to include all of the riot fatalities since it is probable that at least some and, perhaps many, deaths went unrecorded. At the same time, however, I feel that it may prove valuable to future scholars since it provides at least a firm minimum of the number of dead.

Classification of Deaths

Based on the information presently available, riot fatalities of both races can be divided into two groups. Within the first are those established by primary sources such as death certificates and mortuary records. The second group consists deaths mentioned only in secondary
sources (newspaper stories, magazine articles, books, etc.) dealing with the race riot. In this study, I have designated individuals in the first group as confirmed, and those of the second as reported, deaths.

The distinction between the two groups is made clearer when put in a forensic context. For example, bearing in mind that there is no statute of limitations on murder and that the victims killed in the Tulsa race riot were homicide victims, it is at least theoretically possible that murder charges could be brought against an alleged perpetrator.¹ If the victim were to be Dr. Andrew C. Jackson, the prominent black physician who was gunned down after emerging from his burning Greenwood home with his hands held high, the death certificate signed eighty years ago would be unchallengeable evidence of his death in any court.

On the other hand, let us imagine that an elderly black man was charged with the death of a white woman identified only as “Mrs. Deary” by the now extremely aged ex-Sergeant Esley of the Tulsa National Guard. Assuming that his story had not changed since it was recounted in the Muskogee (OK) Phoenix in 1921, Sergeant Esley would testify that the victim died in her husband’s arms after being struck by five bullets fired by a black who stole up behind her while she and her family were watching the fires in Greenwood from the front porch of their home on Sunset Hill. He might further state, as he did eight decades ago, that, after watching his mother die, Mrs. Deary’s fifteen year old son joined the riot and helped set some of the fires. On cross-examination, of course, Sergeant Esley would be forced to admit that even in 1921, when he first told his story, he had not been able to remember the victim’s name but only “...that it sounded

¹ Theoretical indeed, since at this late date the perpetrator most likely would be as dead as his victim and the case, thereby, moved to a higher (or, possibly, lower) jurisdiction.
like Deary.” and, furthermore, he was not sure whether she was shot late Tuesday night or on
Wednesday morning.

Now suppose, that the astute defense lawyer introduces (as they always do, at least on
television), a “surprise” witness, and a fragile little old lady makes her way to the stand. She
would state that her name was Mrs. S.A. Gilmore and that, in 1921, she was living at 225 E. King
in the Sunset Hill addition, which overlooked the Greenwood district. On Wednesday morning,
while she and her husband were watching the battle below, she received five wounds in the arms
and chest. While the shots came in the direction of Greenwood, it was never certain whether they
were fired by a black or she was struck by stray shots being fired in the general direction of
Sunset Hill by members of the white mob. Taken to Morningside Hospital, she lingered close to
death for several days but eventually recovered. The defense attorney would then introduce as
documentary evidence Tulsa City Directories which show that Mrs. Gilmore did indeed reside at
225 E. King at the time of the riot in 1921 and, in fact, was still living there two years later.
He would also point out that Mrs. Gilmore was the only white female reported to have been shot
during riot in the abundant local and national press coverage. And finally, he would show that an
exhaustive search of death records failed to produce any evidence of the death of Mrs. Deary in
the form of funeral home, cemetery or, most importantly, a death certificate. While the jury

\footnote{2 The geriatric problems of conducting such a trial would be a nightmare. Imagine
the complications resulting from the inter-tangling of iv and catheter tubes of the witnesses
and defendant as they traded places on the witness stand!}

\footnote{3 Tulsa World June 3, 1921.}
would rush out to acquit, the red-faced prosecutor would sit contemplating how much he would enjoy ripping out the pacemaker of his star witness, Sgt. Esley.

The hypothetical trials for the murders of Dr. Jackson and Mrs. Deary, by juxtaposing the tragic and the comic, serve to illustrate the crucial difference between confirmed and reported deaths as I have classified them here. Only the most dim-witted prosecutor would consider actually taking the Deary case to court based on Sgt. Esley’s story. On the other hand, the Jackson murder would have been a strong case for the prosecution since the documentary evidence clearly establishes his death and the witnesses, both black and white, could have provided clear and convincing evidence of the circumstances of his death. Unfortunately, however, no investigation of this death was ever undertaken by the Tulsa police or other city, county or state officials.

Readers should be aware the categorization of individual deaths as confirmed or reported in this preliminary study is not necessarily final. This is because the data presently available on many of the victims is still incomplete. As further information comes to light, at least some of the deaths classified as reported might be fully confirmed. This is well-illustrated by the case of Ed Lockard, which will be discussed in detail in the final report.

As noted above, much more data must be collected and analyzed to produce a final report. This is particularly true in regard to reported deaths. Therefore, in this preliminary report, only the data so far compiled on confirmed deaths will be presented.
METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

Analytic Method

The initial effort of this study consisted of combing all known documentary sources for the names of individuals mentioned as victims or possible victims of the riot. The most important primary source was, of course, contemporary local and national press accounts in which the names of riot victims were given. These names include not only the reported fatalities but, also, those who were wounded sufficiently severely to be admitted to local hospitals. In addition to press stories, the various books, reports and articles published in the years since the riot were also a source of names.

The next step in this analysis was to enter the names, along with other data pertaining to the victims, into a computerized database. Once entered, other information on a particular victim could be pursued. For example, an especially important procedure was to search for the person’s death certificate in the files maintained by the Oklahoma State Department of Health. Census data, Tulsa City Directories, as well as funeral home and cemetery records of the period were also helpful and, in a few cases, valuable information was supplied by the victims’ family members.
Death Certificates

In 1921, Oklahoma death certificates consisted of two sections, one to be completed by the undertaker and the other by the physician who attended the deceased. Normally, the completion of a death certificate required four steps:

1. The undertaker would begin the process by filling in the personal data on the dead person. This would include the name, sex, race, age, occupation, birthplace and occupation of the deceased as well as the names and birthplaces of his or her parents. The informant (usually the next-of-kin) providing this information was also asked to sign the certificate.

2. The certificate would then be sent to the attending physician who provided the date, time and cause of death. Signed by the physician, it was returned to the undertaker.

3. Next, the undertaker would complete his part of the certificate by listing the cemetery and date of interment or, if the body was buried elsewhere, the date and place of shipment.

4. Finally, the undertaker would submit the completed certificate to the vital statistics registrar of the county in which the death occurred. After assigning it a unique
In the case of the riot victims, the orderly process outlined above was not always followed. In particular, the personal information on the deceased was sometimes left vague or incomplete. Informants who were not immediate family members did not often know such details as the exact age, marital status or birthplace of the deceased, much less the names of the dead person's father or mother. This was especially true for black victims since their next-of-kin were still in the detention camps and could not come to the mortuaries to claim their relatives if, indeed, they were informed of their deaths at all.

The information provided by physicians was also sketchy. For example, the exact time of death was not recorded and, in many cases, it is not clear whether the victim was dead on arrival at the hospital or survived for a few hours. Also, the causes of death on many certificates are laconic: "Gunshot wound (riot)" with no details on the number and location of wounds. Such lapses of overworked and harried physicians, overwhelmed by the influx of several hundred wounded in addition to the dead, is understandable. It is interesting that the doctors provided more detailed information on the certificates of those who died under their care a few days after the riot than those who were dead on arrival or succumbed a few hours later.

To compound the problem, many death certificates were signed not by physicians but by a lawyer, W.D. Seavers, the Tulsa County Attorney. This was legal because the state law of the time allowed officers of the court to certify deaths that had not been attended by a physician. As
nearly the entire Tulsa medical establishment was tied up in the care of the wounded, no doctors were available to examine bodies found at the scene. This task, apparently, fell to Seavers, who signed out eighteen victims whose bodies were found in the still smouldering ruins of Greenwood or who died after being brought to temporary detention centers where blacks were held during the first hours of the riot. It is not clear whether Seavers actually visited the scene to examine the bodies or whether the death certificates were brought to him by undertakers.

**Mortuary Records**

At the time of the riot, the bodies of the known victims were taken from the hospitals where they were pronounced dead or, sometimes, directly from the scene to local mortuaries. There they were prepared for burial in Tulsa or shipped to other cities designated by their next-of-kin. The records of these establishments (Mobray's, Mitchell-Fleming and Stanley-McCune) provide data on the deceased not found on the death certificates.

**Press Accounts**

The events of the riot received heavy coverage in local, state and national newspapers and other journals, both white and black, of the time. As with all such news events, press attention was most was most intensive in the days immediately following the riot, then dwindled rapidly in the weeks that followed. Over the years, however, occasional newspaper feature stories and magazine articles dealing with the riot and its aftermath have appeared. The most valuable
single source for these materials was the extremely thorough newspaper clippings collection from the Tuskegee Institute microfilm files.

**Books and Monographs**

Over the years, several books have been published dealing with the Tulsa race riot. These include one by a riot survivor and several others by historians who have collected written and oral accounts from survivors and their descendants.

**Miscellaneous Sources**

In the course of this investigation, several researchers have generously provided unpublished reports and documents on the riot which they have collected in their own studies of the event.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

To date, death certificates on thirty-nine victims have been found. They are listed in Table 1 which summarizes the principal variables presently available on them. It should be noted that not all of the tabulated information was abstracted from the death certificates alone. For example, most of the information on the location of their wounds was found in other riot-related documents, particularly contemporary press accounts, which often provide more specific information on the nature of their injuries than was noted on the death certificates.
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**Place of Burial**

- DC^d
- Cemetery
- City, State

- Muncie, IN
- Oklahoma, OK
- Parkersburg, WV
- Muskogee, OK
- Tarrant, MS
- Tulsa

**Data Source:**

- 475
- 444
- 462
- 465
- 468
- 494
- 657
- 443
- 476
- 466
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<td>3</td>
<td>Walker, Curly</td>
<td>bm</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>data</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>gsw</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>6/1</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>scene</td>
<td>Stanley-McCure</td>
<td>Oaklawn Tulsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Walker, Henry</td>
<td>bm</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>data</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>gsw</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>6/1</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>scene</td>
<td>Stanley-McCure</td>
<td>Oaklawn Tulsa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes missing data for various fields.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Birth Place</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Caus e of Death</th>
<th>Time of Death</th>
<th>Mortuary</th>
<th>Place of Burial</th>
<th>Cemetery</th>
<th>City, State</th>
<th>DC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wheeler, John</td>
<td>bm</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>bank porter</td>
<td>gsw</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>6/1</td>
<td>no data</td>
<td>Stanley-McCune</td>
<td>Ft. Smith, AR</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Withrow, Samuel J.</td>
<td>wmn</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>hotel clerk</td>
<td>gsw</td>
<td>neck</td>
<td>6/1</td>
<td>054</td>
<td>Tulsa Hospital</td>
<td>Mitchell-Fleming</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Names are as given on death certificates
b. Italicized numbers are estimates given on death certificate.
c. Abbreviations: gsw: gunshot wound; und: undetermined
d. The figures in this column are the register numbers of death certificates issued in Tulsa County during the riot period. These numbers are in order in which the deaths are registered and, thus, not necessarily in the order in which death occurred since physicians varied in the promptness with which filed certificates.
Sex

All thirty-nine victims, including the stillborn infant, were diagnosed as males. However, it should be pointed out that the bodies of four blacks — all signed out by County Attorney Seavers — were so badly burned that identification was impossible. Since it is often impossible to determine the sex in such cases without an autopsy, the reliability of a layman’s diagnosis in these four cases is questionable.

Race

Twenty-six (66%) of the thirty-nine victims, including the stillborn, were diagnosed as blacks. Again, the four bodies that were so badly burned that the could not be identified (see above) must be considered. This is especially true since thermal damage often results in the destruction of the delicate, paper-thin epidermis which is made up cells which, in blacks, contain the melanin pigments determining skin color. When this layer is extensively destroyed, it exposes the underlying dermis which, in all races, is no darker than the skin of a light-complexion white person, making it easy for an inexperienced observer to mistakenly diagnosis a burned black body as white. However, in the present case, since all the burn victims were found fire-destroyed Greenwood, it is likely that they were indeed those of blacks.
Age

As noted above, among the black victims was an infant diagnosed as a stillborn. This case is interesting since it is apparently related to an account given to Eddie Faye Gates by a riot survivor, Rosa Davis Skinner. According to Mrs. Skinner, she and her husband Thomas, alarmed by the shooting, fled their home at 519 West Latimer a little after midnight on the night of the riot.

“When we got to Greenwood, we met up with a lot more black people who were running trying to find a safe place. We ran into a couple—the man was one of [her husband’s] best friends. The wife had just had a baby that had died at birth. She had put it in a shoe box and was waiting until morning to bury it when the riot broke out. Well durin’ all that runnin’ and pushin’ and shovin’ when black people were trying to get safely away from the riot, that po’ little baby got lost! Everybody was just runnin’ and bumpin’ into each other. They never did find that child.”

(E.F. Gates, They Came Searching., p 167)

According to information in the Stanley-McCune mortuary records, sometime on June 1st, police brought in the body of a newborn infant. It had been found in Greenwood earlier in the day by two white men who turned it over to the police. The body was described as that of a black male measuring “less than twelve inches long”. It apparently bore no signs of trauma and was signed out as a stillborn. Like many of the other black victims, it was buried in Oaklawn
Cemetery. The evidence seems compelling that the baby lost by its fleeing mother and that brought to the mortuary were one and the same. This case is important for two reasons. First, the story of this tiny victim provides a poignant glimpse of the madness that prevailed on that terrible day. Second, this infant is the only one of the thirty-nine known victims that did not die of gunshot wounds and/or burns.

Ages are given on the death certificates of all thirteen of the white victims (Table 2). One of these was apparently an estimate based on examination of the body. The others were provided by informants who knew the actual age of the victim. In contrast, ages are given for only fifteen (58%) of the twenty-six blacks and, of these, at least seven are given as estimates (usually to the nearest fifth year, e.g., “35”, “40”, etc.). This distribution again clearly shows that black victims were signed out with less care and regard than whites; little or no effort was made to identify blacks by contacting their next-of-kin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Known Age</th>
<th>Estimated</th>
<th>Age not Given</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Distribution of Known, Estimated and Unknown Ages by Race

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Despite the fact that no age estimates were given for nearly half of the black victims, statistical comparison of the available age data on the races is interesting. In the analysis below, I have excluded the stillborn which, as a non-violent death, is clearly a special case (see above). The mean age of white victims was around twenty-seven years compared to thirty-four years for blacks. This difference is statistically significant (Table 3).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Unpaired t test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34.21</td>
<td>10.33</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19 - 63</td>
<td>t = 2.030, 25 df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27.23</td>
<td>7.12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16 - 39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Does not include one unidentified infant diagnosed as "stillborn"
Birthplace / Residence

The distribution of the known victims by state of birth or residence is shown in Table 4. The state of residence was inferred from mortuary records which show the state where the body was shipped for burial. This information is available in the records of only two (8%) of the twenty-five black victims -- again, an indication of the lack of attention given them before their hasty burials. This is in contrast to the whites for which birthplaces/residence of all thirteen were given. It is of interest to note that eleven (85%) of the white victims were from outside Oklahoma. The significance of this finding will be discussed more fully below. In all, natives or residents of ten states are represented among the white victims.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State:</th>
<th>OK</th>
<th>AR</th>
<th>CO</th>
<th>IN</th>
<th>IO</th>
<th>KY</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>NY</th>
<th>TX</th>
<th>WV</th>
<th>UNK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Does not include one unidentified infant diagnosed as "stillborn"
Marital Status

Of the white victims, nine (69%) were single, separated or divorced. Only three were married and the wife of at least one of these does not appear to have been living in Tulsa at the time of his death. The marital status of one is unknown.

Among blacks, the marital status of seventeen is not given. Of the remaining eight, five were married and three were single.

Table 5
Distribution of Confirmed Deaths by Race and Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status:</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Divorced</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>or Separated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Does not include one unidentified infant diagnosed as “stillborn”
Occupation

The occupations of ten (40%) of the black victims are known. Among them were two professionals, a physician and a realtor (who was also a tailor). The remaining eight included five listed as "laborers", a bank porter, an iceman and an elevator operator.

Among the twelve (92%) of the white victims whose occupations are known, there was a high school student, two cooks, a salesman, a hotel clerk and a day laborer. Five were skilled blue collar workers and, of these, three were oil field workers; the other two, a boiler maker and a machinist might also have been employed in petroleum-related jobs. The sole professional among the whites was the office manager of a large local oil company. Thus, at least one-third and possibly as many as one-half of the white victims were petroleum industry workers.

Table 6

Distribution of Confirmed Deaths by Race and Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>student</th>
<th>unskilled</th>
<th>blue collar</th>
<th>white collar</th>
<th>professional</th>
<th>unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Does not include one unidentified infant diagnosed as "stillborn"
Cause of and Manner of Death (Table 7)

All of the thirteen whites were killed by gunshot wounds. Among the twenty-five black adults, at least twenty-one (84%) died of gunshot wounds. The cause of death of the remaining four, all signed out by County Attorney Seavers, were given as burns but, as noted previously, any underlying fatal gunshot wounds may not have been apparent in the absence of autopsy.

Of the thirty-nine confirmed deaths, the manner of death of all but that of the stillborn black male were homicides. The latter is classified as “natural.” At least one, and possibly two, whites were killed by persons of their own race who apparently mistook them for blacks.

Table 7
Cause and Manner of Death of Confirmed Death Victims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause of Death</th>
<th>Manner of Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gunshot Wounds</td>
<td>Natural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. It is possible that one or more of these badly burned victims actually died of gunshot wounds. (see text)
Wounds (Table 8)

Of the twenty-five blacks who died of gunshot injury, the wound locations of only four are documented; all four of these men died in hospitals on June 2\textsuperscript{nd} or later. The wound locations of the remaining twenty-one blacks, all of whom died during the first twelve hours of the riot, were unspecified. The wounds of the twelve whites whose locations are known were nearly evenly distributed by anatomical region. The overall pattern of wound distribution is rather typical of those seen in hotly contested armed confrontations carried on at moderate to distant ranges. In this, it contrasts strongly with patterns observed in extrajudicial executions by firing squads.\textsuperscript{4}

Table 8

Anatomical Distribution of Gunshot Wounds in Confirmed Death Victims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>head/neck</th>
<th>chest</th>
<th>back</th>
<th>abdomen</th>
<th>extremity</th>
<th>not reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Place of Death (Table 9)

At the time of the riot, Tulsa had four major white hospitals. Tulsa blacks were served only by Frissell Memorial Hospital, which was burned during the riot. Greenwood blacks who did not flee Tulsa altogether were first taken to temporary detention centers set up in the Armory and Convention Center in downtown Tulsa. The lightly wounded who were forced to walk to the detention centers. Those more seriously injured were either carried to the centers by the
unwounded or transported there by various means, including privately owned trucks and automobiles, some of which were driven by white volunteers.⁵

While it appears that small first aid stations were set up at the detention centers early on June 1st, it must have become quickly apparent that they were not sufficient to provide the care that the dozens of wounded required. Accordingly, the basement of Morningside Hospital was hastily converted to accommodate blacks. Apparently, this makeshift facility included not only cots for the wounded but a small operating room where all surgery on the admitted blacks was performed. For the next few days, all injured blacks were treated in the Morningside basement, which may not have exceeded 5000 square feet of floor space.⁶ A brief glimpse of conditions there can be gained from a story in the *Tulsa World* on June 2nd which noted that sixty-three wounded blacks were being treated there. So far as is presently known, none of the other white hospitals in Tulsa opened their door to African American patients.

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⁵ At this time, the three or four ambulances in Tulsa were operated by mortuaries and it appears that all of them were fully employed in taking wounded whites to the various hospitals.

⁶ Warner, personal communication, 11/22/00.
All thirteen of the white fatalities were taken from the scene to one of four hospital where they were either pronounced dead on arrival (DOA) or died later. Unfortunately, the death certificates are not always clear as to whether the victims who were admitted late on May 31st or in the early morning hours of June 1st were actually dead when brought to the hospital or died shortly afterwards. So far as can be presently determined, at least two and possibly four whites were actually dead on arrival. All four were pronounced dead at Oklahoma Hospital by the same physician, Dr. Lyle Archerloss.

Only eight (31%) of the twenty-six black fatalities were brought to hospitals. Six died in Morningside which, as mentioned above, was the only one where blacks were treated in the first few days of the riot. A seventh died in Cinnabar Hospital on June 7th, about a week after the riot; presumably he had been transferred from Morningside after Cinnabar had been reopened. The last died on August 20th in the Red Cross hospital which was set up in the Greenwood’s black Dunbar School after the riot.

The other eighteen (69%) blacks were not taken to hospitals. The bodies of sixteen of these were found in the downtown area where the fighting began or in the ruins of Greenwood. Five days after the riot (June 6th), the badly decomposed body of a black man was found about eight miles east of Tulsa. He had died of a gunshot wound of the neck. He was later identified as a man who had escaped from a temporary detention center.

All of these bodies were taken directly to mortuaries and their death certificates were signed out by County Attorney Seavers. Another of these “non-hospital” victims died in the Armory detention center where he was taken after he was shot down by a teen-aged member of
the mob while trying to surrender outside his home in Greenwood. Ironically, this man — a prominent physician — lay without medical attention for several hours before he finally succumbed to a bullet wound of the chest. His death certificate was also signed by the County Attorney.  

---

7 What a excruciatingly cruel fate for a physician to have his death certificate signed by a lawyer!
Table 9

Distribution of Confirmed Deaths by Place of Death

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCENE</th>
<th>Cinnabar</th>
<th>Morningside</th>
<th>Oklahoma</th>
<th>P &amp; S(^a)</th>
<th>Tulsa</th>
<th>Red Cross</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>(?(^b)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5(^b)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>18(^c)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5(^b)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) P & S: Physicians and Surgeons Hospital

\(^b\) Death certificates indicate that perhaps four of the whites were pronounced dead on 5/31 and in the early hours of 6/1 were dead on arrival.

\(^c\) At least one black died unattended in a detention center after being wounded in Greenwood.

Date of Death

The records indicate that four of the white casualties died before midnight on May 31\(^{st}\). If this is correct then these men were most likely killed in the downtown area where the fighting
first began. Seven others died on June 1st and one on June 2nd. The last white fatality died in the early morning hours of June 6th. He was wounded a few hours earlier when white militia men fired on the car in which he was riding. The perpetrators, a least one of whom was wearing his World War I U.S. Army uniform, claimed that the driver of the car refused to obey their orders to stop.

None of the twenty-six black victims is listed as having died on the evening of May 31st. Twenty-one were signed out as having died on June 1st, two on June 2nd, and two others on June 7th and 10th respectively. The last black to die of riot wounds was a twenty-one year old who lingered until August 20 -- eleven weeks after the riot.

The fact that no black fatalities were recorded for the evening of May 31st is curious. According to several sources, many shots were fired by both sides during the retreat of the blacks from the courthouse area back to Greenwood, and some early newspaper accounts describe blacks lying wounded or dead in the downtown area. If the latter are true, it suggests that no medical aid was extended to those wounded blacks unfortunate enough to have been left behind during the retreat to Greenwood.
Table 10

Confirmed Deaths by Date of Death

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mortuaries (Table 11)

As in most of the United States at the time, Tulsa mortuaries (funeral homes) were racially restricted. The three major establishments serving white Tulsans were Mitchell-Fleming, Mowbray and Stanley-McCune. Black funerals were handled by a single Greenwood funeral home operated by S. M Jackson, a graduate of the Cincinnati (Ohio) School of Embalming. In 1971, Jackson was interviewed by Tulsa historian Ruth Avery. His account of his riot experiences is valuable since it provides some insight into the way the dead, both black and white, were handled. On the morning of June 1st, when the white mob stormed into Greenwood,

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8 Avery, R. “African-American S.M. Jackson (Mortician) and his wife, Eunice Cloman Jackson on June 26, 1971”, unpublished transcript of taped interview. 182
Jackson’s funeral parlor was burned down. At the time, he was holding four embalmed bodies for burial; only two of these were retrieved (leaving one to wonder about the fate of the other two). At first interned, he was promptly paroled by the owners of Stanley-McCune who temporarily hired him to help process the bodies who were brought their establishment. During the next few days he embalmed several blacks whose bodies were to be shipped to other cities for burial (see below).

Stanley McCune also had a hastily arranged contract with Tulsa County to bury (unembalmed) the bodies of blacks whose relatives could either not afford to claim them for private burial or were not informed of the deaths. In all, Stanley-McCune handled the arrangements for two whites and eighteen blacks. The bodies of all of the blacks were prepared for burial by Mr. Jackson. He embalmed two of these that were claimed and were buried in other cities. The remaining sixteen were not embalmed and placed in plain wood coffins. Mr. Jackson was able to rebuild his Greenwood business and handled the funeral of the last black riot victim who died on August 20 and whose body was claimed by his family for burial in his native Mississippi.
### Table 11

**Distribution of Confirmed Dead by Mortuary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mitchell-Fleming</th>
<th>Mowbray</th>
<th>Stanley-McCune</th>
<th>Jackson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Burial Places (Table 12)

Only three of the white victims were buried in Rose Hill, a privately operated cemetery. Another was buried in Watonga, a small town in western Oklahoma. The remaining nine were buried in other states. Five of the black fatalities were buried outside of Tulsa: two in other Oklahoma towns and three outside the state. The remaining twenty-one blacks (84%) were interred in Oaklawn, the Tulsa municipal cemetery.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tulsa</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Other States</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oaklawn</td>
<td>Rose Hill</td>
<td>AR</td>
<td>CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Oaklawn Burials (Table 13)

In light of the controversy surrounding the total number of black victims of the race riot and the disposal of their bodies, the documented burials in Oaklawn take on a special significance. This is especially true in the light of the preliminary archaeological findings.9

As noted above, twenty-one black victims, 84% of the total, were buried in Oaklawn. At that time, the cemetery was segregated by race and blacks were buried in the western-most

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9 See the report of Drs. Brooks and Witten elsewhere in this publication.

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section, so it is safe to assume that these black riot victims were also buried there. Five of these victims, all of whom died in Morningside Hospital, were buried by Mowbray mortuary. All these hospital cases died of gunshot wounds. Their death certificates were signed by a single physician, J. F. Capps, M.D. Dr. Capps signed out two of these as "John Does". Four died on June 1st and the fifth in the early morning of June 2nd.

The remaining sixteen were bodies found at the scene and taken to Stanley-McCune; their death certificates were signed by County Attorney Seavers. Six of these, four of whom were badly burned, were not identified. A seventh unidentifiable body was that of the previously described stillborn. The remaining nine were identified.

These Oaklawn burials were conducted at county expense. The Mowbray and Stanley-McCune records indicate that the victims were not embalmed but buried in plain wooden coffins; they also show that the mortuaries charged the county $25 for each burial. An important feature of the Stanley-McCune records was a notation indicating the "grave number" of each burial. These numbers form a single sequence from 1 to 19, except for graves 15, 16 and 17. It is possible that these graves were filled by three of the Mowbray. Unfortunately, grave numbers were not given in the Mowbray records.

The data currently available on these Oaklawn burials is given in Table 13. They are significant for several reasons. First, should archaeological exploration of the area go forward, the excavators should encounter them. Assuming, as the records indicate, that they were buried in separate graves in the order indicated by the Stanley-McCune grave numbers, they should be encountered in an orderly row(s). If so, the available information that we have on them should be
valuable in obtaining tentative identifications. For example, the skeletons in graves 7, 9, 13, and 18 should show some signs of fire exposure. If so, they should provide tentative leads to the non-burned skeletons in adjacent graves.\(^{10}\) By narrowing the number of possible decedents, the effort (and the cost) of DNA identification could be substantially reduced.

\(^{10}\) I am assuming here that the exposure to fire was sufficiently intense to affect bone.

### Table 13

**Burials of Confirmed Dead in Oaklawn Cemetery**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>DC signed by</th>
<th>Oak-</th>
<th>Mortuary</th>
<th>Grave</th>
<th>Lawn</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Doe</td>
<td>John #1</td>
<td></td>
<td>GSW</td>
<td>Morningside</td>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>Mowbray</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Doe</td>
<td>John #2</td>
<td></td>
<td>GSW</td>
<td>Morningside</td>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>Mowbray</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Everett</td>
<td>Reuben</td>
<td></td>
<td>GSW</td>
<td>Morningside</td>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>Mowbray</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

187
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Occupation Type</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Other Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jeffery</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>GSW</td>
<td>Morningside</td>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>Mowbray</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Turner</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>GSW</td>
<td>Morningside</td>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>Mowbray</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Alexander</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>GSW</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Seavers</td>
<td>Stan-McC</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Walker</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>GSW</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Seavers</td>
<td>Stan-McC</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>GSW</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Seavers</td>
<td>Stan-McC</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Miller</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>GSW</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Seavers</td>
<td>Stan-McC</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Unident.</td>
<td></td>
<td>GSW</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Seavers</td>
<td>Stan-McC</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ree</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>GSW</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Seavers</td>
<td>Stan-McC</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Unident</td>
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<td>Burns</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Seavers</td>
<td>Stan-McC</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Lewis</td>
<td></td>
<td>GSW</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Seavers</td>
<td>Stan-McC</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Unident.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Burns</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Seavers</td>
<td>Stan-McC</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
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<td>30</td>
<td>GSW</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Seavers</td>
<td>Stan-McC</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION

Of course, this small group of documented fatalities cannot be considered a statistically-defined random sample of those who had some role in the riot, either as active members of the mob or as passive victims. However, it is probably typical enough to provide some glimpses of the kinds of people who were caught up in the riot.

The whites ranged in age from sixteen to thirty-nine years. As a group, they tended to be young, with a median age of twenty-seven years. The state of birth or residence of all thirteen are known and, of these, only two were born in Oklahoma. The bodies of all but four were shipped to other states for burial and, of the four Oklahoma burials, only three took place in Tulsa. Of the
ten for whom we have marital information, seven were single, one was divorced and another had been separated from his wife for nearly twelve years. Among the three married men, the wife of one was not living in Tulsa at the time of the riot. At least four and possibly six were employed in petroleum-related jobs; three others held jobs suggesting transient status: two were cooks and the third listed as a "laborer." Judging from their occupations, all were of lower socioeconomic status except one, an oil company junior executive.

In short, the limited demographic information that can be drawn from such a small sample indicates that these men were probably fairly typical of white Tulsans of the oil boom days: young, single, non-professionals from outside Oklahoma who had been lured to Tulsa by the promise of good jobs and good money. With no strong domestic ties to keep them home that night, drifting around in the bustling downtown area on a nice summer evening, perhaps looking for ladies, liquor or other excitement, they were also the kind who might be expected to show up around the courthouse when the talk about lynching a black accused of assaulting a white girl got started. Since boot-locale was a busy cottage industry in Tulsa, it is possible that at least some of them had high blood-alcohol levels by the time the trouble began.

Black victims, in contrast, tended to be older than whites. They ranged in age from nineteen to sixty-three. Blacks averaged close to 35 years in age — nearly seven years older than the whites. This difference is statistically significant. Of the eight for whom marital data is available, five were listed as married. While their occupational status tended to be lower than that of the whites (and none were employed in the petroleum industry), two — a realtor who also owned a tailor shop and a highly-regarded physician — were solidly middle class. Unlike the
whites, most of whom were young, single, newcomers to Tulsa, this group of black victims appears to have been stable, older citizens of the Greenwood community.

These thirty-nine cases also demonstrate that, compared to white victims, those who were black victims were treated with what would today be considered cavalier, if not criminal, carelessness. This is indicated by the fact that at least one was allowed to bleed to death without medical attention in a detention center instead of being taken immediately and directly to a hospital after being gunned down in Greenwood while trying to surrender. Another indication of this is found in the death certificates. Those of at least four of the thirteen whites were pronounced dead before midnight on May 31st, indicating that they were promptly taken to hospitals. In contrast, none of the death certificates of black victims are dated earlier than June 1st, a finding which suggests that whether dead or still alive, they lay unattended for at least several hours. More evidence is provided by the fact that adequate treatment facilities were denied blacks until sometime in the late morning or afternoon of June 1st, when a makeshift ward and surgery was hastily set up in the basement of one of the several hospitals that normally admitted only whites. Only then were the many black wounded provided with care, and some allowed to die under the care of nurses and physicians.

If Tulsa medical care givers were callous and careless in their treatment of black riot victims, representatives of the Tulsa funeral industry were not far behind them. This is shown by the hasty, "county" burials in Oaklawn on June 1st and 2nd, their death certificates in most cases signed by a layman - County Attorney Seavers. Much of the vital information on these certificates such as address, age, marital status, next-of-kin, etc. was left blank or filled in with a
hastily scrawled “don’t know”. This indicates that authorities with the responsibility to contact families and identify victims did not bother to track them down in the admittedly crowded and confused detention centers. Thus, some families that might have been able and willing to claim their dead and bury them properly were not given this opportunity. Whether they could afford to or not, most probably did not know for sure that their relatives were already dead and buried in unmarked pauper graves until they were released from detention.

Another finger of blame points to law enforcement authorities at the local and county levels. As noted previously, all of these deaths -- both black and white -- were homicides which occurred within the jurisdiction of either the Tulsa Police Department (thirty-seven cases) or the Tulsa County Sheriff’s Department (two cases). Yet, so far as is known, these murder cases were not investigated while at least some of the perpetrators could be identified and apprehended. Prosecutorial authorities, both county and state, are also accountable since they apparently did not aggressively press for such investigations.

These hard truths cannot be presented without pointing out that many white Tulsans and Tulsa institutions (particularly some churches and the local Red Cross) took a courageous role in the riot by offering protection and care to their black neighbors. Their brave actions have been well documented elsewhere and will not be considered in detail here.

It should also be pointed out that what happened in Tulsa could have taken place in almost any other city in the United States in 1921. Nor were the conditions and circumstances leading to this tragic event a uniquely Oklahoman, or even “Southern” phenomenon. In the data considered here, this is probably best illustrated by the known birthplaces or residences of the
white fatalities. Of the thirteen men who were killed, only two were native Oklahomans. None were from states of the deep South. Five — the two Oklahomans, a Texan, an Arkansan and a native of Kentucky — were from Confederate border states in which the populations were of deeply divided loyalties during the Civil War. The remaining seven were from midwestern or northeastern states.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, perhaps the least that can be said of the physicians, undertakers, police and prosecutors of Tulsa of the time was that they were not hypocritical: they treated their black fellow-citizens no better when they were dead than they did when they were alive.

Although this preliminary report is limited to treatment of the confirmed dead, it cannot be closed without considering the as-yet unconfirmed dead of the Tulsa race riot. First to be considered are the eighteen deaths that occurred in the Maurice Willows Hospital operated by the Red Cross until January 1, 1922. We have not yet made a systematic search of vital statistics records to find their names and the causes of their deaths. Some may have died of complications of wounds received during the riot; if so, of course, such deaths would add to the riot deaths. Others, particularly, if children or elderly whose homes were destroyed or their family life disrupted, may have succumbed easily to diseases they may have otherwise survived; while actually not killed in the riot, the deaths of these victims would certainly have to be considered as riot-related.
As noted in the introduction of this preliminary report, we already have the names of many possible decedents and, hopefully, may obtain still more. These *reported dead* will first be scanned against vital statistics records to see if their death certificates have been somehow overlooked. If they are not found, it will not necessarily mean that they did not die in the riot since there is at least some tenuous evidence that more people, especially blacks, died in the riot whose deaths were not recorded. Most of this evidence, it is true, is in the form of wildly varying estimates that appeared in both the Tulsa and national press in the days and weeks immediately following the riot. Many Tulsans, white and black, have recollections of bodies of victims being disposed of in irregular ways in the first few days following the riot. These estimates and stories cannot be dismissed lightly.

As one whose entire professional life has been devoted to the investigation of mass disasters such as fires and floods, aircraft accidents, human rights violations, war crimes and acts of terrorism throughout the world, this writer is fully aware of the often exaggerated estimates of the number of victims that surface in the wake of the chaos and confusion following such events. At the same time, experience has shown that in manner of these situations, *official* counts of the dead or often seriously underestimated.

In the present case, it should be pointed out that, like nearly all other states at the time of the riot, Oklahoma had no adequate system for the medicolegal examination of violent or unattended deaths. Today, the law mandates that all such deaths fall within the medicolegal responsibility of the State Medical Examiner. Bodies of such victims are examined and, when necessary, autopsied by forensic pathologists to determine the cause and manner of death. At the
time of the riot, the law required that death certificates be signed by attending physicians or, as we have seen, certain public officials in exceptional cases. However, it appears that there was no controlling legal authority (to use a phrase currently in vogue) that required that medically unattended deaths not coming to the attention of officers of the court be documented with a state death certificate. Therefore, it is possible that bodies found in the ruins of Greenwood during the days immediately after the riot were simply buried without documentation.

That this may have indeed happened is suggested by a statement apparently made by Major O.T. Johnson, a Salvation Army officer stationed in Tulsa at the time. According to stories in at least two newspapers, the Chicago Defender (June 11, 1921) and St. Louis Argus (June 10, 1921), Johnson is said to have stated that he hired a crew of over three dozen grave diggers who labored for several days to dig about 150 graves for Negro victims. Unfortunately, any official report that Major Johnson may have submitted to the Salvation Army has not yet been located. However, the possibility the statement attributed to him was indeed true is at least partly supported by two witnesses. One, Eunice Cloman Jackson, the wife of black mortician S.M. Jackson stated in 1971 that her step-father was part of a crew of fifty-five grave diggers; when she was asked where the bodies were buried, she replied that “...most of them were out at Oaklawn. That was the cemetery for burying them....”\textsuperscript{11} Clyde Eddy, a young boy at the time, remembers seeing large wooden crates, each containing several burned bodies, awaiting burial in Oaklawn in the days following the riot. If bodies were collected from the burned out area of Greenwood they may well have been collected in crates rather than individual coffins and

\textsuperscript{11} Eddy, \textit{loc. cit.}

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transported to Oaklawn for burial by Major Johnson and his large crew of grave diggers. They most likely wood have been carried on trucks, railroad flatcars (the Frisco tracks ran adjacent to Oaklawn), or both, thus accounting for the several eyewitness reports that bodies were seen being carried from the Greenwood area on both trucks and flatcars.

The theory that perhaps as many as 150 bodies were buried in Oaklawn under Major Johnson's supervision can be framed as an hypothesis that can be tested by archaeological exploration of the area described elsewhere in this volume by Drs. Brooks and Witten. Such an effort would, at the least, result in the recovery of the twenty-one black confirmed dead from their unmarked graves so that they can be more suitably memorialized and, possibly, identified. If the hypothesis turns out to be true, it would result in the recovery of the bones of the undocumented dead and, thus, help provide a solution to a lingering mystery.

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12 Brooks and Witten, *loc. cit.*
The Investigation of Potential Mass Grave

Locations for the Tulsa Race Riot

by Robert L. Brooks and Alan H. Witten

Introduction

On the night of May 31st /June 1st, 1921 the City of Tulsa witnessed a racial conflict between whites and the minority black population living in the Greenwood section that was unprecedented in U.S. history during the twentieth century. This violence, somewhat erroneously labeled as a riot, was brought about by the inflammatory coverage by the Tulsa Tribune of an alleged rape attempt of a white girl by a young black male. Tensions had been mounting with a number of racial incidents occurring prior to the night of May 31st. The economic success of the Greenwood community undoubtedly played a role in fueling resentment among the white population and further escalating the violence. Through the night of May 31st and into the morning of June 1st, whites virtually destroyed the Greenwood section. There were an undetermined number of deaths, both black and white, with estimates ranging from the official count of 36 to approximately 300. Over 1000 residences were
burned and another 400 looted. The business district of Greenwood was totally destroyed and probably accounts for much of the $4 million in claims filed against the city in 1921.\footnote{Ellsworth (1982:70).} Following this night of destruction and bloodshed, blacks were forcibly interned under armed guard. Eventually, over 4000 blacks were held at the fairgrounds and other locations. Under provisions of the imposed martial law, blacks also were required to carry identity or “green cards”.

This introduction only serves to broadly portray the conditions that existed in Tulsa during the “Race Riot”. Detailed accounting of the causes of the riot, the progression of events, casualties, and property are discussed in other chapters of this report. This study focuses on those who died during the violence, what happened to their remains, and our efforts to relocate them almost 80 years later.

**Casualties in the Tulsa Race Riot**

As portrayed in the many studies concerning the Tulsa Race Riot, there is no well-documented evidence for the number of people who died during the violence. Ellsworth notes that the Department of Health’s Bureau of Vital Statistics estimate was 10 whites and 26 blacks, whereas estimates in the Red Cross records were around 300 deaths.\footnote{Ellsworth (1982:69)} There were other figures in the Tulsa Tribune, in two contradictory articles, of casualties of 68 and/or 175. While an accurate number of individuals who died during the violence may not be possible some 80 years later, some perspective can be gained by examining the black
population of Tulsa and the Greenwood section and likely mortality profiles during a conflict of this nature.

It is estimated that approximately 11,000 blacks resided in Tulsa in 1921, most living in the area of the Greenwood section. The black population probably represented around 10% of the total population of Tulsa. Using the Bureau of Vital Statistics counts, casualties among blacks using this statistic would be .2% of the black population.

Given the intensity of the conflict and the fact that many of the blacks resisting invasion of their community by whites were armed and veterans of World War I, it would not be unreasonable to estimate 150-300 deaths. A death toll of 150 is only slightly greater than 1% of the black population. It is also suspected that the number of whites who died would exceed the 10 individuals cited by the Department of Health. Unlike many riots, the racial conflict in Tulsa on the night of May 31st initially contained well-armed groups of blacks and whites. Later, as blacks were overrun by the increasing number of whites invading Greenwood, they lost the numerical capability for defending their property and sometimes, their lives.

The historicity of the Tulsa Race Riot must also be factored into the intensity of the violence. World War I ended three years prior to the violence. Thus, there were many blacks as well as white males who retained recent knowledge of warfare and armed conflict. Some of these veterans probably had retained their rifles from the war. Simply stated, this was not a riot of a few individuals with shotguns and pistols pitted against unarmed victims – at least not at the beginning.
Based on these considerations, the mortality profile would have comparable numbers of deaths among black and white males initially. As white numbers swelled and they successfully made their way into Greenwood, the number of black deaths would increase and would also reflect increasing numbers of women and children in residences. This profiling provides some credibility (although no hard evidence) for casualty counts between 175 and 300. If there were a greater number of victims than reported, then the City of Tulsa and the Army National Guard would have to deal with a significant health problem. Based on weather records for the City of Tulsa on May 31st/June 1st, the temperatures hovered around 100 degrees. This would have made it a necessity that victims be handled expediently to prevent outbreaks of disease. One means of dealing with the deaths of large numbers of people is through mass graves. The following section discusses the plausibility of mass graves and possible locations.

Mass Graves and the Tulsa Race Riot

There are numerous accounts as to the disposition of the riot victims. There are reports of victims being placed on flatbed railroad cars and moved by rail from Tulsa. Other accounts have victims being thrown in the Arkansas River or being incinerated. However, the most frequently reported version is of victims being buried in mass graves. Some of these are oral histories of riot survivors. However, in many other cases they are secondary histories, stories that have been handed down through generations and across kinship lines as well. The difficulty here has been distinguishing oral histories that carry a higher level of credibility – where there is some additional thread of evidence, information, or something that makes that particular individual’s testimony more believable, from others of more speculative nature. In
sorting through the hundreds of taped oral histories, telephone calls, and written accounts, three locations were identified that held greater credibility. This was based on the frequency of their reporting, the veracity of the individuals giving the account, and the plausibility of the location. What is meant by plausibility is whether the location would have functioned as a mass gravesite or as a means of disposing of the victims. For example, the city incinerator was reportedly used to cremate riot victims. However, according to Clyde Snow, an internationally known forensic scientist, this would not have been a feasible strategy based on what we know of the size of the incinerator and the likely number of riot victims. It would have been too time consuming and requiring too much engineering coordination. The three locations frequently cited and thought to merit further study were Newblock Park, Oaklawn Cemetery, and Booker T. Washington Cemetery.

Newblock Park is located adjacent to the downtown area and the Greenwood section. It is bounded to the south by the Arkansas River, to the east by a residential area and 7th Street, to the north by Charles Page Blvd., and on the west by more city property (Figure 1). At the time of the Tulsa Race Riot, Newblock Park was the location of the City Landfill, the City Incinerator, and a substantial amount of open land. Because of wooded tree lines, much of the area of Newblock may have been blocked from view. Today, Newblock Park is dramatically altered from the way it appeared in 1921; much of the park is greenspace. However, this greenspace hides the remains of old water pumping system buildings, numerous utility lines, as well as the Parkview drainage channel leading to the Arkansas River. There is also a railroad line between the park and the Arkansas River as well as a levee constructed by the Corps of Engineers in the 1940s. Thus, the landscape is markedly
different than that witnessed by Tulsans in the summer of 1921. There have been numerous unverified accounts of victims of the riot being buried in Newblock by whites and/or the National Guard. Accounts of their remains being subsequently unearthed during the many public works projects taking place there since the time of the riot have been reported. However, no evidence exists in the City of Tulsa’s files documenting a mass grave or human remains being found in Newblock. The numerous reports of bodies being placed on the sand bar north of the 11th Street Bridge also figures in the Newblock Park account. If victims of the riot were to be placed in a mass grave in the Newblock Park area, this sand bar of the Arkansas River adjacent to the park could have served as a staging area for the event.

Oaklawn Cemetery is also located in the downtown area although not adjacent to the Greenwood section. It is bounded to the west by the Cherokee Expressway (I-444), to the south by 11th Street, and to the east by Peoria, and to the north by 8th Street (Figure 2). At the time of the riot, Oaklawn functioned as a cemetery, one that contained plots for people from many different socio-economic lifestyles, including white and black paupers. Like much of the Tulsa landscape, Oaklawn changed significantly in the following ca. 80 years. The Cherokee Expressway did not exist at the time of the Tulsa Race Riot and undoubtedly claimed the extreme western portion of the cemetery during its construction. Reports of victims of the riot being buried at Oaklawn include individual graves in addition to the mass interment. Currently, there are markers for two blacks who died during the riot in the black section of Oaklawn. It is not known whether the placement of the headstones for these graves is accurate or not. As with Newblock Park, burial of the riot victims is attributed to whites.
Figure 1. Newblock Park and vicinity adjacent to the Arkansas River.
Figure 2. Oaklawn cemetery and vicinity near downtown Tulsa.
Figure 3. Booker T. Washington cemetery in south Tulsa.
The final location that was frequently mentioned was Booker T. Washington Cemetery. Unlike the other sites, Booker T. Washington Cemetery is located in south Tulsa at what was in 1921 a rural outlier of the city. Booker T. Washington is bounded to the south by a creek drainage and sand borrow pit, to the north by South 91st Street, to the west by a Catholic Cemetery, and commercial and residential land to the east (Figure 3). At the time of the riot in 1921, there was probably little development with most of the area being agricultural land. The accounts of Booker T. Washington's use as burial place for riot victims also vary from the other two locations. According to oral histories of riot survivors, it was blacks that brought victims to Booker T. Washington for burial.

This occurred a few days after the riot suggesting that these may have been blacks that were wounded during the riot and died a few days after the conflict.

**Archaeological Methods and the Search for Mass Graves**

Research conducted by Scott Ellsworth and Dick Warner revealed the three locations described above as holding the greatest potential for mass graves within the Tulsa city limits. The problem then was how to examine the three sites to determine whether they might yield evidence of a large communal grave. In the case of human rights violations in foreign countries this has been accomplished through the use of informants and mechanical equipment. However, in the case of the Tulsa Race Riot, some 80 years later, survivors of the riot's knowledge and memory of the 1920s landscape, compared to that of today, is questionable. Without precise knowledge of mass grave locations, the use of mechanical equipment to search for remains is not cost-effective. Thus, archaeological examination methods were used to seek mass grave locations in the three site areas.
Archaeologists frequently examine the landscape for evidence of prehistoric and early historic peoples settlements. While evidence of these settlements may be exposed on the surface, they are frequently buried by many feet of soil deposits. Thus, archaeologists have resorted to using a variety of methodological tools to cost-effectively examine the subsurface. Some of these methods use conventional mechanical equipment such as backhoes and hydraulic coring rigs. These offer the advantage of providing physical evidence of subsurface remains. Their disadvantages are that they disturb the ground subsurface and are heavy users of time and financial resources. Beginning in the 1940s archaeologists began to explore non-invasive means of examining the soil subsurface through application of the principles of physics.\(^3\) By sending different types of physical impulses into the ground subsurface, archaeologists could measure differences between natural soil formations and culturally altered conditions. These contrasts are referred to as anomalies. When sampling over a large area, the pattern in these anomalies can often be articulated with recognizable shapes (e.g., houses, fireplaces, graves, etc.). Geophysical applications in archaeology were more frequently practiced in Europe during the 1940s-1960s, but following the transistor revolution of the 1970s, they became widely used around the world, particularly in the United States.\(^4\) There are three basic methods of geophysics applied in archaeology: magnetometer, resitivity, and radar.

The magnetometer measures changes in magnetic properties between cultural features and natural properties of the soil. These changes or differences are usually due to the presence of ferrous metal objects although baked clays around burned houses or fireplaces

\(^3\) Aikens (1961)
\(^4\) c.f. Wynn (1986)
may also present a strong magnetic response. Magnetometers today are extremely sensitive and can pick-up responses from small objects such as nails or gun parts. Resistivity involves measuring the resistance to an electrical current injected into the subsoil. Typically, the differences in values yielded by resistivity are a result of variation in ground moisture. These changes in ground moisture content are frequently due to collection of moisture around cultural features such as houses, walls, and privies. The third method applied is ground penetrating radar. Here, radar signals are projected into the ground and are reflected back upon encountering an object or natural feature (much like sonar on ships works). The difference in the character of soil between a natural soil sequence and one where some type of cultural feature is present (e.g., house, trash pit, or grave) will variably reflect back to the radar unit and present an approximation as to the shape of the anomaly.

There are obvious benefits to use of geophysical methods in archaeological investigations. They permit cost-effective subsurface examination of large areas. In many areas, the highly portable nature of today’s equipment allows examination of confined or congested areas (e.g. wooded areas). Most importantly, these geophysical applications are non-invasive and do not physically disturb the subsurface areas under investigation.5 There are some disadvantages as well. They can respond to nearby surface features and they are sensitive to “noise” in the subsurface and may present distorted signals. In such cases, information on anomalies may be misleading or erroneous. The other drawback to these methods is that they lack a “ground truth” element. The actual character of the anomaly can only be confirmed by physical examination of the subsurface though excavation.

5 Heimer (1992)
In the spring of 1998, it was recommended to the Tulsa Race Riot Commission that a search for mass graves sites be attempted through use of geophysical investigations. Based on the cost-effectiveness of examining large areas and the non-invasive nature of the methods, geophysical examination of Newblock Park, Oaklawn Cemetery, and Booker T. Washington Cemetery appeared to be the most reasonable approach to study of this issue. The Commission at their February, 1999 meeting approved use of geophysics to examine for potential mass gravesites.

Archaeological Geophysics at the Three Suspected Mass Grave Locations

Phase I

On July 20-21, 1998, initial geophysical examination of the three-suspected mass grave locations was undertaken. David L. Maki and Geoffrey Jones of Archaeo-Physics conducted the geophysical investigations. Conditions at the time of the study were extremely hot and dry. Temperatures on the two days of fieldwork were 105 and 106. As discovered later, the extensive heat and drought of the summer of 1998 had some bearing on the results of the July work. The following details on Phase I investigations have been excerpted from Maki and Jones.6

Methods

The search for mass graves at the three locations was carried out with a pulse EKKO 1000 ground penetrating radar unit (GPR). Ground penetrating radar was selected for this
initial examination because of its successful use in detecting both prehistoric and historic graves in a variety of settings. A noted in Maki and Jones report the GPR unit may locate anomalies through reflections from disturbed soil associated with the grave shaft, bones, coffins, grave goods, and breakdown in normal soil conditions. Two different frequency antenna’s were used, 450 MHz and 225 MHz. The higher frequency antenna was used to obtain better resolution although this frequency also experiences a loss in the depth of ground penetration. The antenna utilized was determined by local soil conditions at each locality. Each of the three potential mass grave locations was also sketched and a grid imposed over the area to be examined.

Newblock Park

Using information obtained from their oral history research Scott Ellsworth and Dick Warner assisted in the selection of the area for examination. This area is near the eastern extent of the park immediately adjacent to the Parkview drainage channel. Soils at Newblock Park consisted of silt, sand, and clay with relatively high moisture content. From a baseline established for the study area, data were systematically collected along transects spaced some .75 meters (ca. 30 inches) apart using the 225 MHz antenna. A total of 38 transects of GPR data were collected. Depth of subsurface penetration of the radar signal was limited to .5 meters - 1.5 meters due to high conductivity soils. Interpretation of the Newblock Park data was also complicated by reflection from the numerous building foundations and buried utility lines – especially the sewer lines. However, one anomalous area of interest was identified and is present on Transects 8-11 (Figure 4). Additionally, Transect 10 exhibits sloping

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6 Maki and Jones (1998)
reflections that might represent the walls of a shallow excavation (or pit). There was also an inverted reflection that potentially reflects a buried object of some nature. Investigations were inconclusive as to the specific nature of the reflective pattern.

While one anomaly was revealed during the work at Newblock Park, this does not discount the potential for other anomalies in areas not investigated.

Oaklawn Cemetery

As was the case at Newblock Park, Scott Ellsworth and Dick Warner assisted in identifying the areas at Oaklawn to be examined. Here, the study area was restricted to the black part of the cemetery. Three areas (A, B, and C) were targeted for GPR survey. Areas A and B were square and rectangular plots of land within the black section of the

“The Old Potters Field” of the cemetery near 11th Street. Area C was a rectangular plot of land on the west side of Oaklawn nearest the Cherokee Expressway. One noteworthy feature of areas A and B was the presence of recognized single grave areas as marked by headstones. Soils in Oaklawn Cemetery are much like those at Newblock Park, exhibiting a mixture of silt, sand, and clay and a relatively high moisture content. Baseline grids were established for the three areas. A 15 meter square (ca. 45 feet) grid was laid-out for Area A and data were systematically collected at .75 meter (ca. 30 inches) spacing using a 225 MHz antenna. Area B was a grid roughly 25 meters (75 feet) east-west by 7 meters (21 feet) north-south. Area C was a grid of some 13 meters (40 feet) north-south by 8 meters (25 feet) east-
Figure 4. GPR data anomalies found at Newblock Park.
Figure 5. GPR data anomalies found at Oaklawn cemetery.
Figure 6. GPR data anomalies found at Booker T. Washington cemetery.
west. These two areas were inspected using a transect interval of 1 meter and 225 MHz antenna. Forty-three transects of ground penetrating radar data were collected. As was the case at Newblock Park, depth of subsurface penetration by the radar signal was limited due to high conductivity soils. There was also a “ringing” response that made signal interpretation difficult. Despite these difficulties, 14 anomalies were identified at Oaklawn with 13 of these located within Area A (Figure 5). The remaining anomaly was found in Area B. Seven of these anomalies occur with burial markers. Thus, these distinctive reflections probably reflect marked and unmarked single interments. No evidence was found to suggest the presence of a mass grave in the three areas surveyed at Oaklawn Cemetery. However, this again does not discount the potential for a mass gravesite within another, unexamined part of the cemetery.

**Booker T. Washington Cemetery**

With information provided by Scott Ellsworth and Dick Warner three areas at Booker T. Washington Cemetery were selected for GPR study. Soils here differed from those at the other two locations, consisting of a homogenous sand with relatively low moisture content. Area A was a roughly 40 meter (ca. 120 feet) by 7 meter (21 feet) rectangular segment south of the gravel road. Area B was a 22 meter (ca. 66 feet) by 22 meter (66 feet) square north of the gravel road and roughly 20 meters (60 feet) north of Area A. Area C contained two separate segments. The first was a 40 meter (120 feet) by 8 meter (ca. 25 feet) rectangular unit oriented north-south, whereas the second was a smaller 18 meter (55 feet) by 3 meter (9 feet) unit extending east-west approximately 5 meter (15 feet) east of the initial Area C unit.
Ground penetrating radar data were systematically collected from the three units using 1 and 2 meter (3 and 6 feet) transect spacings. Because of the sandy nature of the soil, both 225 MHz and 450 MHz antennas were used. The 450 MHz antenna was used in Areas A and B and both antenna frequencies were used in the two Area C segments. A total of 40 transects were collected from the three areas. One anomaly was identified in Area A and was thought to potentially represent an individual grave. A much larger anomaly was recorded in the initial unit in Area C (Figure 6). The reflection suggested a zone of disturbed soil approximately 6.5 meters (ca. 20 feet) by 3 meters (9 feet) extending to a depth of at least a meter. This anomaly was thought to potentially represent a pit such as one might find with a mass grave.

Investigations at Newblock Park, Oaklawn Cemetery, and Booker T. Washington Cemetery did not conclusively demonstrate the presence of mass graves. However, anomalies were found at Newblock Park and Booker T. Washington Cemetery that merited further investigation. During the fall of 1998, it was recommended to the Tulsa Race Riot Commission that these anomalies be physically studied to ascertain whether they represented mass graves. This request was approved by the Commission in October, 1998.

**Phase II**

Following approval to study the anomalies at Booker T. Washington and Newblock Park, a methodology was developed to allow us to determine the nature of the anomalies without significantly disturbing these features. The plan was to take core samples from each of the anomalies using a 3 inch truck-mounted bull probe. The 3 inch cores would minimally
disturb the anomalies while providing necessary information on the context and content of these features. This work was performed with the assistance of Dr. Lee Bement using the Archeological Survey’s truck mounted coring rig on December 16th, 1998.

**Newblock Park**

Because of the potential for buried utility lines at Newblock Park, an initial step in the investigation was to obtain from the City of Tulsa a map identifying the placement of lines in relation to the anomaly to be investigated. With this information, avoidance of areas with a high density of utility cables, conduits, etc. was accomplished. Ten core samples were drawn from the anomaly. The cores were typically extended to a depth of 2 meters (6 feet). Material recovered from these samples included brick fragments, concrete, broken glass and whiteware, and cinders. The debris appears to be uniformly distributed throughout the area of the anomaly with little stratigraphic integrity. The artifactual data were suggestive of fill for what was apparently the basement or subfloor of a water pump station. The reflective shape of this feature as detected with the ground penetrating radar probably represents the slightly slumped subsurface walls of the razed building. Thus, the anomaly at Newblock Park can be discounted as a mass grave site. This does not, however, mean that Newblock Park can be discounted as holding potential for a mass grave.

**Booker T. Washington Cemetery**

During the study of Newblock Park, the truck-mounted coring rig was damaged and could not be used to investigate the anomaly in Area C at Booker T. Washington. The work here was accomplished using manually operated coring rods. These rods were capable of probing to depths of up to 1 meter (3 feet). Between 10 and 15 probes were randomly placed
through the anomaly in Area C. No cultural material or evidence of graves was obtained during this work. Soils from the cores were uniform, corresponding to the natural soil stratigraphy, with no evidence of a disturbed context. At approximately 90 cm (35 inches) a sand lens with some clay content was encountered. This also marked slightly moister soils. Because of the drought conditions encountered in July, it appears that the radar was reflecting back from this moister clay lens, presenting a pitlike image. The potential single grave in Area A was also investigated with 3 core probes. These were negative as well. Although there are multiple reports of Race Riot victims being buried at Booker T. Washington, these locations were not discovered during this work.

**Interpretations**

The December, 1998 investigations conducted at Newblock Park and Booker T. Washington Cemetery failed to substantiate the anomalies as the sites of mass graves or even individual graves. The work did reveal why the ground penetrating radar presented these anomalies as pitlike features. This demonstrates the necessity of physically investigating such features before viewing them as valid mass grave locations. The first two phases of work also address but small portions of the three potential locations. That other areas within Newblock Park, Oaklawn Cemetery, and Booker T. Washington Cemetery hold mass gravesites cannot be discounted.

**Phase III**

In the spring of 1999, an eyewitness was found to the digging of a mass grave at Oaklawn Cemetery. Mr. Clyde Eddy, who was a child of 10 at the time of the riot, witnessed
white laborers at Oaklawn digging a "trench". There were also a number of black riot victims present in several wooden crates. While Mr. Eddy did not directly see the victims being placed in this trench-like area, it is reasonable to assume that its purpose was for a mass grave. Mr. Eddy recalls this area being within the white section of the "Old Potters Field" and was able to point out the area in a visit to Oaklawn during the spring, 1999. Based on this new information, further study of Oaklawn Cemetery was approved. Because a specific area was identified, thus limiting the search area, it permitted a more expansive examination using geophysical methods. Three different geophysical applications were used at Oaklawn: magnetometer, electromagnetic induction, and ground penetrating radar. Dr. Alan Witten of the Department of Geology and Geophysics, University of Oklahoma conducted these investigations at Oaklawn on June 4th and subsequently, on November 22nd, 1999.

A rectangular grid of 15 meters (45 feet) north-south by 50 meters (150 feet) east-west was established over the area that Mr. Eddy identified. Because the location was based on a visual history from some 80 years ago, the targeted area was enlarged by about a factor of four to ensure complete coverage. This rectangular area lies within 4 meters (12 feet) of the iron fence facing 11th Street. Fourteen headstones or footstones are present within the unit.

The unit, referred to as the Clyde Eddy Area, was first examined using a Geometrics 858 cesium magnetometer. North-south transects were walked with the magnetometer at 1 meter (3 feet) intervals. Signals were acquired at a rate of 5 samples per second. Numerous magnetic anomalies were identified. Most of these represent headstones reinforced with iron rebar or ferrous objects associated with single marked interments. However, there was one large magnetic anomaly at 24.5 west and 3.5 south that could not be explained by the
presence of the single graves (Figure 7). This anomaly extends over an area of some 2 meters (6 feet) north-south by 2.6 meters (ca. 8 feet) east-west to a depth of 1 –1.6 meters (3-5 feet). This was a strong ferrous object signal. It could represent a coffin with considerable quantity of ferrous metal hardware or a ferrous metal object with no relation to the cemetery. Because it is doubtful that victims of the riot would have been buried with sizable amounts of metal or in metal coffins, this feature probably did not relate to burial of the race riot victims.

The Clyde Eddy Area was subsequently examined using electromagnetic induction (EMI) with a GEM-2. The GEM-2 is a broadband instrument that responds to variations in electrical conductivity somewhat like a resistivity device. Transects were covered in a manner identical to that for the magnetometer (1 meter spacing with 5 samples per second). The GEM-2 receives signal variation from both high conductivity objects (metal) as well as non-metallic conductors. Data acquired with the GEM-2 obtained results similar to that of the magnetometer. However, in addition to these responses, the GEM-2 also identified an area in the northwestern quadrant that exhibits a regular shape and could represent an area of altered soil electrical conductivity as a result of past excavation (Figure 8). This was roughly an area some 5 meters (15 feet) square.

Ground penetrating radar was initially performed on June 4th in conjunction with the 200 MHz antennas with a Mala Geosciences RAMAC system. Transects of systematically collected GPR data for the Clyde Eddy Area revealed no reflections of possible cultural origin. This work, though, was conducted without the benefit of the results of the magnetometer and EMI data. A second GPR study was conducted on November 22nd, 1998. GPR data acquisition in this second survey was focused on the two anomalies revealed by the
Figure 7. Magnetometer anomalies encountered in the Clyde Eddy area at Oaklawn cemetery.
Figure 8. EMI data from the Clyde Eddy area at Oaklawn cemetery.
Figure 9. Interpretation of EMI and GPR data from the Clyde Eddy area.
magnetometer and EMI. Two grid areas were established and north-south transects at 1 meter (3 feet) intervals were run for the two potential features. Both 250 and 500 MHz antennas were used in data collection. The 250 MHz antenna provided no new data; the reflections were basically the same as those obtained on June 4th, 1998. The 500 MHz antenna presented a much different picture. The radar identified an anomaly in the same location as that revealed by the GEM-2 unit. Ground penetrating radar data depict a feature measuring approximately 5 meters (15 feet) square—a unit essentially the same size as that defined by the GEM-2. The GPR data additionally suggest the presence of an isolated object in roughly the center of the anomaly and that the feature has walls that appear to be vertical with well-defined corners (Figure 9).

**Interpretations and Conclusions.**

The third phase of geophysical work at Oaklawn Cemetery resulted in the identification of two subsurface anomalies or features. One anomaly represents a highly ferrous subsurface deposit. This is not believed to be associated with the Tulsa Race Riot. The other anomaly bears all the characteristics of a dug pit or trench with vertical walls and an undefined object within the approximate center of the feature. Because this anomaly showed up on both EMI and GPR surveys, it is not believed to be a false signal. The vertical walls also support an argument for this being some sort of dug feature. Without the presence of an eyewitness, this would just represent another “anomaly” to be examined. However, with Mr. Eddy’s testimony, this trench-like feature takes on the properties of a mass grave. It
can be argued that the geophysical study, combined with the account of Mr. Eddy, are compelling arguments for this feature being considered a mass grave.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Study

Between July, 1998 and November, 1999 geophysical investigations were conducted at three locations thought to potentially represent sites of mass graves for victims of the Tulsa Race Riot. Examination of select areas at Newblock Park and Booker T. Washington Cemetery through use of ground penetrating radar failed to reveal any features suggestive of a mass grave. As has been reiterated throughout this report, the failure to identify a mass grave at specified locations does not negate the potential for a mass grave within either Newblock Park or Booker T. Washington Cemetery. It only documents that such a feature was not present within the area examined.

Initial study of Oaklawn Cemetery with ground penetrating radar revealed a number of individual interments but no evidence of a mass grave. With an eyewitness’ account permitting a narrowing of the search window, a second examination was conducted at Oaklawn Cemetery. Through use of electromagnetic induction and ground penetrating radar, a 5 meter (15 feet) square anomaly with vertical walls was identified within the area pointed out by the eyewitness as where a trench was dug for burying riot victims. While this evidence is compelling, it cannot be viewed as factual until the feature has been physically examined by excavation to determine if this represents a gravesite, and, more importantly, if a grave, whether it contains multiple individuals. The situation at Oaklawn Cemetery has been further complicated by cemetery records indicating that an adult white male had been buried
there shortly before the riot and two white children were buried within the boundaries of this feature following the riot. This information seems contradictory to the presence of a mass grave at this location.

There are a number of recommendations that should be considered. They are enumerated as follows:

1. Oral history and archival work should continue the search for more specific data on areas within Newblock Park and Booker T. Washington Cemetery. Other locations that have some credibility should also be reexamined (if merited).

2. Continued examination of records at Oaklawn Cemetery to resolve the somewhat paradoxical issue of a mass grave where other non Race Riot related people were reportedly buried.

3. Further examination of the potential mass grave feature at Oaklawn with geophysical applications. This would involve changing the angle of orientation used in the transects (e.g., a northwest-southeast direction) to effect the reflection of the signal. Other options would be the use of different antenna and changing the signal rate.

4. At the discretion of commissions governing the Race Riot investigation, the City of Tulsa, and the Greenwood community limited physical investigation of the feature be undertaken to clarify whether it indeed represents a mass grave. This is not a recommendation to exhume any remains but to clarify the nature of this anomaly.
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African-American History Uncovered:
Skeletal Remains as a Vehicle to the Past

by Phoebe Stubblefield and Lesley M. Rankin-Hill

I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.

— Ralph Ellison

Overview

During the last twenty to thirty years, several large — and numerous small — African-American skeletal populations have been studied by physical anthropologists. Each population has contributed significantly to the reconstruction of African-American lives, experiences, communities, and historical events. African-Americans to a great extent are the “invisible people” in the historical record. This is a common problem whenever one studies non-elite people in the historical past, especially members of the underclass. These are the people who facilitated the lives of the wealthy and the powerful of society; they built cities, provided goods and services, and, to a great extent, were the essential elements of a growing
society. However, they remain obscure in publications of their times and the history books. Elites leave significant documentation of their lives in a variety of forms and these materials have a high probability of being archived. The few sources of documentation for the poor and underclasses of a society are likely to be lost.

Therefore, when African-American skeletal populations are discovered or recovered they present a unique opportunity to add to the historical record and document the lives of the individuals and their community. Physical anthropological studies provide a direct method of assessment (providing evidence) when skeletal populations like the New York African Burial Ground or the Dallas Freedmen’s cemetery become available.

African-American skeletal populations have become available under several conditions: 1) the intentional excavation due to land redevelopment or threat of environmental damage; 2) the accidental discovery of an abandoned cemetery; 3) archaeological excavation projects for historical/anthropological research and documentation. These skeletal populations, represent a broad spectrum of African-American lifestyles throughout the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries in the Western Hemisphere.

Biological and behavioral factors affect the human skeleton because the skeleton is a dynamic system, which undergoes growth and development throughout the individual’s life span. In general, these biological and cultural factors can interfere in the normal processes of bone growth and loss, causing disease episodes and/or periods of delayed growth. These experiences can be usually indelibly recorded on the skeleton and dentition. Through observing these "historical remnants" of bones and teeth, the physical anthropologist has a means of measuring a population's health. In addition, the skeleton can record the actual cause(s) of death and/or contributory factors surrounding death.
Therefore, the potential contribution and importance of the Tulsa Race Riot victims' skeletal remains would be significant to both the documentation of the historical event and to African-American history. It is imperative that these remains be located, recovered, "given a voice" through skeletal analysis and then reinterred with dignity, as most of the African-American skeletal populations have been and will be in the future.

A discussion of the basic types of analysis and information that physical anthropologists-forensic anthropologists can provide is presented below.

The Role of Forensic Anthropology in the Identification of Deceased Individuals

Forensic anthropology has had an active role in American science and medicolegal investigations since at least 1878, when Harvard anatomist Thomas Dwight published his essay on identifying human skeletal remains.¹ Existing as a poorly recognized subfield of the scientific discipline called physical anthropology, forensic anthropology received little scholarly or public notice until the task of identifying and repatriating the deceased from World War II and the Korean War brought the field into prominent activity. Technical advances at this time and a steady increase in academic interest in the field led to its later organization as a section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences in 1972. Since that time, forensic anthropology has been a recognized subfield of physical anthropology and the forensic sciences, requiring the usual academic rigors of obtaining the higher degrees in anthropology (at least a Master's degree), as well as the special training and certification of its section in the Academy.

A forensic anthropologist is a physical anthropologist who has been trained to recognize and examine human skeletal remains for indications of sex, age, height, unique characters of the individual, features which might indicate how the person died, and processes which affect the skeleton after death. Although a forensic pathologist or other medical doctor may seem a more appropriate conductor of such analyses, their education and training focuses on changes in soft tissue. The forensic anthropologist is expected to recognize bone outside of its natural context even if it is reduced to small fragments. He or she can identify all the bones of the human skeleton, determine if a bone is human or not, and understand that the shape of a bone is related to its function in the body and its owner's relationship to other animals.

Forensic anthropologists serve the public in several types of investigations. As a result they work with the other agents concerned with the disposition of human remains, such as medical examiners or coroners, local and federal law enforcement, and family organizations. The most common circumstances are criminal investigations on a local or federal level, such as a local homicide or the results of terrorist activity. Other circumstances include mass disasters of natural or human cause, such as the recovery of tornado or aviation accident victims. The U.S. Army maintains a staff of forensic anthropologists at a facility based in Hawaii who are dedicated to the continued recovery and identification of Americans lost in the past armed conflicts. Frequently the public learns of the forensic anthropologists work when it involves cases of historical interest, such as the exhumation of President Zachary Taylor for an investigation of the cause of his death, or the recovery and identification of the remains of the last Czar of Russia and his household.
The varieties of occasion that require the skills of a forensic anthropologist are sufficiently diverse that the anthropologist may enter the project at various points and utilize a wide assortment of skills. The list below is a summary of exercises that could be employed in a generic investigation. While it seems a short list, many activities take place under each section. While all of the items listed will be covered, most of the remainder of this chapter will focus on item 3, laboratory analysis.

1. Scene or locality search for skeletal remains or burials
2. Recovery of remains by surface recovery or excavation
3. Laboratory analysis
4. Report production

As previously stated, forensic anthropologists are trained to discriminate between human and nonhuman bone. In many investigations, the anthropologist's services begin and end (if no human bones are found) at this step when he or she is called to a locality or medical examiner's office and asked to make a determination. At an investigation scene the forensic anthropologist will search for and identify human bone, look for indications of burials, and conduct necessary excavations in a systematic manner using thorough documentation. In the search for burials, in addition to using visual clues, the anthropologist may employ specialized equipment and techniques, such as ground penetrating radar and infrared photography.

As part of recovery of remains, the anthropologist may map the locality in order to have a record of the position of the remains relative to a fixed landmark and any significant
features of the site. This is a typical part of a criminal investigation and can be conducted in conjunction with scene investigators. Locating the site on an existing map and noting the physical address of the location may suffice, but in wooded areas or along roadsides the anthropologist may employ a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit to get the geographic coordinates of the site. If a burial is involved the site must be mapped with the location of the burial indicated (sometimes the burial is the site), while the burial itself receives a mapping grid. The grid provides a means of mapping the location of each bone or artifact found within the burial. An organized and thorough excavation may provide the information that allows the reconstruction of the events surrounding the burial of the deceased. In one instance the late Dr. William Maples successfully documented differing times of death for multiple individuals in one grave, based on the information gained from his thorough excavation. In addition to any physical mapping of the burial, good note taking, photography and/or videotaping during the excavation will also insure a good record of what was found during the excavation.

Once human remains are found, they are collected in a manner that will protect the privacy of the family of the deceased, keep material remains in association, and prevent fragile material from further breakage or deterioration from exposure to air and sunlight. The remains are then maintained in a secure location while the anthropologist conducts the analysis. Good security insures the remains and any items with them stay together and are not adulterated or altered by outside influences.

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What Skeletal Remains Tell Us

In everyday living, our skeletons are frames from which we work our muscles, frames which we protect from breaking whenever possible and rely on as silent partners as we move through and manipulate the world around us. Yet human bones are not just a frame for the flesh, they are also frames for our identities. An anthropologist can get more information from a skeleton with all of its parts present, no bones broken, and little or no degradation from the environment, but even fragmentary remains will tell much about their former owner. Forensic anthropologists investigate six properties when examining skeletal remains: age, sex, ancestry, stature, unique characters of the skeleton, and indications of trauma.

Age Assessment

Unless the skeleton is sparsely represented, forensic anthropologists do not rely on only one technique to arrive at an age assessment. The best assessments are a summary conclusion based on as many parts of the skeleton as possible. This technique becomes especially important when dealing with mature individuals, because they have fewer age-specific characters than infants, children and young adults.

Age Determination in Infants, Children, and Young Adults

The techniques for determining skeletal age in children are based on standards of skeletal and dental maturation developed for living children. Infant remains are aged by comparing the length of the long bones of the legs or arms to guidelines for the maturation of living infants. One difficulty in aging infant remains is that their bones are very fragile, do not preserve well under ground and are rarely recovered from burials. Older children,
depending on how far into development they are, can be aged by various techniques, including long bone length, degree of completed growth of the teeth, and degree of completed growth of the long bones. Age assessments using dental remains are primarily based on the degree of development of each tooth crown and root, the simultaneous presence of adult and baby teeth, and whether a tooth has erupted and if so how far. This technique is useful from infants with teeth still developing inside the jaws, to teenagers with developing wisdom teeth. The dental eruption sequence may alone be enough to obtain an age assessment, but eruption of the wisdom teeth cannot be considered an indication of adulthood because their eruption times are highly variable.

The long bones of the arms and legs each have a main shaft that develops ends that fuse as the person matures. The age at which the ends develop and fuse to the main shaft occurs so regularly that age can be assessed within a couple years if enough of the skeleton is present. Limb bones stop being useful for age assessment in early adulthood. The bones in the arm, being the last to fully develop, do so at about 18 years in women and 19 years in men. As a general rule when confronted with a skeleton that looks mature on first glance, the collarbone is examined first. The collarbone is the latest fusing long bone, becoming complete by about 25 years in males and females. If the collarbone is completely united, the anthropologist uses techniques for aging adult remains.

Age Estimation in Adults

Assessing age in the adult skeleton presents a special challenge because any parts that were going to fuse as a part of maturation have done so. Most standardized techniques for age assessment in adults focus on age related changes to mature bone in portions of the
postcranial skeleton. In 1920 and again in 1989, anthropologists published standards for age changes at the fibrous joint between the pubic bones, the pubic symphysis. Similarly, in 1986, anthropologists began publishing standards for the age changes to the sternal end of the 4th rib.

Quite frequently a skeleton is too fragmentary or too poorly preserved to retain the pubic bones or the 4th ribs. In such a case more marginal age estimation techniques may be used, such as closure of the cranial sutures. Contrary to popular belief, cranial suture closure, as seen by the disappearance of the lines separating the bones of the cranium, is one of the most unreliable techniques for estimating age. Cranial sutures do not close in a systematic fashion in any human population. As a result, an age estimate of 30 to 50 years is not uncommon from this technique, which only signifies that the remains are adult, as was already known. Cranial sutures are used only as a last resort, such as when only a cranium is found.

In addition to using the suitable standardized techniques for the skeletal remains, the anthropologist also examines all the collected remains for general indicators of age. He or she examines the teeth, to see how worn or decayed they are in order assess how long they were in use. Tooth wear is a population dependent character because some populations use their teeth as tools, get more dental care, or eat more grit than others. The joint surfaces and vertebrae are also examined for signs of arthritic development. In general, an older body will show more signs of lost cartilage and have more extensive bony growth on the margins of the joint. Vertebrae in particular begin developing bony growths called osteophytes as a person

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enters his or her 30s. The osteophytes increase in size and number as a person grows older. Another indicator of greater maturity is the presence of ossified soft tissue, such as the thyroid and cricoid cartilage of the throat, the cartilage joining the ribs to the sternum, and sclerotic portions of the descending aorta. As stated earlier, every suitable method, beginning with the most reliable, should be used for an age assessment, but forensic anthropologists are especially careful while using qualitative clues. An overused and overworked body will have arthritic development and ossified soft tissue at a younger age than otherwise expected.

Sex Assessment

It is extremely difficult to estimate sex for pre-pubertal remains because the characters of the skeleton that indicate sex do not appear until after puberty. A few techniques have been proposed for estimating sex in infants, but the reliability of these techniques is questionable. Hunt and Gleiser (1955) developed a technique for children age 2 to 8, based on a combination of dental and skeletal development of the hand and wrist. This technique works better than 50% of the time, but does require a fairly intact skeleton.

For adult remains, estimating sex can be one of the simpler parts of a forensic analysis if certain parts of the skeleton are present. Given a choice a forensic anthropologist would always prefer to have an intact pelvis, with second choice being an intact skull. For either part two approaches are used to estimate sex, a morphological assessment and/or a metric assessment. The morphology or shape of the pelvis differs between males and females. This difference can be recorded by noting the presence of features associated with a particular sex, or by measuring the pelvis and using statistical analysis to estimate sex.

Forensic anthropologists understand that the sex differences in the human pelvis are related to differences in function and are trained to recognize the physical differences associated with function. The female pelvis differs from the male in being designed to pass a large brained infant through a narrow space. The pelvis is made of three bones, the two innominates plus the sacrum. The innominates themselves are composed of three bones that fuse at about age 13 in girls and 15 in boys, the pubis, ischium, and ilium. As a means of orientation, consider that when you sit down on a firm surface the bone that makes contact is the ischium, the bony hip you rest your hand on is the ilium, and the part that may unfortunately connect with the bar on a men’s bike is the pubis. The female pelvis differs visibly from the male by having, among other features, a rectangular shape to the body of the pubis, a wide sciatic notch between ilium and ischium, and a pronounced angle beneath the body of the pubis.

In contrast to the pelvis, sex differences in the skull make males exceptional. Larger size plays a part here rather than a different shape, because while skulls serve the same function no matter the sex, men tend to be larger and or more robust than are women. Greater robusticity means that in the male skull projections protrude farther, and ridges are rougher and sharper. In the skull, the male brow tends to project farther than in females, and the mass of bone behind the ear, the mastoid process, tends to be larger. Size and ruggedness will also distinguish male long bones and vertebrae.

Forensic anthropologists do not rely solely on morphology to estimate sex because there are several circumstances when this technique is insufficient. Skeletal remains are frequently fragmentary. Also, differences in size and shape occur as central tendencies surrounded by variation. Therefore we can say that the female pelvis has certain features, but
we do not expect every female pelvis to have all those features in the same degree. In addition, human populations differ in the degree to which males are more robust than females. Consider the contrast of the American quarterback with his cheerleader girlfriend juxtaposed to the Eastern European bride. The alternative to, or support for a morphological assessment is to compare measurements of the pelvis, skull, or other parts of the skeleton to statistical samples generated for particular populations. The equations of Giles and Elliot \(^5\) are frequently used to determine sex for skulls from Americans of European and African descent. Statistical procedures are very important in the next two points of a forensic identification, ancestry and stature.

**Determining Ancestry**

The skull is the best source of information for estimating ancestry from the human skeleton. Just as with the pelvis in sex assessment, morphological and metric analysis of the skull can show the geographic population to which an individual belonged. A geographic population is the large collection of people -- such as Europeans, Africans, and Asians -- that is usually called a "race". Here the term race is avoided because the skull only indicates genetic ancestry, not the social connotations of race. Social issues of race, such as "passing", or "one-drop rule", are rarely represented by the shape of the skull. In the same way that someone resembles his or her other relatives, that resemblance carries down to the bone and can be approximated with measurements and careful observation. When assessing ancestry we frequently state it in terms of descent. Typically in the United States we encounter individuals of European, African, Asian (which includes Native Americans), or mixed

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descent. This does not mean that the individual in question recently immigrated to the United States; rather, it means that the person's ancestry is derived from that population.

Forensic anthropologists determine ancestry by examining the morphology of the skull and by taking measurements at several points on the skull. In a morphological exam the anthropologist looks for particular sets of anatomical features that are found with greater frequency in certain populations. Closely related people will share more cranial features with each other than with their more distant relations on the next continent. On the other hand, since large populations are not made up of clones, the anthropologist cannot expect everyone in a particular population to have the same features in the same degree or combinations. Also, since all humans are related, the anthropologist cannot expect any cranial feature to necessarily be exclusive to a particular population. Therefore an assessment of ancestry is based on a suite of characters that tend to appear or are found in similar degree in particular populations. For example, the anthropologist might look for a short, high cranium combined with a narrow nasal aperture as part of an indication of European ancestry, but he or she would not require a short, high cranium because some Europeans have long craniums. Nor would we look only for the ratio of skull length to height because different populations can have the same ratio. See the table below for a list of some of the characters used for determining ancestry.
Table 1. Short list of cranial characters and their expression in specific populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>European</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skull length</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Long or short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skull breadth</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
<td>Broad</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal aperture</td>
<td>Wide</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incisor shape</td>
<td>Spatular</td>
<td>Shoveled</td>
<td>Spatular</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the morphological assessment, the forensic anthropologist can conduct a metric analysis of the skull. A metric analysis requires that a skull be measured across several points, and those measurements compared to a statistical sample of individuals of known ancestry. In the United States many forensic anthropologists rely on another set of equations designed by Giles and Elliot⁶ which distinguish between people of European, African and Native American descent. Anthropologists at the University of Tennessee have also produced a statistical package called FORDISC that serves a combined function of ancestry and stature estimation. Metric analysis is often the preferred route to ancestry determination because it does not require that the eye be trained to recognize morphological traits, and because it is more effective on fragmentary skulls.

Stature Estimation

Estimation of the standing height of the living individual is an exclusively metric procedure. Anthropologists have developed predictive equations that estimate stature based on the length of various bones of the body. These equations exist for several populations, including Native Americans and Americans of African and European descent. Trotter and Gleser\(^7\) designed the most commonly used equations in response to the repatriation effort of WWII and Korean War dead. Normally, leg length is the greatest contributor to standing height, so most of the predictive equations are based on length of the long bones of the leg, the femur, tibia, and fibula. Other anthropologists have developed equations for the complete skeleton, vertebrae, long bones of the arm, and bones of the hands and feet. In cases where preservation is poor and bones are fragmentary and incomplete, Steele\(^8\) developed equations for predicting the complete length of the long bone. One additional concern in stature estimation is that as people enter their 40s they begin losing height, so stature estimates for older individuals must be corrected. The rate of correction is minus 0.06 centimeters for every decade past 30.

Trauma Analysis

The assessment of trauma in skeletonized remains requires the ability to distinguish between perimortem trauma and postmortem damage. Perimortem trauma is damage caused to bone in the interval surrounding the time of death. The interval is defined by the time

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period during which the bone is "green" or behaves with the plasticity of its living state. Any trauma that occurs while the bone is fresh and green is perimortem trauma, including damage that occurs shortly after death. Perimortem trauma that would have either contributed to or is directly associated with the cause of death is classified as trauma associated with the cause of death. For example, perimortem rib fractures can occur in a victim without those fractures being the cause of death, but the accompanying cranial gunshot wound would be trauma associated with the cause of death.

Forensic anthropologists are trained to recognize the types of trauma that can be found on bone, which includes blunt force, sharp force, gunshot wounds, and burning. By visual inspection, touch, use of a light microscope, and radiography, the anthropologist can identify these forms on trauma from the characteristic marks they leave on bone. Blunt force trauma is associated with fractured or crushed bone, such as in a greenstick fracture or a depressed cranial fracture. Blunt force injuries to green bone may leave clear identifying marks of the instrument used to inflict the trauma, such as grooves or direct impressions of the weapon. Sharp force trauma includes incised cuts, stab wounds, and chopping injuries. This type of trauma leaves an assortment of marks, such as nicks, punctures or serrated grooves, which are observable by touch, plain vision, and under the microscope. The anthropologist may make a silicone cast of cutmarks for later comparison to the cutting edge of a suspect weapon. Gunshot wounds, especially to thin or tabular bones, have characteristic beveled shapes. Bullets frequently leave traces of lead on the bone, which can be seen on an x-ray. Typical fracture patterns are found on bone burned during the perimortem interval. Fire damage may

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occur in conjunction with other forms of trauma, so the anthropologist is prepared to find evidence that might be obscured by the charring and breakage caused by burning.

Postmortem damage occurs after death, after the bone has become brittle from decomposition and drying. Some damage may occur during recovery, such as marks acquired during excavation from shovels, trowels or probes, damage from careless handling such as breakage, and marks from scalpels or scissors. Other forms of damage are from natural agents such as dog or other carnivore chewing, rodent gnaw marks, root etching, and flaking and cracking caused by exposure to sunlight. Attempts to dispose of remains will also cause postmortem damage, such as cutmarks, chemical burns, and burning from fire. Forensic anthropologists are careful to minimize the occurrence of postmortem damage during and after recovery of remains. Postmortem damage is distinguishable from perimortem trauma by the lack of indicators of plastic behavior in the bone, a color difference between the outside bone and the newly exposed bone, and the pattern (e.g., only at joints) or type (e.g., carnivore chewing) of the damage.

**Idiosyncratic Characters**

Individual characters can be the clearest indicators of identity in skeletal remains. The forensic anthropologist carefully inspects the skeletal remains in order to document any features that might have been noted by family members or placed in a medical or dental record. The anthropologist documents healed fractures, atypical anatomy, signs of diseases that affect bones such as anemia, syphilis or cancer, medical appliances such as protheses, wires and sutures, and dental restorations and plates.
The anthropologist can make positive identifications by comparing antemortem radiographs to postmortem radiographs of the same area, and matching the anatomy and/or medical appliances found in each. Another technique, called video superimposition, allows the anthropologist to match photographs taken in life to the features of the skull. In cases when the remains represent a complete unknown, the anthropologist may build or commission a facial reconstruction of the deceased based on the assessment of sex, ancestry, age, and published data on skin thickness. The reconstruction is either three-dimensional, using clay to represent the skin, or conceived of in two dimensions by a sketch artist.

The recent advances in genetic analysis has made it possible to describe the most unique characters of the individual, his or her DNA sequence. In non-living tissue, bone is the best preserver of DNA. Therefore it is possible to take a small sample from the preserved bone of a deceased person and match the DNA to a sample collected while the individual was living, or to match the sample to the nearest relatives. Only a small bone sample is needed, because a technique called PCR (polymerase chain reaction) allows the volume of DNA to be amplified until there is an abundant amount to sequence.

The Report

After all the analyses and descriptions are complete, the forensic anthropologist generates a report of his or her findings. This report will document in a succinct and clear form all the findings and conclusions regarding sex, ancestry, stature, trauma analysis, and individualizing characteristics, made by the anthropologist. Any supporting documents such as radiographs, photographs, slides, or videotapes will accompany the report. Depending on the nature of the investigation this report will be submitted to a medical examiner, committee,
or family organization, or, in the case of an interdisciplinary project, be combined with the reports of the other project members.

Conclusion

It is clear from the above description that "dead men do tell tales" physical anthropologists-forensic anthropologists tell the stories of the individual skeletons and skeletal populations they study. This work identifies individuals, and provides evidence for reconstructing communities and historical events. The focus of locating the remains of Tulsa Race Riot is not to prove that it happened or to count the dead. When the individuals who lived and died in Greenwood in 1921 are recovered they will be treated with respect and their stories will be documented. Their voices, therefore, will be added to the historical record, finally giving them and their families closure with dignity.
Riot Property Loss

By Larry O'Dell

An account of the property damage in North Tulsa during the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 can impart solid information. But researching the history of an African American controlled community seventy-nine years later, however, entails many problems associated with the racial climate of the era. Throughout the research process not just the destruction of property, but also the loss of life had to be considered. When tallying up the monetary value of a community the results are insignificant when compared to the loss of a father, mother, brother, sister, son or daughter. Yet, the physical character of the community and the property lost are an important aspect to any undertaking to understand this awful occurrence in Oklahoma history.

Most of the African-American population of Tulsa resided in the Northeast section of the city. The first step in the research involved building a database of North Tulsa for the years of 1920-1923. This would not only show the residence of many African Americans affected by the riot, but also give a clue to the wealth and prosperity of black Tulsa by revealing the addresses of businesses, professionals, and civic locations. Also, listing the name and location of a resident in 1920, and then tracking that name through 1923, should shed insight on whether there was a huge population loss in North Tulsa and help to pinpoint citizens that may...
not have survived the riot.

The database utilized city directories, 1920 census information, and the appendix to Mary E. Jones Parrish's account, *Events of the Tulsa Disaster*, which has a partial list of losses and their addresses. With its document's completion, this database became a tool itself when compared to maps, interviews, Sanborn Insurance maps (created for insurance purposes and including descriptions of building and the materials they are made of), plat maps, warranty deed records, building permits, Red Cross reports, and so on. The database highlights problems in the records for North Tulsa. Many of the African Americans in the census records do not show up in the 1920 city directory and vice versa. Poor research or lack of interest by the city directory would probably enumerators account for the discrepancies. The census takers would likely mirror this attitude.

The United States census of 1920 reported 10,903 African Americans living in Tulsa County. The census also claimed that 8,878 blacks lived in the city of Tulsa, or that 10.8 percent of Tulsans were African Americans. The influx of African Americans continued, totaling almost 11,000 by 1921 and, according to the database founded on city directory estimates, included 191 businesses. There were fifteen doctors, one chiropractor, and two dentists practicing in the district as well as three lawyers. This section of town contained a library, two schools, a hospital, and an office of the Tulsa public health services. Two newspapers, the *Tulsa Star* and the *Oklahoma Sun*, were published in North Tulsa. African American fraternal lodges and churches dotted the neighborhoods and business districts in the northeastern quadrant of the city.

The database listed 159 businesses in 1920; after the riot in 1922 city directories, 120

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1 Bureau of the Census, 1920.
businesses are listed. The Red Cross reported that 1256 houses burned, that 215 houses were
looted and not burned, and the total number of building not burned but looted and robbed was
314. According to 1920 census entries, a number of the residences in North Tulsa contained
more than just one family. Greenwood Avenue held the heart of the district, with two theatres
and many of the prominent businesses located there. Distinguished business owners and
leaders of the community resided on Detroit Avenue, the western boundary to the African
American section; across the street were white houses and businesses. Another economically
prosperous section of the African American district was the Lacy sector in the Eastern part of
the community.²

Three sources corroborate an approximate value for the destroyed property: the Tulsa
Real Estate exchange commission; the claims filed against the city in the City Commission
meetings; and the actual damage claimed in court cases against insurance companies and the
city of Tulsa. The Tulsa Real Estate Exchange Commission reported 1.5 million dollars worth
of property damage, with one-third of it being in the business district. This research by the
commission was done shortly after the riot and may be suspect because of their temporary
involvement in the plan to relocate the black population and develop the Greenwood area for a
train station.³ The Real Estate Commission estimated personal property loss at $750,000.
Between June 14, 1921, and June 6, 1922, Tulsa residents filed riot-related claims against the
city for over $1.8 million dollars. The city commission disallowed most of the claims. One
exception occurred when a white resident obtained compensation for guns taken from his

² Scott Ellsworth, Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana
State University Press. 1982). Tulsa City Directories for 1920-1923 (Tulsa: Polk-Hoffhine Directory Company,
1920-1923).
³ Ellsworth, Death in a Promised Land, p. 72.
shop. The sum of the actual damage filed in the 193 retrieved court cases equaled $1,470,711.56, which is in close relation to the $1.5 and the $1.8 million of the other estimates.

Of course, not all residents took insurance companies or the city to court, but most of the prominent businessmen and women, as well as the influential residents, did have detailed petitions drawn out against both entities. In 1937 Judge Bradford J. Williams summarily dismissed most of the court cases. North Tulsans claimed a variety of possessions in these cases. For example, Dr. R. W. Motley claimed not only his surgical instruments and medicines, but Chippendale book cases, a set of the Harvard Classics, a mahogany library table, a silk mohair library outfit, a Steinway piano, and Rodgers silverware, among other items. Other claims were for livestock, rental property, and other essential materials. A study of these claims reveals the diverse wealth and poverty in the community, one that could match or exceed that of many other many communities in 1921 Oklahoma.


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4 Records of Commission Proceedings, City of Tulsa, September 2, 1921. J.W. Megee’s pawnshop received $3,994.57 for guns and ammunition taken from the store during the riot.
5 Court cases vs. the City of Tulsa and various insurance companies. Although the punitive damages were claimed in many of these cases, for this purpose only actual damage was tallied.
6 Dismissal records from court cases filed.
7 Motley vs. Mechanics and Traders Insurance Company, Case No. 23404 Tulsa Country District Court (1937)
Also, many white Tulsans conducted real estate business in the African American district prior to the riot. One of the better known white businessmen, Cyrus S. Avery, sold multiple lots in the Greenwood addition to black residents in the years before the riot. A powerful member of the Chamber of Commerce, Avery served as a member of the Tulsa Water Board for the Spavinaw water project, and he also directed the Executive Welfare Committee that collected $26,000 for the Red Cross after the riot. E.W. Sinclair also conducted real estate business in North Tulsa. Sinclair was the president of Exchange National Bank and vice president of Sinclair Pipeline. Other significant white property owners in the district were: S.R. Lewis, vice-chairman of the taxpayer’s committee; W.H. Botkin, real estate financier; Tate Brady, former Democratic national committeeman and Oklahoma commander of the Sons of Confederate Veterans; T.E. Smiley, realtor; R.J. Dixon, realtor; George Stephens, realtor; H.E. Bagby, department manager of Exchange National Bank; Claude Sample, realtor; H.C. Stahl, information not found, but probably related to W.E. Stahl involved in insurance, loans and bonds; Earl Sneed, lawyer; Wm Redfearn, proprietor of the Dixie Theater; The Brockman brothers, realtors; and J.A. Oliphant, lawyer.

It is problematic to determine property ownership in 1921 North Tulsa for a variety of reasons. The city renamed some of the streets in the area after the riot, creating complications in the transference of an address from pre-riot to modern. Also, Urban Renewal and the accumulation of North Greenwood property for the highway and Roger’s State University (Now OSU-Tulsa), create a gap in the records of property and cause old addresses, legal and otherwise, do not display on the county clerk computer system. City directories list residents

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3 Comparing the 1920 to the 1922 *Tulsa City Directories.*
by their city address, and even comparing these to city plats can cause confusion on the legal address; but, luckily, all warranty deeds and other tracking devices are made with the legal address, making this a time-consuming but not an insurmountable task. A great problem arises when the legal address is all that is known; matching it to a street address tends to be complex unless the owner and not the renter is listed in the city directory. Oftentimes two buildings would be on one lot making the assignment of street addresses almost entirely guesswork. Another problem consists of property transfer that is conducted by means other than money convoluting the value of the property. In many instances a transfer of deed would be listed as costing the buyer only one dollar.

When looking for a certain individual or family, the best place to begin is the compiled database of city directories. After finding the address, if it can be located on the existing Sanborn maps, the size and make up of the structure and its location on the property can be determined. The Sanborn map will also pinpoint the legal address. If it is located outside the Sanborn map area it needs to be examined on the plat maps. Using the legal address, ownership can be determined by going to the Tulsa County Clerk's office. In theory, finding the last transaction in the tract indexes before 1921 should indicate the owner at the time of the riot. Besides problems listed in the paragraph above, however, many times the lot will be split and sold to two parties, making it difficult to decide who owned what part of the lot.

Examining the properties of Percy and Mabel Little provides an example of how using the database, warranty deed records, plats, and county court house records can provide needed data. The Littles resided at 617 East Independence, which is not on a portion of the Sanborn Insurance maps. Percy had interest in the Bell and Little Restaurant on land owned by J. Hodnett or W. Appleby at 525 Cameron. The Littles had just bought some land off Greenwood
Avenue at the legal address lots 13-14, block 8 Greenwood Addition, for $600 from C.S. Avery on April 12, 1921. The bank released them from their mortgage on June 8, 1923. The 1923 directory lists P.L. Little at 1301 Greenwood. This residence should be on the land they purchased. This property before the riot could have been used as a beauty parlor, after the riot Mrs. Little put an ad for her beauty parlor in Mary Parrish’s book, *Events of the Tulsa Disaster*, that claimed the address as 1301 Greenwood.  

Another example is Osborne Monroe. According to the Tulsa City Directory of 1921, Monroe and his wife, Olive, lived at 410 Easton, lot 3, block 17 North Tulsa, and worked as a porter at 117 South Main Avenue. Mary Parrish listed the loss of their residence as $1,000. According to the Sanborn Insurance maps their house before the riot was a one-story frame house with a porch. In August 1920, Monroe received a building permit to build a $2,000 one-story frame structure on lot 1 block 15 North Tulsa Addition. In a petition filed against the Mechanics and Traders Insurance Company of New Orleans, Osborne Monroe claimed fire destroyed his property, consisting of two one-story shingle-roof, frame building with stone piers foundation and brick chimneys and flues, on June 1, 1921. Six months after the riot, Mr. Monroe requested building permits on December 6, 1921, to build a frame building on lot 1, block 15 North Side Addition and on December 12, 1921 to build three frame buildings on lot 1, block 15 North Tulsa Addition at $400 each. This would be on the 500 block of Exeter or North Elgin Place.

By early July 1921, the city of Tulsa began granting building permits to African American residents of North Tulsa. O.W. Gurley received a permit on July 2 for a one-story brick building that was to cost him $6,000. The earliest to rebuild were generally the “Deep

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*Tulsa City Directories, Tulsa County Court cases, etc.*
Greenwood" business owners. For example, Gurley, Goodwin, Woods, Young, Bridgewater, and Williams were among the first to gain a building permit.\textsuperscript{13} This happened amidst the efforts of white Tulsa to industrialize this sector with various codes to prevent black rebuilding.\textsuperscript{14} The city manager or the fire marshal likely issued more permits to individual families as the winter of 1921 approached.\textsuperscript{15}

Although much of the research on ownership of all property in North Tulsa may not be definitive, the character of the Greenwood area can be deciphered before and after the riot. A thriving area of the town of Tulsa where the majority of the business district was owned and managed by the African American residents, Greenwood also contained a diverse residential area. But, there were extensive business dealings, especially in real estate, by whites and oftentimes, by major leaders of the white business or civic community conducted in North Tulsa. The majority of the wealth occurred in the "Deep Greenwood" business section and in the residential areas around Detroit Avenue and what was known as the Lacy Sector northeast of the business district. Using the three different sources explained above (Records of The Tulsa Real Estate Exchange Commission, claims addressed at the Tulsa City Commission meetings, and the various court cases) each with its own particular faults, an estimate of just under $2 million dollars of property damage in 1921 dollars can be made. When using a consumer price index inflation calculator, a tool provided by the website at NASA, a 1921 amount of $1.8 million would equal an amount of $16, 752,600 in 1999.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Tulsa City Directories}, Court Cases, Deed Records, etc.
\textsuperscript{14} Building permits garnished from \textit{The Tulsa Daily Legal News}, 1921-1922.
\textsuperscript{15} Ellsworth, \textit{Death in a Promised Land}, pp. 84-89.
\textsuperscript{16} Ellsworth, \textit{Death in a Promised Land}, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{16} http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/hs/2/inflateCPI.html The CPI inflation calculator is for adjusting costs from one year to another using the Consumer Price Index inflation index. The calculator is based on the average inflation index during the calendar year. The CPI represents changes in prices of all goods and services purchased for consumption by urban household; User fees and sales and excise taxes paid by the consumer are also included.
The tragedy and triumph of North Tulsa transcends numbers and amounts and who owned what portion of what lot. The African community not only thrived in an era of harsh “Jim Crow” and oppression, but when the bigotry of the majority destroyed their healthy community, the residents worked together and rebuilt. Not only did they rebuild, they again successfully ran their businesses, schooled their children, and worshipped at their magnificent churches in the shadow of a growing Ku Klux Klan in Oklahoma and continuing legal racial separatism for more than forty years. In fact, one of the largest Ku Klux Klan buildings, not only in the state, but the country stood within a short walking distance of their community.\textsuperscript{17}

Assessing State and City Culpability:

The Riot and the Law

by Alfred L. Brophy

The Tulsa riot represented the breakdown of the rule of law.¹ As Bishop Mouzon told the congregation of the city’s Boston Avenue Methodist Church just after the riot, “Civilization broke down in Tulsa. I do not attempt to place the blame, the mob spirit broke and hell was let loose. Then things happened that were on a footing with what the Germans did in Belgium, what the Turks did in Armenia, what the Bolshevists did in Russia.”² That breakdown of law is central to understanding the riot, the response afterwards, and the decision over what, if anything, should be done now.

This essay assesses the culpability of the city and the state of Oklahoma during the riot, questions that are of continuing importance today. This essay begins by reviewing the chronology of the riot, paying particular attention to the actions of governmental officials. It draws largely

¹ This brief report on “the riot and the law” is necessarily summary. For a fuller exploration of many of the issues discussed here, see Alfred L. Brophy, “Reconstructing the Dreamland” (2000), available at www.okcu.edu/law/P-broph.HTM.
upon testimony in the Oklahoma Supreme Court’s 1926 opinion in *Redfearn v. American Central Insurance Company* to portray the events of the riot. Then it explores the attempts of Greenwood residents and other Tulsans who owned property in Greenwood to obtain relief from insurance companies and the city after the riot.

**Investigating Tulsa’s Culpability in the Riot**

This section summarizes the evidence of the city’s culpability in the riot. It emphasizes that Tulsa failed to take action to protect against the riot. More important, city officials deputized men right after the riot broke out. Some of those deputies—probably in conjunction with some uniformed police officers—were responsible for some of the burning of Greenwood. Then, after the riot, the city took further action to prevent rebuilding, by passing a zoning ordinance that required the use of fireproof material in rebuilding.

**“The Riot”**

**Questions of Interpretation and Sources**

In reconstructing the historical record of the 1921 Tulsa Riot, there are difficulties in interpretation. Questions ranging from general issues—such as the motive of Tulsa rioters and was a riot inevitable given the context of violence and racial tension in 1920s Tulsa—to specific issues—such as whether Dick Rowland would have been lynched had some black Tulsans not appeared at the Courthouse, the nature of instructions the police gave to their deputies, and how many people

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2 "Black Agitators Blamed for Riot", *Tulsa World*. June 6, 1921.
died—can be answered with varying degrees of certainty. The record establishes with about as much certainty as on any issue related to the riot that “special” deputy police officers were deeply involved in the burning of Greenwood. Contemporaneous reports establish the shameful record of the hastily deputized police.

Looking for Evidence: The Official Investigations

Important details of the riot are recorded in several contemporary accounts. The 1926 opinion of the Oklahoma Supreme Court in Redfearn v. American Central Insurance Company, the least biased of the contemporaneous “official” reports of the riot, demonstrates the close connection between Tulsa’s special police and the riot. It culminated a two year suit by William

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3 There are seven key questions, which need answers in developing a clear picture of the riot:

(1) How did Tulsa go from minor event in elevator to attempted lynching?
(2) How did Tulsa go from confrontation at the Courthouse to riot?
(3) What was the role of the police? That question has several sub-parts:
   (a) How many were commissioned as deputies?
   (b) What instructions did police give the deputies?
   (c) How much planning was there for the attack on Greenwood?
(4) What was the role of the mayor?
(5) What was the role of the National Guard?
(6) What motivated the changing of the fire ordinance and the rezoning of Greenwood to require building using fireproof material? How was that resolved?
(7) Was a riot inevitable? That question has several sub-parts:
   (a) Was there planning before the evening of May 31 to “run the Negro out of Tulsa,” as some alleged. See, e.g., “The Tulsa Riots”, 22 The Crisis, pp 114-16 July 1921. “Compare Public Welfare Board Vacated by Commission: Mayor in Statement on Race Trouble”, Tulsa Tribune, June 14, 1921 (reprinting Mayor T.D. Evans speech to City Commission. June 14, 1921) (“It is the judgment of many wise heads in Tulsa, based upon observation of a number of years that this uprising was inevitable. If that be true and this judgment had to come upon us, then I say it was good generalship to let the destruction come to that section where the trouble was hatched up, put in motion and where it had its inception.”).
   (b) Were racial tensions so great that there would have been a riot even without the attempted lynching of Dick Rowland? See Walter F. White, “The Eruption of Tulsa”, The Nation, pp. 909-10 (detailing elements of racial tension and lawlessness in Tulsa). See also: R. L. Jones,” Blood and Oil”, Survey 46, June 1921.

On questions of historical interpretation, where the record is only imperfectly preserved, there are inevitable uncertainties.

4 221 Pacific Reporter p. 929 (1926).

5 The other “official” reports, the grand jury report and the Fire Marshall’s report, are less helpful in
Redfearn, a white man who owned two buildings in Greenwood: the Dixie Theatre and the Red Wing Hotel. Redfearn lost both buildings, which were insured for a total of nineteen thousand dollars. The American Central Insurance Company refused payment on either building, citing a riot exclusion clause in the policies. Redfearn sued on the policy and the case was tried in April 1924. The insurance company claimed that the property was destroyed by riot and the judge directed a verdict for the defendant at the conclusion of the trial. During the trial and subsequent appeal, Redfearn and the insurance company advanced competing stories about the riot. Their briefs present one of the most complete stories of the riot now available. They also capture the uncertainty of facts and outcome, which is central to a true understanding of history. For we have the written, neatly stylized version of “ancient myth” and “the other unwritten and chaotic and full of contradictions, changes of pace, and surprises as life itself.”

reconstructing the riot. The hastily prepared grand jury report blamed Tulsa’s blacks for the riot. The grand jury report focused blame on “exaggerated ideas of equality.” See “Grand Jury Blames Negroes for Inciting Race Rioting; Whites Clearly Exonerated”. Tulsa World, June 26, 1921, pp. 1,8 (reprinting grand jury report). The grand jury report, for instance, declared that the riot was the direct result of “an effort on the part of a certain group of colored men who appeared at the courthouse . . . for the purpose of protecting . . . Dick Rowland . . .” Id at 1. An indirect cause of the riot was the “agitation among the Negroes” for ideas “of social equality.” Id. It is an extraordinary document, which illustrates in vivid detail how an investigation can select evidence, refuse to seek out alternative testimony, and then formulate an interpretation that is remarkably biased in the story it creates.

The Fire Marshal’s report cannot be located. There was another investigation, perhaps by a special city court of inquiry. See “Hundred to be Called in Probe”, Tulsa World 1 (June 10, 1921) (“With the formal empanelling and swearing in of the grand jury Thursday morning the third investigation into the causes and placing or responsibility for the race rioting in Tulsa law week was begun.”); “Police Order Negro Porters Out of Hotels”, Tulsa Tribune 1 (June 14, 1921) (“This action . . . follows scathing criticism of the system that allowed the Negro porters to carry on their nefarious practices of selling booze and soliciting for women of the underworld made . . . at the city’s court of inquiry held several weeks ago.”).

6 Brief of Plaintiff in Error, William Redfearn, Plaintiff in Error v. American Central Insurance Company, 243 P 929 (Okla. 1926), No. 15,851 [hereinafter Plaintiff’s Brief]. Of the previous historians of the riot, only Ellsworth has even mentioned Redfearn’s suit. See Ellsworth, supra note 3, at 135, n. 57. No one has utilized the Oklahoma Supreme Court’s opinion or the briefs.

7 Ellison, “Going to the Territory”, in Ellison, Going to the Territory, p. 124 (1986). See also Brent Staples, Parallel Time: Growing Up in Black and White (1994) (exploring ways that life unfolds and the ways that individuals and families perceive, react to, and rewrite that history). Ellison’s essay spoke in terms similar to those employed by Bernard Bailyn, whose widely read monograph on Thomas Hutchinson, the governor of
history, Redfearn’s hundreds of pages of testimony are indispen-
sable. It may no longer be possible
to think of the events put in motion by the Tulsa Tribune’s story on Rowland having any other
outcome, but it is necessary to understand the contingencies, to put ourselves back in the events as
they were occurring, to understand how forces came together in the riot. We now know the broad
contours of the riot, but the testimony fills in gaps in specific areas and recovers the chaotic,
fearful environment in which black and white Tulsans struggled to prevent violence, even as strong
forces, like the ideas of equality and enforcement of the law against mob violence, clashed with
white views of the place that blacks should occupy. The following account is drawn from those
briefs and is supplemented with contemporary newspaper stories.

Evolution of the Riot

As best as we can now determine, a crowd of whites began gathering at the Tulsa County
Courthouse in the early evening on Tuesday, May 31. They were drawn there in at least in part by
a newspaper story implying that nineteen year old Dick Rowland had assaulted seventeen year old

Massachusetts on the eve of the American Revolution, presented a sympathetic portrait of the Loyalist, in an effort
to present a comprehensive portrait of the coming of Revolution. See Bernard Bailyn, The Ordeal of Thomas
Hutchinson ix (1974). One hopes that the Redfearn testimony, when combined with a careful reading of the other
texts, will enable us to “embrace the whole event, see it from all sides.” Id. We might even see “the inescapable
boundaries of action; the blindness of the actors—in a word, the tragedy of the event.” Id.

The competing narratives of the insurance company and Redfearn showed the ways that Tulsans
interpreted what happened during the riot and the conclusions they drew from those events. Cf. Judith L. Maute,
Peveyhouse v. Garland Coal and Mining Co. Revisited: The Ballad of Willie and Lucille, 89 NW. U. L. REV.
1341 (1995) (exploring in detail the background to an infamous Oklahoma case). Redfearn shows the competing
interpretations of the riot’s origins even within the Greenwood community itself and the constraints imposed upon
the Oklahoma Supreme Court by desire to limit the city’s liability. The testimony shows the diversity of opinions
in Tulsa and the ways that legal doctrine shapes those opinions.

Those competing interpretations can tell us a great deal about larger Tulsa and American society, much
as studies of medicine and law serve as mirrors for society more generally. See, e.g., Edward H. Beardsley, A
History of Neglect: Health Care for Blacks and Mill Workers in the Twentieth-Century South viii (1987); Eben
Moglen, The Transformation of Morton Horwitz, 93 Colum. L. Rev. 1042 (1993) (discussing modes of legal

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Sarah Page, a white elevator operator. Sometime around four to five p.m. and certainly by six-thirty p.m., rumors that Dick Rowland would be lynched that evening circulated in the Greenwood community. Greenwood residents were becoming more anxious as the evening wore on. William Gurley, owner of the Gurley Hotel in Greenwood and one of the wealthiest blacks in Tulsa, went with Mr. Webb to the Courthouse to investigate the rumored lynching. The sheriff told him “there would be no lynching; if the witness could keep his folks away from the Court House there wouldn’t be any trouble.” Gurley then went back to report his conversation with the sheriff to the crowd gathered outside his hotel. The crowd was skeptical. “You are a damn liar,” said one person. “They had taken a white man out of jail a few weeks before that, and that they were going to take this Negro out.” At that point the speaker “pointed a Winchester at [Gurley], and was stopped by a Negro lawyer named Spears.”

By about nine p.m., the situation was becoming more heated. William Redfearn, owner of a theater testified:

that he closed his business about nine or nine-thirty o’clock on the evening of May 31st; that he closed it because there was a colored girl came into the theatre and was going from one person to another, telling them something, and he looked out into the street and saw several men in the street talking and bunched up, and upon inquiry as to what was wrong, someone said there was going to be a lynching and that was the reason they had come over

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* Plaintiff’s Brief, supra note 6, at 44; 47 (testimony of Barney Cleaver); Brief of Defendant in Error, William Redfearn, Plaintiff in Error v. American Central Insurance Company, 243 P 929 (Okla. 1926), No. 15,851 [hereinafter Defendant’s Brief] at 74 (testimony of Columbus F. Gabe).
Redfearn went to the Courthouse, where someone asked him to go back to Greenwood, to try to dissuade the black residents from coming to town. Despite Redfearn’s efforts, he was unsuccessful. When he returned, “there was a bunch of men standing in front of the police station and across the street when he arrived at that place; that there was probably fifty or sixty men in front of the police station.” The police chief attempted to persuade the blacks to disperse. Gurley told the court about the unstable scene at the Courthouse:

That some white man was making a speech and advised the people to go home, stating that the Negroes were riding around with high powered revolvers and guns down town — that the speech had some effect and the crowd started to disperse, but would soon come back; that while this man was speaking the witness noticed “some colored men coming from Main street; that when the machine was up in front of the Court House, the people there closed in around that bunch of men, and that when they got mixed up a pistol went off, but the crowd soon dispersed, and he didn’t know whether anyone was killed or not.

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10 Defendant’s Brief, supra note 9, at 101 (testimony of O.W. Gurley).

11 Plaintiff’s Brief, supra note 6, at 30 (testimony of O.W. Gurley).

12 Plaintiff’s Brief, supra note 6, at 30.

13 Plaintiff’s Brief, supra note 6, at 48-49.
Shooting started after the confrontation.¹⁴

After the shooting, "hell . . . broke loose," as O.W. Gurley told William Redfearn when they met that night.¹⁵ The record is not as clear on what happened immediately after the initial shooting. White witnesses were likely reluctant to testify and few blacks witnessed the next events around the Courthouse.

The mob broke into Bardon’s pawnshop, looking for guns. Henry Sowders, a white man who operated the movie projector in the Williams' Dreamland Theater in Greenwood, closed up shop around 10:30 p.m. His car had been commandeered by blacks and he was taken back towards the Courthouse by a black man; as he passed the Courthouse, he was told he "had better get on home to his family, if he had one, or else get some arms, for the thing was coming on."¹⁶ The police department’s reaction to the events "coming on" was to commission hundreds of white men.¹⁷

One of the best descriptions of the unfolding of events came from Columbus F. Gabe, a black man who lived in Greenwood for about fifteen years. His testimony at the Redfearn trial preserves the unfolding of the entire riot and thus allows us to reconstruct a picture through a single character. He first heard about the lynching around 6:30 p.m. and he went home to pick up a gun; then he went to the Courthouse. When Gabe arrived at the courthouse, there were perhaps about 800 people there and tensions were already running high. Some people were yelling to “Get

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¹⁴ A somewhat different, more detailed version of the confrontation appears in Ronald L. Trekell, History of the Tulsa Police Department, 1882-1990 (1989).

¹⁵ Plaintiff’s Brief, supra note 6, at 48.

¹⁶ Plaintiff’s Brief, supra note 6, at 44.

these niggers away from here”; meanwhile, Gabe was told by a carload of blacks to arm himself. Whites were going to the armory to arm themselves and several carloads of armed blacks headed towards the Courthouse. Gabe left the Courthouse area, but was still within earshot when the gun that began the riot went off. The next morning, he was ousted from his house by two men. One said to the other, “Kill him,” and the other said, “No, he hasn’t a gun, don’t hurt him,” and said, “Get on up with the crowd.” He was then taken to the Convention center.\(^\text{18}\)

Barney Cleaver, a black member of the Tulsa sheriff’s department, presented similar testimony about the way the forces gathered momentum around the riot. He was policing Greenwood Avenue when he heard rumors of a lynching, so he drove up to the Courthouse. According to Cleaver, as the blacks were dispersing, a gun fired and then people began to run away. He stayed at the Courthouse until about four o’clock the next morning and then he headed back to Greenwood, where he met about fifteen or twenty black men. He told the group that no one had been lynched and that they should go home. Someone then “made the remark that he was a white man lover.”\(^\text{19}\)

The next morning a whistle blew about 5 a.m. and the invasion of Greenwood began. Gurley left his hotel around 8:30, as he became worried that it might burn and as white rioters appeared:

Those were white men, they was wearing khaki suits, all of them, and they saw me standing there and they said, “You better get out of that hotel because we are going to burn all of this God damn stuff,

\(^{18}\) Plaintiff’s Brief, \textit{supra} note \(6\), at 40.

\(^{19}\) \textit{Id.} at 44.
better get all your guests out.’ And they rattled on the lower doors of the pool hall and the restaurant, and the people began on the lower floor to get out, and I told the people in the hotel, I said ‘I guess you better get out.’ There was a deal of shooting going on from the elevator or the mill, somebody was over there with a machine gun and shooting down Greenwood Avenue, and the people got on the stairway going down to the street and they stampeded.20

Gurley hid under a school building for a while and then when he came out, he was detained and taken to the Convention Center.

The Oklahoma Supreme Court’s Version of the Riot

The Oklahoma Supreme Court’s opinion in Redfearn, written by Commissioner Ray, acknowledges the city’s involvement in the riot. The court wrote that “the evidence shows that a great number of men engaged in arresting the Negroes found in the Negro section wore police badges or badges indicating they were deputy sheriffs.” It questions, however, whether the “men wearing police badges” were officers or were “acting in an official capacity.”21

That statement indicates Commissioner Ray’s pro-police bias. The case was appealed from

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20 Defendant’s Brief, supra note 2, at 106.

21 221 P. at 931.
a directed verdict against Redfearn, which meant that the trial judge concluded there was no
evidence from which a jury could conclude that the men wearing badges were officers. Yet cases
involving resisting arrest routinely conclude that a police badge indicates one’s authority to arrest.
Simply put, if one of the blacks involved in the riot resisted one of the men wearing a badge, he
could have been prosecuted for resisting arrest. Commissioner Ray could have insulated the
insurance company from liability with the statement that, even assuming the men wearing badges
were police officers, that they were acting beyond their authority and were thus acting as rioters.
Ray’s inconsistency in applying precedent suggests that his motive was not solely impartial
decision of the case before him, but the insulation of the police department and Tulsa from
liability.

There is substantial testimony in Redfearn’s brief, moreover, demonstrating a close
connection between the “police deputies” and the police chief. Fire Marshal, Wesley Bush, stated
that when he arrived at the police station sometime after 10 p.m.:

the station was practically full of people, and that the people were
armed; that there would be bunches of men go out of the police
station, but he didn’t know where they would go; that they would
leave the police station and go out, and come back — they were out
and in, all of them, that they were in squads, several of them
together.\textsuperscript{22}

The instructions those special deputies received are unclear. According to pleadings in a suit filed

\textsuperscript{22} Plaintiff’s Brief, supra note 6, at 67.
by a black riot victim, one deputy officer gave instructions to “Go out and kill you a d__m nigger.” Another allegation was that the mayor gave instructions to “burn every Negro house up to Haskell Street.” Other contemporary reports contain similar allegations.

Whether they received instructions to “ru[n] the Negro out of Tulsa,” as one of the photos of the riot was captioned or not, many of the rioters wore badges and started fires. Green Smith, a black carpenter who lived in Muskogee and was in Tulsa for a few days working on the Dreamland Theater installing a cooling system, testified to the role of the special police during the riot. He awoke before five and went to work at the theater, but soon heard shooting. The shooting was heavy from five until around eight, and then it let up. But by nine-thirty, “there was a gang came down the street knocking on the doors and setting the buildings afire.” Smith thought they were police. In response to a cross-examination question, how he could know they were police, Smith testified, “They came and taken fifty dollars of money, and I was looking right at them.” He saw a gang of about ten to twelve wearing “Special Police” and “Deputy Sheriff” badges: “Some had ribbons and some of them had regular stars.” Smith was arrested and taken to the

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24 Id.


26 See, e.g., Plaintiff’s Brief, supra note 6, at 61. It is important to note that one early criticism was that the sheriff failed to deputize officers to quell fears of a lynching. See “Tulsa in Remorse”, New York Times 2 (June 3, 1921) (General Barrett “declared the Sheriff could have [pacified the armed men] if he had used power to deputize assistants. The General said the presence of six uniformed policemen or a half dozen Deputy Sheriffs at the county building Tuesday night, when whites bent on taking from jail Dick Rowland . . . clashed with Negroes intent on protecting Rowland, would have prevented the riot.”). See also “Tulsa Officials ‘Simply Laid Down’,” Sapulpa Herald 1 (June 2, 1921) (reporting General Barrett’s belief that officials could have prevented riot by dispersing both blacks and whites).

27 Plaintiff’s Brief, supra note 6, at 62.

28 Id. (emphasis in original). While the Oklahoma Supreme Court referred to the some of the special
The insurance company’s brief presents a different story—one that blames Tulsa blacks. But perhaps most telling is the insurance company's argument at the end of the brief, in which the insurance company was arguing that there was a riot and, therefore, that they did not have to pay for the losses: there was all the way from a few hundred to several thousand people engaged in the Tulsa race riot; that they met at different places, some at the court house, some on Greenwood Avenue, some at the hardware store, some at the pawn shop, and fully armed themselves with guns and ammunition, with a common intent to execute a common plan, to-wit: the extermination of the colored people of Tulsa and the destruction of the colored settlement, homes, and buildings, by fire.  

Apportioning Blame to the City

Whatever interpretation one places on the origin of the riot, there seems to be a consensus emerging from historians that the riot was much worse because of the actions of Tulsa officials. Major General Charles F. Barrett, who was in charge of the Oklahoma National Guard during the riot and thus was a participant in the closing moments of the riot, wrote in 1941 in his book *Oklahoma After Fifty Years* about the role of the deputies in fueling the riot. The police chief had

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deputies as sheriff’s deputies and some evidence mentions sheriff’s deputies, it appears that the police were the only officials who commissioned special deputies. I would like to thank Robert Norris and Rik Espinosa for clarifying this point with me.

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29 Defendant's Brief, *supra* note 9, at 207 (emphasis added).
deputized perhaps 500 men to help put down the riot. But he:

did not realize that in a race war a large part, if not a majority, of
those special deputies were imbued with the same spirit of
destruction that animated the mob. They became as deputies the
most dangerous part of the mob and after the arrival of the Adjutant
General and the declaration of martial law the first arrests ordered
were those of special officers who had hindered the fire men in
their abortive efforts to put out the incendiary fires that many of
these special officers were accused of setting.30

Several other white men testified about the role of the police. According to testimony
found in the Oklahoma Attorney General’s papers, a bricklayer, Laurel Buck, testified that after the
riot broke out he went to the police station and asked for a commission. He did not receive it, but
he was instructed to “get a gun, and get busy and try to get a nigger.”31 Buck went to the Tulsa
Hardware Store, where he received a gun. Like many other men, Buck was issued a weapon by
Tulsa officials.

Buck then stood guard at Boston and Third. In the words of the lawyer who questioned
Buck, he “went to get a Negro.” By that he meant that, if he had seen a black man shooting at
white people he would have “tried to kill him.” He was “out to protect the lives of white people . .
. under specific orders from a policeman at the police department.” And the only reason Buck did

30 Charles F. Barrett, Oklahoma After Fifty Years: A History of the Sooner State and Its People, 1889-
1939 (1941).

31 Testimony of Laurel Buck 30, Attorney General’s Civil Case Files, RG 1-2, A-G Case No. 1062, Box
25 (Oklahoma State Archives).
not kill any blacks was he did not see any. The next morning he went near Greenwood, where he saw two uniformed police officers breaking into buildings and setting them afire.  

Another witness, Judge Oliphant, linked the police and their special deputies to burning, even murder. The seventy-three year old Oliphant went to Greenwood to check on his rental property there. He called the police department around eight o’clock and asked for help protecting his homes. No assistance came, but shortly after his call, a gang of men—four uniformed officers and some deputies—came along. Instead of protecting property, “[t]hey were the chief fellows setting fires.” They shot Dr. A.C. Jackson and then began burning houses.

Oliphant tried to dissuade them from burning. “This last crowd made an agreement that they would not burn that property [across the street from my property] because I thought it would burn mine too and I promised that if they wouldn’t, . . . I would see that no Negroes ever lived in that row of houses any more.”

The record from the testimony of credible whites before the Attorney General and in the Redfearn case, in conjunction with General Barrett’s book, demonstrate the involvement of the city in the destruction.

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31 Testimony of Laurel Buck, supra note 31, at 32. See also “Witness Says Cop Urged Him to Kill Black”, Tulsa Tribune 1, 9 (July 15, 1921); “Instruction is Denied by Court”, Tulsa World 1,2 (July 16, 1921) (summarizing Buck’s testimony).

32 Testimony of John A. Oliphant, at 2, Attorney General’s Civil Case Files, RG 1-2, A-G Case No. 1062, Box 25 (Oklahoma State Archives).

33 Id. at 6.

34 Id. at 7.

35 Id. at 8.
State Culpability: The Divided (and Ambiguous) Roles of the National Guard

During the opening moments of the crisis, the local units of the National Guard behaved admirably; they defended the armory against a crowd of gun-hungry whites, then offered their assistance to the police in putting down the riot. But it is precisely that offer of assistance—and their subsequent cooperation with the Tulsa police that calls their behavior into question.

There is also substantial evidence that the out-of-town units of the National Guard—those who had traveled throughout the night from Oklahoma City—helped restore order when they arrived around 9 am on the morning of June 1. They deserve some of the credit for limiting the loss of life caused by the white mobs that invaded Greenwood. Nevertheless, the local units of the National Guard may have acted unconstitutionally in restoring order. The Guardsmen arrested every black resident of Tulsa they could find and then took them into “protective custody.” That left Greenwood property unprotected—and vulnerable to the special deputies who came along and burned it.

The key questions then become, what was the role of the local units of the National Guard (which were present in Tulsa even before the riot broke out and were there throughout the riot)? What was the role of the out-of-town units of the National Guard (which arrived from Oklahoma City around 9 a.m. the morning of June 1)?

The local units knew that there was trouble brewing in the early evening of May 31; they closely guarded their supply of ammunition and guns and waited orders from the Governor about what to do next. Sometime after 10 p.m., following the violent confrontation at the Courthouse, the local units, under the direction of Colonel Rooney, went into action and traveled the few blocks from the armory to the police station, where they established headquarters. The soldiers helped to
stop looting near the Courthouse. They then began working in conjunction with local authorities to try to quell the riot. There was consideration given to protecting Greenwood by keeping white mobs out. But such a plan was abandoned in favor of another, which had disastrous consequences for Greenwood. The local units of the Guard systematically disarmed and arrested Greenwood residents, leaving their property defenseless. When the “special deputies” came along in the wake of the Guard, it was a simple task to burn Greenwood property.

After-Action Reports: The Testimony of the Local Units of the National Guard

The National Guard’s after-action reports describe their role in the riot using their own words. Two reports in particular suggest that the local units of the Guard—while ostensibly operating to protect the lives and property of Greenwood residents—disarmed and arrested Greenwood residents (and not white rioters), then left their property defenseless, allowing deputies,uniformed police officers, and mobs to burn it.

According to the report filed by Captain Frank Van Voorhis, the police called around 8:30 p.m. to ask for help in controlling the crowds at the Courthouse. No Guardsmen went to the Courthouse until they received orders from Lieutenant Colonel Rooney, the officer in charge of the Tulsa units of the National Guard. Van Voorhis arrived after the riot had broken out, at 10:30 p.m., with two officers and sixteen men. They went to the Police Station, where they apparently began working in conjunction with the police. At 1:15 a.m. they “produced” a machine gun and placed it on a truck, along with three experienced machine gunners and six other enlisted men.

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37 See “Weapons Must be Returned”, *Tulsa World* 3 (June 4, 1921) (asking for return of weapons and threatening prosecution if weapons are not returned).
They then traveled around the city to spots where “there was firing” until 3 a.m., when Colonel Rooney ordered them to Stand Pipe Hill. At that point, Rooney deployed the men along Detroit Avenue, from Stand Pipe Hill to Archer, where they worked “disarming and arresting Negroes and sending them to the Convention Hall by Police cars and trucks.” Van Voorhis’ report details the “capture” of well more than 200 “prisoners.” Van Voorhis’ men were able to disarm and capture those Greenwood residents without much gunfire. It appears that his men killed no one.

Captain McCuen’s men, however, did fire upon a number of Greenwood residents in the process of responding to what the local units of the Guard called a “Negro uprising.” Sometime after 11 p.m., McCuen brought twenty men to the Police station, where Colonel Rooney had set up headquarters. They guarded the border between white Tulsa and Greenwood for several hours. Then they began moving towards Greenwood and established a line along Detroit, which was on the west side of Greenwood. They began pushing into Greenwood, using a truck with an old (and likely inoperable machine gun on it), probably around three a.m. McCuen’s men, like Van Voorhis’, were working in close conjunction with the Tulsa police. They arrested a “large number” of Greenwood residents and turned them over to the “Police Department automobiles,” which were close by “at all times.” Those cars “were manned by ex-service men, and in many cases plain-clothes men of the police department.” The close connection between the local units of the National Guard and the Police Department is not surprising. Major Daley, for instance, was also a Police officer. The Guard established its headquarters at the Police Station.

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40 See “Rooney Explains Guard Operation”, Tulsa World 18 (June 4, 1921); L.J.F. Rooney and Charles
units were instructed to follow the directions of the civilian authorities.\textsuperscript{42} And once they went into operation, the local units took charge of a large number of volunteers, many of whom were American Legion members and veterans of the war.\textsuperscript{43}

Some may argue that the Guard was taking Greenwood residents into protective custody. Indeed, the local units of the National Guard told the men they were disarming that they were there to protect them.\textsuperscript{44} Nevertheless, the after-action reports suggest that the Guard’s work in conjunction with local authorities was designed to put down the supposed “Negro uprising,” not to protect the Greenwood residents.\textsuperscript{45}

McCuen’s men did not seem to be working to protect blacks. In fact, after daylight he received an urgent request from the police department to stop blacks from firing into white homes

\textsuperscript{41} Brian Kirkpatrick, “Activities on night of May 31, 1921, at Tulsa, Okla.” (July 1, 1921), Oklahoma State Archives (“After patrols had been established . . . I established your headquarters in the office of the Chief of Police.”).

\textsuperscript{42} Around 10 p.m. on the evening of May 31, Oklahoma’s Adjutant General, Charles Barrett, who later criticized the local Tulsa authorities, told Major Byron Kirkpatrick of Tulsa to “render such assistance to the civil authorities as might be required.” Kirkpatrick, \textit{supra} note 41.

\textsuperscript{43} Kirkpatrick, \textit{supra} note 41 (“I assumed charge of a body of armed volunteers, whom I understand were Legion men, and marched them around into Main Street. There the outfit was divided into two groups, placed under the charge of officers of their number who all had military experience, and ordered to patrol the business section and court-house, and to report back to the Police Station at intervals of fifteen minutes.”); C. W. Daley, “Information on Activities during Negro Uprising May 31, 1921” (July 6, 1921), Oklahoma State Archives (“[T]here was a mob of 150 walking up the street in a column of squads. That crowd was assembled on the corner of Second and Main and given instructions by myself that if they wished to assist in maintaining order they must abide by instructions and follow them to the letter rather than running wild. This they agreed to do. They were split up at this time and placed in groups of 12 to 20 in charge of an ex-service man, with instructions to preserve order and to watch for snipers from the tops of buildings and to assist in gathering up all Negroes bringing same to station and that no one was to fire a shot unless it was to protect life after all other methods had failed.”).

\textsuperscript{44} \textsuperscript{45} Van Voorhis, \textit{supra} note 38, at 3.
along Sunset Hill, which was on the northwest side of Greenwood. "We advanced to the crest of Sunset Hill in skirmish line and then a little further north to the military crest of the hill where our men were ordered to lie down because of the intense fire of the blacks who had formed a good skirmish line at the foot of the hill to the northeast among the outbuildings of the Negro settlement which stops at the foot of the hill." The Guardsmen fired at will for nearly half an hour and then the Greenwood residents began falling back, "getting good cover among the frame buildings of the negro settlement." As the Guardsmen advanced, they continued to meet stiff opposition from some "negroes who had barricaded themselves in houses." According to McCuen, the men who were barricaded "refused to stop firing and had to be killed." It is unclear how many they killed. Later, at the northeast corner of the settlement, "10 or more negroes barricaded themselves in a concrete store and a dwelling." The Guardsmen fought along side civilians, and at this point, some blacks and whites were killed. 6

As the Guardsmen were advancing, fires appeared all over Greenwood. Apparently, the white mobs followed closely after the Guardsmen as they swept through Greenwood disarming and arresting the residents. They fires followed shortly afterwards. In essence, the Guardsmen facilitated the destruction of Greenwood because they removed residents who had no desire to leave and appeared more than capable of defending themselves. While the after-action reports are sparse, they create a picture of the local units of the Guard working in close conjunction with the local civilian authorities to disarm and arrest Greenwood residents. It was those same civilian authorities who were later criticized for burning, looting, and killing in Greenwood.

Colonel Rooney, who was in charge of the local units of the Guard, claimed that his men

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6 McCuen, supra note 39, at 2.
only fired when fired upon, although he admitted that the Guard fired upon Greenwood residents. Rooney's men were lined up facing into Greenwood and they positioned to protect white property and lives. When the Guard heard that blacks were firing upon whites, they moved into position to stop the firing. When the Tulsa police thought that five hundred black men were coming from Muskogee, they put a machine gun crew on the road from Muskogee, with orders to stop at the invasion "at all hazards." When Colonel Rooney heard a rumor that the five hundred black men had commandeered a train in Muskogee, he went off to organize a patrol to meet it at the station. Yet, in contrast, when whites were firing upon blacks who were in the Guard's custody, they responded by hurrying the prisoners along at a faster pace. The Guard seems to have been too busy working in conjunction with civilian authorities arresting Greenwood residents—or too preoccupied putting down the "Negro uprising" to protect Greenwood property.

McCuen concluded that "all firing" had ceased by 11 a.m. The reason for the end of the fighting was not that the Guard had succeeded in bringing the white rioters under control. It was that the Greenwood residents had been arrested or driven out: "practically all of the Negro men had

47 See "Rooney Explains Guard Operation", *Tulsa World* 18 (June 4, 1921) ("None of my men used their rifles except when fired upon from the east. The most visible point from which enemy shots came was the tower of the new brick church. This was sometime just prior to daybreak.").

48 There were fears, for example, that blacks were coming from Muskogee to reinforce the Greenwood residents: "In response to a call from Muskogee, indicating several hundred Negroes were on their way to the city to assist Tulsa Negroes should fighting continue, a machine gun squad loaded on a truck, went east of the city with orders to stop at all hazards these armed men." "Race War Rages for Hours After Outbreak at Courthouse; Troops and Armed Men Patrolling Streets", *Tulsa World* 1 (June 1, 1921).

49 Id. See also Daley, *supra* note 43 ("Upon receiving information that large bodies of Negroes were coming from Sand Springs, Muskogee and Mohawk, both by train and automobile. [sic] This information was imparted to the auto patrols with instructions to cover the roads which the Negroes might in on. At this point we received information that a train load was coming from Muskogee, so Col. Rooney and myself jumped into a car, assembled a company of Legion men of about 100 from among the patrols who were operating over the city, and placed them in charge of Mr. Kinney a member of the American Legion and directed him to bring men to the depot which was done in a very soldierly and orderly manner. Instructions were given that the men form a line on both sides of the track with instructions to allow no Negroes to unload but to hold them in the train by keeping them covered. The train proved to be a freight train and no one was on it but regular train crew.").

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retreated to the northeast or elsewhere or had been disarmed and sent to concentration points.\textsuperscript{50}

**Interpreting the Local Units’ Actions**

There remains the question of how one should interpret the actions of the local units of the National Guard. They appear to have arrested based on race. Some have argued that the Guard took Greenwood residents into protective custody and that they protected lives by doing so. There were simply too few Guardsmen to protect all of Greenwood from invasion by white mobs.\textsuperscript{51} So the question becomes, is it permissible to draw such distinctions based on race in time of crisis? Was it constitutionally permissible to arrest (or take into protective custody) Greenwood residents? Did the local units of the National Guard behave properly? Mary Jones Parrish captured the frustration of Greenwood residents after the riot:

It is the general belief that if [the state troops from Oklahoma City] had reached the scene sooner many lives and valuable property would have been saved. Just as praise for the State troops was on every tongue, so was denunciation of the Home Guards on every lip. Many stated that they [the local guard] fooled [the residents] out of their homes on a promise that if they would give up peacefully they would give them protection, as well as see that their property was

\textsuperscript{50} McCuen, *supra* note 39, at 2.

\textsuperscript{51} See, e.g., “Guardsmen at Center of Riot Discussion”, *Daily Oklahoman* (May 23, 2000) (reporting debate over role of National Guard’s role in riot).
saved . . . . When they returned to what were once their places of business or homes, with hopes built upon the promises of the Home Guards, how keen was their disappointment to find all of their earthly possessions in ashes or stolen.52

Parrish’s account testifies to the belief among Greenwood residents that the local troops were culpable and the out-of-town units were responsible for ending the riot—or at least for restoring order afterwards.

While in extremely rare instances it is permissible for the government to draw invidious distinctions based solely on race,53 such action must be narrowly tailored. Even in 1921 the Supreme Court recognized that it was inappropriate for the government (as opposed to private individuals) to segregate on the basis of race.54 The reports of the Guard units based in Tulsa

52 Mary Jones Parrish, Events of the Tulsa Disaster, p. 31 (circa 1921) (reprinted 1998).

53 See Lee v. Washington, 390 U.S. 333 (1968) (affirming desegregation order in Alabama prison but observing that there might be instances where segregation was necessary to maintain order). The last time the United States Supreme Court upheld overt (nonremedial) racial distinction was Korematsu v. United States, 323 U.S. 214 (1944). That decisions—and the United States government’s willful withholding of evidence showing that such discrimination was unnecessary—became the basis for the Civil Rights Act of 1968. See Eric K. Yamamoto, “Racial Reparations: Japanese Americans and African American Claims”, 40 Boston College Law Review 477-523 (1998).

54 See, e.g., Buchanan v. Warley, 245 U.S. 60 (1917) (invalidating as unconstitutional a zoning ordinance that segregated on the basis of race). While Professor Aoki has recently analyzed the early twentieth century alien laws as important precursors to the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, Keith Aoki, “No Right to Own?: The Early Twentieth-Century “Alien Land Laws” as a Prelude to Internment”, 40 Boston College Law Review 37-72 (1998), no one has yet interpreted the internment of blacks during the Tulsa riot, which drew no legal protest, as a testing ground for the idea of internment. See “85 Whites and Negroes Die in Tulsa Riots”, supra note at 2 (“Guards surrounded the armory, while others assisted in rounding up Negroes and segregating them in the detention camps. A commission, composed of seven city officials and business men, was formed by Mayor Evans and Chief of Police Gustafson, with the approval of General Barrett, to pass upon the status of the Negroes detained.”).
acknowledge that they arrested many blacks, beginning as early as 6:30 a.m. on June 1. At that point, much of Greenwood were still intact. It is likely that had the local units not arrested those residents, their homes would not have been vacant—and they might not have been burned. In essence the Guard created the danger when they took Greenwood residents into custody.

Much of the United States Supreme Court’s law on racial arrests arises out of World War II. Three cases in particular address the constitutionality of drawing distinctions based on race: *Hirabayashi v. United States*,56 decided in June 1943, and *Korematsu v. United States*57 and *Ex Parte Endo*,58 decided on the same day in December 1944. They all addressed the legality of the United States’ laws regarding Japanese Americans. *Hirabayashi*, the first of the race cases to reach the United States Supreme Court, addressed the constitutionality of a curfew imposed on Americans of Japanese ancestry living in Hawaii. A majority of the court upheld the racially discriminatory curfew. One concurring Justice observed that “where the peril is great and the time is short, temporary treatment on a group basis may be the only practicable expedient whatever the ultimate percentage of those who are detained for cause.”59 The concurring opinions were careful to note that distinctions based on race were extraordinarily difficult to justify. They went “to the brink of constitutional power.”60 While arrests might be justified upon a showing of immediate harm, they had to be justified. “Detention for reasonable cause is one thing. Detention on account

56 320 U.S. 81 (1943).
57 323 U.S. 214 (1944).
58 323 U.S. 283 (1944).
59 320 U.S. at 107.
60 *Id.* at 111.
of ancestry is another,” Justice William O. Douglas wrote. Justice Murphy’s concurrence further limited the government’s power to detain American citizens without any showing that they posed a threat.

While the Supreme Court unanimously upheld a curfew imposed upon American citizens on the basis of race, in two cases decided the next year, some justices voted against continued distinctions based on race. In *Ex Parte Endo*, Mitsuye Endo, an American citizen whose loyalty to the United States was unquestioned, challenged her continued detention in a relocation camp. The United States sought to justify the detention on the ground that there were community sentiments against her and that, in essence, she was detained for her own safety. In rejecting the argument, the United States Supreme Court observed that community hostility might be a serious problem, but it refused to permit continued detention on that basis once loyalty was demonstrated.

The most important—and most heavily criticized—case of the trilogy was *Korematsu*, which upheld the forced relocation of Japanese Americans. The court upheld the relocation, with the bold contention that “when under conditions of modern warfare our shores are threatened by hostile forces, the power to protect must be commensurate with the threatened danger.” Even the majority opinion acknowledged that the majority of those interned were loyal. We now recognize the decision as improper; indeed, the Civil Rights Act of 1988, which provided $20,000 compensation to each Japanese American person interned during World War II, was premised on

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61 *Id.* at 108.
62 *Id.* at 113.
63 323 U.S. at 302-03.
64 323 U.S. at 220.
65 *Id.* at 218-19.
the belief that Korematsu and the relocation that it upheld was wrong. The Civil Rights Act apologized for the relocation and internment and provided some compensation for those affected.

Justice Roberts’ dissenting opinion in Korematsu, which argued that the relocation was unconstitutional, recognized that citizens might occasionally be taken into protective custody. At other times, the government can, Roberts acknowledged, “exclude citizens temporarily from a locality.” For example, it may exclude citizens from a fire zone. But the internments went beyond limited exclusion for the protection of the people excluded and so Roberts thought them improper. Korematsu involved internment “based on his ancestry, and solely because of his ancestry, without evidence or inquiry concerning his loyalty . . . .”

The evidence seems to establish that the local units of the National Guard, in conjunction with police deputies, arrested based on race, not on danger to the Greenwood residents themselves. The fear of Tulsa’s police force was that the Greenwood residents were engaged in an uprising. Their response was to disarm and arrest, in some cases taking life to do so. That behavior is suspect even under the majority’s opinion in Korematsu. Under Justice Roberts’ dissent, the actions of the local units of the National Guard are even more suspect.

There is one other precedent that is important in interpreting the National Guard’s actions: the United States Supreme Court’s 1909 decision in Moyer v. Peabody. That case arose from a conflict between miners and mining companies in Colorado. The president of the Western Federation of Miners was arrested by the National Guard and detained for several weeks, even though there was no probable cause to arrest him. Simply put, he had committed no crime.

** Id. at 231.

* 323 U.S. at 226.

** 212 U.S. 78 (1909).
Colorado’s governor explained that there was an insurrection and that he had to arrest Moyer and detain him to put down the insurrection. Justice Holmes gave the National Guard, acting under the governor’s orders, broad power to arrest in order to put down an insurrection. Holmes refused to allow a suit against the governor for deprivation of constitutional rights, as long as the governor had a good faith belief that the arrest was necessary. It is easier, though, to classify the arrest of one person in Moyer, as justified, than the wholesale arrest of Greenwood residents. Moyer supported limited arrests to stop insurrections. The local units of the National Guard, in conjunction with deputized Tulsa police officers, arrested thousands. In the process—according to their own reports—they killed an unspecified number of blacks. Such actions are difficult to defend even applying the legal standards of the times.

Newspaper Accounts of the Official Involvement in the Riot

The accounts of the riot as it was unfolding in the Tulsa World show the coordination of the police, National Guard, and white citizens. Some white men were working to arrest “every Negro seen on the streets.” Many of those people had at a minimum volunteered their services to the police. “Armed guards were placed in cars and sent out on patrol duty. Companies of about 50 men each were organized and marched through the business streets.” As the World stated in an

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69 Id. at 85 (“So long as arrests are made in good faith and in the honest belief that they are needed in order to head the insurrection off, the Governor is the final judge and cannot be subjected to an action after he is out of office . . .”).

70 “Race War Rages for Hours After Outbreak at Courthouse; Troops and Armed Men Patrolling Streets”, Tulsa World 1 (June 1, 1921) (“Thousands of persons, both the inquisitive including several hundred women, and men, armed with every available weapon in the city taken from every hardware and sporting goods store, swarmed on Second street from Boulder to Boston avenue watching the gathering volunteer army offering their services to the peace officers.”).

71 “Race War Rages for Hours After Outbreak at Courthouse; Troops and Armed Men Patrolling Streets”, Tulsa World 1 (June 1, 1921).
editorial on June 2, "Semi-organized bands of white men systematically applied the torch while others shot on sight men of color." 

The black press presented starker pictures of official involvement in the destruction. An account of Van B. Hurley, who was identified as a former Tulsa police officer, which was printed in the *Chicago Defender* in October 1921. The account was circulated by Elisha Scott, an attorney from Topeka, Kansas, who represented a number of riot victims. The Defender reported that Hurley, "who was honorably discharged from the force and given splendid recommendations by his captains and lieutenants," named city officials who planned the attack on Greenwood using airplanes. Hurley described "the conference between local aviators and the officials. After this meeting Hurley asserted the airplanes darted out from hangars and hovered over the district dropping nitroglycerin on buildings, setting them afire." Hurley said the officials told their deputies to deal aggressively with Greenwood residents. "They gave instructions for every man to be ready and on the alert and if the niggers wanted to start anything to be ready for them. They never put forth any efforts at all to prevent it whatever, and said if they started anything to kill every b__ son of a b__ they could find." Hurley's account is somewhat suspect, but it fits with Laurel Buck's testimony that the police told white Tulsans to "get out and get a nigger."

At a minimum, there was substantial planning by the police for the systematic arrest and detention of Greenwood residents. Fire Marshal Wesley Bush reported that he saw armed men coming and going from the police station all evening. The *Tulsa Tribune* reported that there had

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72 "The Disgrace of Tulsa", *Tulsa World* 4 (June 2, 1921).

73 "Ex-Police Bears Plots of Tulsans: Officer of Law Tells Who Ordered Airplanes to Destroy Homes", *Chicago Defender* 1 (Oct. 25, 1921). *See also*: "Attorney Scott Digs Up Inside Information on Tulsa Riot", *Black Dispatch* 1 (October 20, 1921).

74 Plaintiff’s Brief, supra note 6, at 67.
been planning to take Greenwood residents to the Convention Center. It is very difficult at this point to reconstruct the instructions from the mayor and police chief to the deputies. That difficulty arises in large part because the city refused to allow a serious investigation of the riot. There are, however, a substantial number of reports of those instructions and the pattern of destruction certainly fits with those reports. Quite simply, it is difficult to explain the systematic arrest of blacks, the destruction of their property, and the timing of the invasion of Greenwood without relying upon some coordination by the Tulsa city government, with the assistance of the local units of the National Guard.⁷⁵

**Statutory Liability for City’s Failure to Protect**

Asking for reparations for the riot does not require us to read our own morality back onto Tulsa at the early part of the century. Many states provided a remedy for the city’s failure to protect riot victims in the 1920s. At the time of the riot, for instance, Illinois had a statute providing a cause of action for damage done by riot when the local government failed to protect against the rioters. The Illinois law provided that the municipality where violence occurred was liable to the families of “lynching” victims. It allowed claims for wrongful death up to $5000.⁷⁶ The Illinois courts construed “lynching” to include deaths during race riots.⁷⁷ If the riot had

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⁷⁷ See, e.g., City of Chicago v. Sturigs, 222 U.S. 323 (1908) (upholding constitutionality of Illinois statute imposing liability on cities for three-quarters value of mob damage, regardless of fault); Arnold v. City of Centralia, 197 Ill. App. 73 (1915) (imposing liability without negligence under Illinois statute, Hurd’s Revised Statutes, 1915-16 chap. 38, section 256a, on city that failed to protect citizens against mob); Barnes v. City of Chicago, 323 Ill. 203 (1926) (interpreting same statute and concluding that police officer was not “lynched”).
occurred in Illinois, there would have been a right to recover if the police failed to protect the victims. Tulsans knew about the statutes in Illinois and Kansas. They even consulted an attorney from East Saint Louis for help in understanding their legal liability.⁷⁸

The Aftermath of the Riot: Of Prosecutions, Lawsuits, and Ordinances

As Tulsans began to shift the rubble after the riot, they asked themselves how had such a tragedy occurred, who was to blame, and how might they rebuild. A grand jury investigated the riot’s causes and returned indictments against about seventy men, mostly blacks. The city re-zoned the burned district, to discourage rebuilding, as Greenwood residents and whites who owned property in Greenwood filed lawsuits against the city and their insurance companies. The lawsuits, filed by more than one hundred people who lost property, testify to the attempts made by riot victims to use the law for relief—and its failure to assist them, even after the government had destroyed their property.

The Failure of Reparations Through Lawsuits

Greenwood residents and property owners (both black and white) filed more than one hundred suits against their insurance companies, the city of Tulsa, and even Sinclair Oil Company, which allegedly provided airplanes that were used in attacking Greenwood. Not one of those suits was successful. One, filed by William Redfearn, a white man who owned a hotel and a movie theater in Greenwood, went to trial and then on appeal to the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

⁷⁸ “City Not Liable for Riot Damage”, Tulsa World 1 (August 7, 1921).
Redfearn’s insurance company denied liability, citing a riot exclusion clause. The clause exempted the insurance company from liability for loss due to riot.

The Oklahoma Supreme Court interpreted the damage as due to riot—an understandable conclusion—and thereby immunized insurance companies from liability.79 Following the failure of Mr. Redfearn’s suit, none other went to trial. That is not surprising; it is difficult to see how anyone could have prevailed in the wake of the Redfearn opinion. They lay fallow for years and then were dismissed in 1937.

The Grand Jury and the Failure of Prosecutions

Just as the legal system had failed to provide a vehicle for recovery by Greenwood residents and property owners, the legal system failed to hold Tulsans criminally responsible for the reign of terror during the riot. The grand jury, convened a few days after the riot, returned about seventy indictments. A few people—mostly blacks—were held in jail; others were released on bond, pending their trials for rioting. But most of the cases were dismissed in September 1921, when Dick Rowland’s case was dismissed. When Sarah Page failed to appear as the complaining witness, the District Attorney dismissed his case.80 Other dismissals soon followed.81 Apparently, no one—either black or white—served time in prison for murder, larceny, or arson, although some people may have been held in custody pending dismissal of suits in the fall of 1921.

The grand jury’s most notable action is not the indictments that it returned but the whitewash it engaged in. Their report, which was published in its entirety in the Tulsa World

79 221 Pacific Reporter 929 (1926).
80 State v. Rowland, Case No. 2239, Tulsa County District Court (1921).
81 See State v. Will Robinson et al, Case No. 2227, Tulsa County District Court (1921).
under the heading “Grand Jury Blames Negroes for Inciting Race Rioting; Whites Clearly Exonerated,” told a laughable story of black culpability for the riot. The report is an amazing document, which demonstrates how evidence can be selectively interpreted. It is, quite simply, a classic case of interpreters’ extreme biases coloring their vision of events.

The grand jury, which began work on June 7, took testimony from dozens of white and black Tulsans. It operated within the framework established by Tulsa District Judge Biddson. He instructed the jurors to investigate the causes of the riot. Biddson feared that the spirit of lawlessness was growing. The jurors’ conclusions would be “marked indelibly upon the public mind” and would be important in deterring future riots. It cast its net widely, looking at the riot as it unfolded, as well as social conditions in Tulsa more generally.

The grand jury fixed the immediate cause of the riot as the appearance “of a certain group of colored men who appeared at the courthouse . . . for the purpose of protecting . . . Dick Rowland.” From there it laid blame entirely on those people who sought to defend Rowland’s life. It discounted rumors of lynching: “There was no mob spirit among the whites, no talk of lynching and no arms.”

Echoing the discussions of the riot in the white Tulsa newspapers, the grand jury identified two remote causes of the riot, which were “vital to the public interest.” Those causes were the “agitation among the Negroes of social equality” and the breakdown of law enforcement. The agitation for social equality was the first of the remote causes the jury discussed:

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82 Tulsa World 1, 8 (June 26, 1921).

83 “Judge Biddson’s Instructions to Grand Jury”, Tulsa Tribune 1 (June 9, 1921).

84 “Grand Jury Blames Negroes for Inciting Race Rioting; Whites Clearly Exonerated”, Tulsa World 1, 8 (June 26, 1921).
Certain propaganda and more or less agitation had been going on among the colored population for some time. This agitation resulted in the accumulation of firearms among the people and the storage of quantities of ammunition, all of which was accumulative in the minds of the Negro which led them as a people to believe in equal rights, social equality, and their ability to demand the same.85

*The Nation* broke the grand jury’s code. Charges that blacks were radicals meant that blacks were insufficiently obsequious. They asked for legal rights:

Negroes were uncompromisingly denouncing of “Jim-Crow” cars, lynching, peonage; in short, were asking that the Federal constitutional guarantees of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” be given regardless of color. The Negroes of Tulsa and other Oklahoma cities are pioneers; men and women who have dared, men and women who have had the initiative and the courage to pull up stakes in other less-favored States and face hardship in a newer one for the sake of greater eventual progress. That type is ever less ready to submit to insult. Those of the whites who seek to maintain the old white group control naturally do not relish seeing Negroes emancipating themselves from the old system.86

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85 “Grand Jury Blames Negroes for Inciting Race Rioting; Whites Clearly Exonerated”, *Tulsa World* 1, 8 (June 26, 1921).

86 Walter F. White, “The Eruption of Tulsa”, *The Nation* 909 (June 29, 1921). One justice on the Georgia Supreme Court explained the origins of an Atlanta riot in this way: “this one thing of the street car
Such was the mindset of the grand jury that they thought ideas about racial equality were to blame for the riot, instead of explaining why Greenwood residents felt it necessary to visit the courthouse. And so, as the grand jury recast its evidence to fit its established prejudices. And as it did that, as it confirmed white Tulsa’s myth that the blacks were to blame for the riot, it helped to remove the moral impetus to reparations.

Preventing Rebuilding?

Given the context of racial violence and segregation legislation of Progressive-era Oklahoma, it makes sense that one of the city government’s first responses was to expand the fire ordinance to incorporate parts of Greenwood. That expansion made rebuilding in the burned district prohibitively expensive. The city presented two rationales: to expand the industrial area around the railroad yard and to further separate the races.87

The story of the zoning ordinance is one of the few triumphs of the rule of law to emerge from the riot. Greenwood residents who wanted to rebuild challenged the ordinance as a violation of property rights, as well as on technical grounds. They first won a temporary restraining order on technical grounds (that there had been insufficient notice before the ordinance was passed). Then, following re-promulgation of the ordinance, they won a permanent injunction, apparently on the

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87 See “Burned District in Fire Limits”, *Tulsa World* 2 (June 8, 1921) (reporting the “real estate exchange” organization supported expansion of fire limits, because it would help convert burned area into industrial area near the railroad tracks and would “be found desirable, in causing a wider separation between Negroes and whites”).
grounds that it would deprive the Greenwood property owners of their property rights if they were not permitted to rebuild.  

And so, having won one court victory, Greenwood residents were left to their own devices: free to rebuild their property, but without the direct assistance from the city that was crucial to doing so. Now the question is whether the city and state wish to acknowledge that as a debt and to pay it?

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88 “Negro Sues to Rebuild Waste Area”, Tulsa World (Aug. 13, 1921); “Three Judges Hear Evidence in Negro Suit”, Tulsa World 1 (Aug. 25, 1921). The three-judge panel upheld the ordinance to the extent that it prohibited the building of permanent structures. But it allowed the building of temporary structures. Id. The property owners argued that the city was depriving them of their property by such restrictive building regulations and that the restrictions endangered their health. See Petition in Lockard v. Evans, et al., Tulsa County District Court, Case 15,780 paragraphs 6-7 (Aug. 12, 1921). Their argument was based, at least in part, on the emerging police power doctrine that the state could regulate to promote health and morality. The petitioners applied a corollary to that doctrine, arguing that the city was prohibited from interfering with that protection. The judges granted first a temporary restraining order against the ordinance in August because there was insufficient notice when it was passed. See “Can Reconstruct Restricted Area, District Judges Grant Restraining Order to Negroes”, Tulsa World 1 (Aug. 26, 1921). Then, following re-promulgation of the ordinance, the judges granted a permanent injunction against it, citing the ordinance’s effect on property rights. See “Cannot Enforce Fire Ordinance, Court holds unconstitutional act against the burned district”, Tulsa World 1 (Sept. 2, 1921). The judges’ opinion has been lost.
Notes on Contributors

Dr. John Hope Franklin, a native of Rentiesville, is the James B. Duke Professor of History Emeritus at Duke University. A member of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, he is the author of numerous books, including *From Slavery to Freedom*, now in its eighth edition. His father, the well-known Tulsa attorney B. C. Franklin, survived the riot.

Dr. Scott Ellsworth was born and raised in Tulsa. The author of *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, he formerly served as a historian at the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

Dr. Robert L. Brooks is the Director and State Archaeologist of the Oklahoma Archeological Survey. He is responsible for the management and protection of Oklahoma's heritage resources, including unmarked graves and burial sites.

Alfred L. Brophy is a professor of law at Oklahoma City University. A specialist in property law, he is president of the board of directors of Oklahoma Indian Legal Services.

Larry O'Dell is a historian with the Oklahoma Historical Society. Raised in Newcastle, he currently serves as a research associate for the Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture project.

Dr. Lesley Rankin-Hill is an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Oklahoma. A specialist in the study of burial remains and historic cemeteries, she is the author of *A Biohistory of 19th Century Afro-Americans*.

Dr. Clyde Snow, of Norman, is an internationally recognized forensic anthropologist. An expert in the identification of human skeletal remains, he currently serves as a consultant to the Oklahoma State Medical Examiner.
Phoebe Stubblefield is a Ph.D. candidate in anthropology at the University of Florida. A specialist in forensic anthropology, she is also the granddaughter of survivors of the Tulsa race riot.

Richard S. Warner, a lifelong Tulsan, is a member of the board of directors of the Tulsa Historical Society. A well-known authority on the history of Tulsa, he has contributed to the *Chronicles of Oklahoma* and other professional publications.

Dr. Alan H. Witten is the Schultz Professor of Geophysics at the University of Oklahoma. An expert in near-surface remote sensing, he has coordinated scientific research for archaeological investigations both in the United States and overseas.
Final Report of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission
February 28, 2001

The 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission originated in 1997 with House Joint Resolution No. 1035. The act twice since has been amended, first in 1998, again two years later. The final rewriting passed each legislative chamber in March and became law with Governor Frank Keating’s signature on April 6, 2000.

In that form, the State of Oklahoma extended the commission’s authority beyond that originally scheduled, to February 28, 2001. The statute also charged the commission to produce, on that date, “a final report of its findings and recommendations” and to submit that report “in writing to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and the Mayor and each member of the City Council of the City of Tulsa, Oklahoma.”

This is that report. It accounts for and completes the work of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission.

A series of papers accompanies the report. Some are written by scholars of national stature, others by experts of international acclaim. Each addresses at length and in depth issues of expressed legislative interest and matters of enormous public consequence. As a group, they comprise a uniquely special and a uniquely significant contribution that must be attached to this report and must be studied carefully along with it.
Nonetheless, the supporting documents are not the report, itself. The scholars' essays have their purposes; this commission's report has another. Its purpose is contained in the statutes that first created this commission, that later extended its life, and that each time gave it the same set of mandates. That is why this report is an accounting, presented officially and offered publicly, of how Oklahoma's 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission has conducted its business and addressed its statutory obligations.

Its duties were many, and each presented imposing challenges. Not least was the challenge of preparing this report. Lawmakers scheduled its deadline and defined its purpose, and this report meets their requirements. At the same time, four years of intense study and personal sacrifice surely entitle commission members to add their own expectations. Completely reasonable and entirely appropriate, their desires deserve a place in their report as well.

Together, then, both the law's requirements and the commissioners' resolves guide this report. Designed to be both concise and complete, this is the report that law requires the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission to submit to those who represent the people. Designed to be both compelling and convincing, this also is the report that the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission chooses to offer the people whom both lawmakers and the
commissioners serve.

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The Commission shall consist of eleven (11) members.

The legislative formula for commission membership assured it appropriate if unusual composition. As an official state inquiry, the state’s interest was represented through the executive, legislative, and administrative branches. The governor was to appoint six members, three from names submitted by the Speaker of the House, three from nominees provided by the Senate President Pro Tempore. Two state officials – the directors of the Oklahoma Human Rights Commission (OHRC) and of the Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) – also were to serve as ex officio members, either personally or through their designees.

Reflecting Tulsa’s obvious interest, the resolution directed the city’s mayor to select the commission’s final three members. Similar to the gubernatorial appointments, they were to come from names proposed by Tulsa’s City Commission. One of the mayor’s appointees had to be “a survivor of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot incident”; two had to be current residents of the historic Greenwood community, the area once devastated by the “incident.”

The commission began with two ex officio members and ended with two others. After Gracie Monson resigned in March 2000, Kenneth Kendricks replaced her as OHRC’s interim director and its representative to the commission. Blake Wade directed the
historical society until Dr. Bob Blackburn succeeded him in 1999. Blackburn had been Wade’s designated representative to the commission anyway. In fact, the commission had made him its chairman, a position he would hold until June 2000.

Governor Frank Keating’s six appointees included two legislators, each from a different chamber, each from an opposite party, each a former history teacher. Democrat Abe Deutschendorf’s participation in the debate over the original house resolution echoed his lingering interest in history and foretold his future devotion to this inquiry. As a history teacher, Robert Milacek had included Tulsa’s race riot in his classes. Little did he know that he, himself, would contribute to that history as a Republican legislator, but he has.

Governor Keating turned to metropolitan Tulsa for two appointees. T. D. “Pete” Churchwell’s father serviced African-American businesses in the Greenwood district, and Churchwell has maintained concern for that community and with the 1921 riot that nearly destroyed it. He was Blackburn’s replacement as chairman during the commission’s closing months. Although born in Oklahoma City, Jim Lloyd and his family moved to Turley (the community just north of Greenwood) when he was three. Raised in Tulsa, he graduated from Nathan Hale and the University of Tulsa’s College of Law. He now practices law in Sand Springs and lives in Tulsa.

The governor’s other appointees entered the inquiry less
with geographical than with professional connections to Tulsa and its history. Currie Ballard lives in Coyle and serves neighboring Langston University as historian-in-residence. Holding a graduate degree in history, Jimmie White teaches it and heads the social science division for Connors State College.

Tulsa Mayor Susan Savage appointed the commission’s final three members. If only five in 1921, Joe Burns met the law’s requirement that one mayoral appointee be a survivor of the 1921 “incident.” He brought the commission not faint childhood memories but seasoned wisdom rooted in eight decades of life in the Greenwood community and with Greenwood’s people.

As the resolution specified, Mayor Savage’s other two appointees live in contemporary Greenwood, but neither took a direct route to get there. Eddie Faye Gates’s path began in Preston, Oklahoma, passed through Alabama’s Tuskegee Institute, and crisscrossed two continents before it reached Tulsa in 1968. She spent the next twenty-four years teaching its youngsters and has devoted years since researching and writing her own memoirs and her community’s history. Vivian Clark-Adams’s route took nearly as many twists and turns, passing through one military base after another until her father retired and the family came to Oklahoma in 1961. Trained at the University of Tulsa, Dr. Vivian Clark-Adams serves Tulsa Community College as chair of the liberal arts division for its southeast campus.
In the November 1997, organizing meeting, commissioners voted to hire clerical assistants and expert consultants through the OHS. (The legislature had added $50,000 to the agency's base appropriations for just such purposes.) They then scheduled their second meeting for December 5 to accommodate the most appropriate and most eminent of all possible authorities.

John Hope Franklin is the son of Greenwood attorney B. C. Franklin, a graduate of Tulsa's Booker T. Washington High School (Fisk and Harvard, too), and James B. Duke Professor of History Emeritus at Duke University. Recipient of scores of academic and literary awards, not to mention more than a hundred honorary doctorates, Franklin came back for another honor. He received the Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award on December 4 and stayed to meet and help the commission on the fifth.

Commissioners were delighted to learn that Franklin was anxious to serve, even if he confessed the contributions limited by age (he was eighty-two at the time) and other obligations. They enthusiastically made John Hope Franklin their first consultant, and they instantly took his advice for another. Dr. Scott Ellsworth, a native Tulsan now living in Oregon, was a Duke graduate who already had written a highly regarded study of the riot. Ellsworth became the second consultant chosen; he thereafter emerged first in importance.

As its work grew steadily more exacting and steadily more
specialized, the commission turned to more experts. Legal scholars, archeologists, anthropologists, forensic specialists, geophysicists – all of these and more blessed this commission with technical expertise impossible to match and unimaginable otherwise. As a research group, they brought a breadth of vision and a depth of training that made Oklahoma’s commission a model of state inquiry.

Ten consultants eventually provided them expert advice, but the commissioners always expected to depend mostly on their own resources, maybe with just a little help from just a few of their friends. Interested OHS employees were a likely source. Sure enough, a half-dozen or so pitched in to search the agency’s library and archives for riot-related materials.

That was help appreciated, if not entirely unexpected. What was surprising – stunning, really – was something else that happened in Oklahoma City. As the commission’s work attracted interest and gathered momentum, Bob Blackburn noticed something odd: an unusual number of people were volunteering to work at the historical society. Plain, ordinary citizens, maybe forty or fifty of them, had asked to help the commission as unpaid researchers in the OHS collections.

At about that time, Dick Warner decided that he had better start making notes on the phone calls he was fielding for the Tulsa County Historical Society. People were calling in, wanting
to contribute to the inquiry, and they just kept calling. After two months, his log listed entries for 148 local calls.

Meanwhile, Scott Ellsworth was back in Oregon, writing down information volunteered by some of the three hundred callers who had reached him by long distance.

Most commission meetings were in Tulsa, each open to any and all. Oklahoma’s Open Meetings Law required no less, but this commission’s special nature yielded much more. It seemed that every time the commissioners met at least one person (usually several) greeted them with at least something (usually a lot) that the commission needed.

Included were records and papers long presumed lost, if their existence had been known at all. Some were official documents, pulled together and packed away years earlier. Uncovered and examined, they took the commission back in time, back to the years just before and just after 1921. Some were musty legal records saved from the shredders. Briefs filed, dockets set, law suits decided – each opened an avenue into another corner of history. Pages after pages laid open the city commission’s deliberations and decisions as they affected the Greenwood area. Overlooked records from the National Guard offered overlooked perspectives and illuminated them with misplaced correspondence, lost after-action reports, obscure field manuals, and self-typed accounts from men who were on duty.
at the riot. Maybe there was a family’s treasured collection of yellowed newspaper clippings; an envelope of faded photographs; a few carefully folded letters, all handwritten, each dated 1921.

One meaning of all of this is obvious, so obvious that this report pauses to affirm it.

Many have questioned why or even if anyone would be interested now in events that happened in one city one time one day long ago. What business did today’s state lawmakers have in something so old, so local, and so deservedly forgotten? Surely no one cares, not anymore.

An answer comes from hundreds and hundreds of voices. They tell us that what happened in 1921 in Tulsa is as alive today as it was back then. What happened in Tulsa stays as important and remains as unresolved today as in 1921. What happened there still exerts its power over people who never lived in Tulsa at all.

How else can one explain the thousands of hours volunteered by hundreds of people, all to get this story told and get it told right? How else can one explain the regional, national, even international attention that has been concentrated on a few short hours of a mid-sized city’s history?

As the introductory paper by Drs. Franklin and Ellsworth recounts, the Tulsa disaster went largely unacknowledged for a half-century or more. After a while, it was largely forgotten. Eventually it became largely unknown. So hushed was mention of
the subject that many pronounced it the final victim of a conspiracy, this a conspiracy of silence.

That silence is shattered, utterly and permanently shattered. Whatever else this commission has achieved or will achieve, it already has made that possible. Regional, national, and international media made it certain. The Dallas Morning News, the Los Angeles Times, the New York Times, National Public Radio (NPR), every American broadcast television network, cable outlets delivering Cinemax and the History Channel to North America, the British Broadcasting Corporation – this merely begins the attention that the media focused upon this commission and its inquiry. Many approached it in depth (NPR twice has made it the featured daily broadcast). Most returned to it repeatedly (the New York Times had carried at least ten articles as of February 2000). All considered it vital public information.

Some – including some commission members – thought at least some of the coverage was at least somewhat unbalanced. They may have had a point, but that is not the point.

Here is the point: The 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission is pleased to report that this past tragedy has been extensively aired, that it is now remembered, and that it will never again be unknown.

† † †

The Commission shall undertake a study to [include] the
identification of persons. . . .

No one is certain how many participated in the 1921 riot. No one is certain how many suffered how much for how long. Certainty is reserved for a single quantifiable fact. Every year there remain fewer and fewer who experienced it personally.

Legislation authorizing this commission directed that it seek and locate those survivors. Specifically, it was to identify any person able to "provide adequate proof to the Commission" that he or she was an "actual resident" of "the 'Greenwood' area or community" at the time of the riot. The commission was also to identify any person who otherwise "sustained an identifiable loss . . . resulting from the . . . 1921 Tulsa Race Riot."

Some considered this the commission's most difficult assignment, some its most important duty, some its most compelling purpose. They all were right, and had Eddie Faye Gates not assumed personal and experienced responsibility for that mandate, this commission might have little to report. Because she did, however, it principally reports what she and those who worked with her were able to accomplish in the commission's name.

Commissioner Gates's presence gave this commission a considerable and welcomed head start. She already had included several riot victims among the early pioneers whom she had interviewed for They Came Searching: How Blacks Sought the Promised Land in Tulsa. The book finished, she had an informal
list of survivors, but the list kept changing. Death erased one name after another. Others appeared. Many were of old people who had left Oklahoma years, even decades, ago; but she heard about them and patiently tracked them down. As lawmakers were authorizing this inquiry, the count stood at thirteen, nineteen if all the leads eventually panned out. No one presumed that even nineteen was close to final, but no one knew what the accurate total might be either.

At its very first, organizing meeting, on November 14, 1997, this commission established a “subcommittee on survivors,” headed by Commissioner Gates and including Commissioner Burns and Dr. Clark-Adams. From that moment onward, that subcommittee has aggressively and creatively pursued every possible avenue to identify every possible survivor.

Letters sent over Dr. Ellsworth’s signature to Jet and Ebony magazines urged readers to contact the commission if they knew of any possibilities. From Gale’s Directory of Publications, Commissioner Gates targeted the nation’s leading African-American newspapers (papers like the Chicago Defender and the Pittsburgh Courier), appealing publicly for survivors or to anyone who might know of one. The commission’s website, created and maintained by the Oklahoma Historical Society, prominently declared a determination to identify and register every survivor, everywhere. For affirmation, it posted the official forms used as
the subcommittee's records, including instructions for their completion and submission.

An old-fashioned, intensely personal web turned out to be more productive than the thoroughly modern, entirely electronic Internet. Like historical communities everywhere, modern Greenwood maintains a rich, if informal, social network. Sometimes directly, sometimes distantly, it connects Greenwood's people, sometimes young, sometimes old. Anchoring its interstices are the community's longest residents, its most active citizens, and its most prominent leaders.

One quality or another would describe some members of this commission. After all, these are the very qualifications that lawmakers required for their appointments. Others share those same qualities and a passion for their community's history as well. Curtis Lawson, Robert Littlejohn, Hannibal Johnson, Dr. Charles Christopher, Mable Rice, Keith Jemison, Robert and Blanchie Mayes — all are active in the North Tulsa Historical Society, all are some of the community's most respected citizens, and all are among this commission's most valuable assets.

The initial published notices had early results. Slowly they began to compound upon themselves. The first stories in the national and international media introduced a multiplying factor. Thereafter, each burst of press attention seemed to increase what was happening geometrically. People were contacting
commissioners, some coming forward as survivors, more suggesting where or how they might be found. Names came in, first a light sprinkle, next a shower, then a downpour, finally a flood.

Old city directories, census reports, and other records verified some claims, but they could confirm only so much. After all, these people had been children, some of them infants, back in 1921. After eighty years, could anyone remember the kind of details — addresses, telephone numbers, property descriptions, rental agreements, business locations — someone else could verify with official documents? Not likely. In fact, these were exactly the kind of people most likely to have been ignored or lost in every public record. Officially, they might have never existed.

Except that they did, and one who looked long enough and hard enough and patiently enough could confirm it — that is, if one knew where to look and whom to ask.

That is what happened. Name-by-name, someone found somebody who actually knew each person. In fact, that is how many names surfaced: a credible figure in the community knew how to find older relatives, former neighbors, or departed friends. Others could be confirmed with equal authority. Maybe someone knew the claimant’s family or knew someone that did. If a person claimed to be kin to someone or offered some small detail, surely someone else knew that relative or remembered the same detail as well. Some of those details might even be verified through official
documents.

It was a necessary process but slow and delicate, too. As of June 1998, twenty-nine survivors had been identified, contacted, and registered. (The number did not include sixteen identified as descendants of riot victims.) It took another fourteen months for the total to reach sixty-one. It would have been higher, except that three of the first twenty-nine had died in those months. This deadline had an ominous and compelling meaning.

Work immediately shifted through higher gears. In March 2000, the identification process finished for forty-one survivors then living in or near Tulsa. Just a few more still needed to be contacted. The real work remaining, however, involved a remarkable number of survivors who had turned up outside of Oklahoma. Following a recent flurry of media attention, more than sixty out-of-state survivors had been located. They lived everywhere from California to Florida, one in Paris, France!

All of that work is complete. As the commission submits its report, 118 persons have been identified, contacted, and registered as living survivors of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot. (Another 176 persons also have been registered as descendants of riot victims.)

The 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission thereby has discharged the mandate regarding the identification of persons.
The Commission shall . . . gather information, identify and interview witnesses . . . , preserve testimony and records obtained, [and] examine and copy documents . . . having historical significance.

Whatever else this commission already has achieved or soon will inspire, one accomplishment will remain indefinitely. Until recently, the Tulsa race riot has been the most important least known event in the state's entire history. Even the most resourceful of scholars stumbled as they neared it for it was dimly lit by evidence and the evidentiary record faded more with every passing year.

That is not now and never will be true again. These few hours - from start to finish, the actual riot consumed less than sixteen hours - may now comprise the most thoroughly documented moments ever to have occurred in Oklahoma. This commission's work and the documentary record it leaves behind shines upon them a light too bright to ignore.

The Oklahoma Historical Society was searching its existing materials and aggressively pursuing more before this commission ever assembled. By the November 1997, organizing meeting, Bob Blackburn was ready to announce that the society already had ordered prints from every known source of every known photograph taken of the riot. He was contacting every major archival depository and research library in the country to request copies
of any riot-related materials they might hold themselves. Experienced OHS professionals were set to research important but heretofore neglected court and municipal records.

This was news welcomed by commission members. It assured early momentum for the job ahead, and it complemented work that some of them were already doing. Eddie Faye Gates, for one, had pulled out every transcript of every interview that she had made with a riot witness, and she was anxious to make more. Jim Lloyd was another. Lloyd already had found and copied transcripts from earlier interviews, including some with Tulsa police officers present at the riot. He also had a hunch that a fellow who knew his way around a courthouse just might turn up all sorts of information.

That is how it began, but that was just the beginning. In the months ahead, Larry O’Dell and other OHS employees patiently excavated mountains of information, one pebble at a time, as it were. They then pieced together tiny bits of fact, carefully fitting one to another. One by one, completed puzzles emerged. Arranged in different dimensions, they made magic: a vision of Greenwood long since vanished.

Master maps, both of the community on the eve of the riot and of the post-riot residue, identified every single piece of property. For each parcel, a map displayed any structure present, its owner and its use. If commercial, what firms were there, who
owned them, what businesses they were in. If residential, whether it was rented or owned. If the former, the landlord's name. If the latter, whether it was mortgaged (if so, to whom and encumbered by what debt.) For both, lists identified each of its occupants by name.

It was not magic; it was more. Larry O'Dell had rebuilt Greenwood from records he and other researchers had examined and collected for the commission. Every building permit granted, every warranty deed recorded, every property appraisal ordered, every damage claim filed, every death certificate issued, every burial record maintained – the commission had copies of every single record related to Greenwood at the time of the riot.

Some it had only because Jim Lloyd was right. Able to navigate a courthouse, he ran across complete records for some 150 civil suits filed after the race riot. No one remembered that they even existed; they had been misplaced for thirty-five years. When Jim Lloyd uncovered and saved them, they were scheduled for routine shredding.

The commission gathered the most private of documents as well. Every form registering every survivor bears notes recording information taken from every one of 118 persons. With Kavin Ross operating the camera, Eddie Faye Gates videotaped interviews with about half of the survivors. Each is available on one of nine cassettes preserved by the commission; full transcripts are being
completed for all. Sympathetic collectors turned over transcripts of another fifty or more. Some had been packed away for twenty, even thirty years.

Others, including several resourceful amateur historians, reproduced and gave the commission what amounted to complete documentary collections. There were sets of municipal records, files from state agencies, reports kept by social services, press clippings carefully bound, privately owned photographs never publicly seen.

People who had devoted years to the study of one or more aspects of the riot supplied evidence they had found and presented conclusions they had reached. Beryl Ford followed the commission’s work as a Tulsan legendary for his devotion to his city and its history. William O’Brien attended nearly every commission meeting, sometimes to ask questions, sometimes to answer them, once to deliver his own full report on the riot. Robert Norris prepared smaller, occasional reports on military topics. He also dug up and turned over files from National Guard records. Others located affidavits filed with the State Supreme Court. The military reports usually had been presumed lost; the legal papers always had been assumed unimportant.

Commissioners were surprised to receive so much new evidence and pleased to see that it contributed so much. They were delighted to note that so much came from black sources, that it
documented black experiences and recorded black observations.

It had not always been that way. Too many early journalists and historians had dismissed black sources as unreliable. Too few early librarians and archivists had preserved black sources as important. Both thereby condemned later writers and scholars to a never ending game of hide-and-go-seek, the rules rigged so no one could win.

This commission's work changes the game forever. Every future scholar will have access to everything everyone ever had when the original source was white. In fact, they will have a lot more of it. They also will have more from sources few had before when the original source was black.

Because they will, the community future scholars will behold and the property they will describe was a community of black people, occupied by black people. The public records they will examine involved black people and affected black people. Objects they will touch came from black people. Interviews they will hear and transcripts they will read were recorded from black people. The evidence they will explore reveals experiences of black people.

Consider what so much new information and what so many new sources can mean for future historians. Consider what it already has meant for one.

Read closely Scott Ellsworth's accompanying essay, "The
Tulsa Riot,” a rather simple title, as titles go. Much more sophisticated is the title he gave the book he wrote in 1982, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*.

It is fair that they have different titles. They tell somewhat different stories in somewhat different ways. The chief difference is that the one titled so simply tells a tale much more sophisticated.

For one thing, it is longer. The report attached here filled 115 typed pages in the telling; the comparable portion of the book prints entirely in 25 pages. The report has to be longer because it has more to report, stories not told in the first telling. It offers more because it draws upon more evidence. The report packs 205 footnotes with citations for its story; 50 did the job for the first one.

Within that last difference is the difference that causes every other difference. To write this report, Scott Ellsworth used evidence he did not have — no one had it — as recently as 1982. He cites that new evidence at least 148 times. He had information from black sources accessible now because of this commission. That knowledge contributed to Scott Ellsworth’s citations from black newspapers, black interviews, or black writings. He cites black sources at least 272 times.

No wonder the two are different. From now on, everything can be different. They almost have to be.
Before there was this commission, much was known about the Tulsa race riot. More was unknown. It was buried somewhere, lost somewhere, or somewhere undiscovered. No longer. Old records have been reopened, missing files have been recovered, new sources have been found. Still being assembled and processed by the Oklahoma Historical Society, their total volume passed ten thousand pages some time ago and well may reach twenty thousand by the time everything is done.

The dimensions of twenty thousand pages can be measured physically. Placed side-by-side, they would reach across at least ten yards of library shelving, filling every inch with new information. The significance of these twenty thousand pages has to be gauged vertically and metaphorically though. Stacked high, they amount to a tower of new knowledge. Rising to reach a new perspective, they offer visions never seen before.

The 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission thereby has discharged the mandate to gather and preserve a record of historical significance.

* * *

The Commission shall . . . develop a historical record of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot . . .

The commission’s first substantive decision was to greet this obligation with a series of questions, and there was compelling reason why. Eighty years after the fact, almost as
many unresolved questions surround the race riot as did in 1921—
maybe even more. Commissioners knew that no "historical record"
would be complete unless it answered the most enduring of those
questions— or explain why not. That was reason enough for a
second decision: Commissioners agreed to seek consultants,
respected scholars, and other experts to investigate those
questions and offer answers.

Their findings follow immediately, all without change or
comment, each just as the commission received it. Accompanying
papers present what scholars and others consider the best answers
to hard questions. The reports define their questions, either
directly or implicitly, and usually explain why they need
answers. The authors give answers, but they present them with
only the confidence and exactly the precision they can justify.
Most retrace the route they followed to reach their positions.
All advance their positions openly. If they sense themselves in
hostile territory, some stake their ground and defend it.

The commissioners harbor no illusion that every reader will
accept their every answer to every question. They know better.
Why should everyone else? None of them do. All eleven have
reservations, some here, some there. Some dispute this point;
some deny that one. Some suggest other possibilities. Some insist
upon positions squarely opposite the scholars’.

None of that matters. However they divide over specifics,
they also are united on principles. Should any be in need, they endorse and recommend the route they took to reach their own consensus. The way around an enraged showdown and the shortest path to a responsible solution is the line that passes through points ahead. Each point marks a big question and an important answer. Study them carefully.

What was the total value of property destroyed in the Tulsa race riot, both in 1921's dollars and in today's? Larry O'Dell has the numbers. Any one of them could be a little off, probably none by very much. Could a lawyer argue, and might a judge decree, that citizens living now had a duty to make that good, had to repay those losses, all because of something that happened eighty years ago? Alfred Brophy can make the case, and he does.

Over eight decades, some Tulsans (mostly black Tulsans) have insisted that whites attacked Greenwood from the air, even bombed it from military airplanes. Other Tulsans (mostly white Tulsans) have denied those claims; many have never even heard them. In a sense, it is a black-or-white question, but Richard S. Warner demonstrates that it has no black-or-white answer.

He proves it absolutely false that military planes could have employed military weapons on Greenwood. He also proves it absolutely true that civilian aircraft did fly over the riot area. Some were there for police reconnaissance, some for photography, some for other legitimate purposes. He also thinks
it reasonable to believe that others had less innocent use. It is probable that shots were fired and that incendiary devices were dropped, and these would have contributed to riot-related deaths or destruction. How much? No one will ever know: History permits no black-or-white answer.

Can modern science bring light to old, dark rumors about a mass grave, at least one, probably more, somewhere in Tulsa? Could those rumors be true? If true, where is one? Robert L. Brooks and Alan H. Witten have answers. Yes, science can address those rumors. Yes, there are many reasons to believe that mass graves exist. Where? They can point precisely to the single most likely spot. They can explain why scientists settle on that one—explain it clearly enough and completely enough to convince non-scientists, too. Without making a scratch on the ground, they can measure how deep it has to be, how thick, how wide, how long. Were the site to be exhumed and were it to yield human remains, what would anyone learn? Quite a bit if Lesley Rankin-Hill and Phoebe Stubblefield were to examine them.

How many people were killed, anyway? At the time, careful calculations varied almost as much as did pure guesses—forty, fifty, one hundred, two hundred, three hundred, maybe more. After a while, it became hard to distinguish the calculations from the guesses. By now, the record has become so muddied that even the most careful and thorough scientific investigation can offer no
more than a preliminary possible answer.

Clyde Collins Snow's inquiry is just as careful and just as thorough as one might expect from this forensic anthropologist of international reputation, and preliminary is the word that he insists upon for his findings. By the most conservative of all possible methods, he can identify thirty-eight riot victims, and he provides the cause of death and the burial site for each of them. He even gives us the names of all but the four burned beyond recognition.

That last fact is their defining element. Thirty-eight is only the number of dead that Snow can identify individually. It says nothing of those who lost their lives in the vicious riot and lost their personal identities in records never kept or later destroyed. An accurate death count would just begin at thirty-eight; it might end well into the hundreds. Snow explains why as many as 150 might have to be added for one reason, 18 more for another reason. What neither he nor anyone can ever know is how many to add for how many reasons. That is why there will never be a better answer to the question of how many died than this: How many? Too many.

For some questions there will never be answers even that precise. Open for eighty years and open now, they will remain open forever because they are too large to be filled by the evidence at hand.
Some of the hardest questions surround the evidence, itself. Evidence amounting to personal statements — things said to have been seen, heard, or otherwise observed — raises an entire set of questions in itself. Surely some statements are more credible than others, but how credible is that? Most evidence is incomplete; it may be suggestive but is it dispositive? Evidence often inspires inference, but is the inference reasonable or even possible? Evidence is usually ambiguous, does it mean this or does it mean that? Almost every piece of evidence requires an interpretation, but is only one interpretation possible? Responsibilities will be assigned, decisions will be evaluated, judgments will be offered — on what basis?

These are not idle academic musings. On the contrary: This small set of questions explains why so many specific questions remain open. They explain how people — reasonable, fair-minded, well-intended people — can disagree so often about so much.

Consider a question as old as the riot itself. At the time, many said that this was no spontaneous eruption of the rabble; it was planned and executed by the elite. Quite a few people — including some members of this commission — have since studied the question and are persuaded that this is so, that the Tulsa race riot was the result of a conspiracy. This is a serious position and a provable position — if one looks at certain evidence in certain ways.
Others — again, including members of this commission — have studied the same question and examined the same evidence, but they have looked at it in different ways. They see there no proof of conspiracy. Selfish desires surely. Awful effects certainly. But not a conspiracy. Both sides have evidence that they consider convincing, but neither side can convince the other.

Another nagging question involves the role of the Ku Klux Klan. Everyone who has studied the riot agrees that the Klan was present in Tulsa at the time of the riot and that it had been for some time. Everyone agrees that within months of the riot Tulsa’s Klan chapter had become one of the nation’s largest and most powerful, able to dictate its will with the ballot as well as the whip. Everyone agrees that many of the city’s most prominent men were Klansmen in the early 1920s and that some remained Klansmen throughout the decade. Everyone agrees that Tulsa’s atmosphere reeked with a Klan-like stench that oozed through the robes of the Hooded Order.

Does this mean that the Klan helped plan the riot? Does it mean that the Klan helped execute it? Does it mean that the Klan, as an organization, had any role at all?

Or does it mean that any time thousands of whites assembled — especially if they assembled to assault blacks — that odds were there would be quite a few Klansmen in the mix? Does the presence of those individuals mean that the institution may have been an
instigator or the agent of a plot? Maybe both? Maybe neither?
Maybe nothing at all? Not everyone agrees on that.

Nor will they ever. Both the conspiracy and the Klan
questions remain what they always have been and probably what
they always will be. Both are examples of nearly every problem
inherent to historical evidence. How reliable is this oral
tradition? What conclusions does that evidence permit? Are these
inferences reasonable? How many ways can this be interpreted?

And so it must go on. Some questions will always be disputed
because other questions block the path to their answers. That
does not mean there will be no answers, just that there will not
be one answer per one question. Many questions will have two,
quite a few even more. Some answers will never be proven. Some
will never be disproved. Accept it: Some things can never be
known.

That is why the complete record of what began in the late
evening of May 31 and continued through the morning of June 1
will never quite escape those hours, themselves. They forever are
darkened by night or enshrouded by day.

But history has a record of things certain for the hours
between one day’s twilight and the next day’s afternoon. These
things:
• Black Tulsans had every reason to believe that Dick Rowland
would be lynched after his arrest on charges later dismissed
and highly suspect from the start.

- They had cause to believe that his personal safety, like the defense of themselves and their community, depended on them alone.
- As hostile groups gathered and their confrontation worsened, municipal and county authorities failed to take actions to calm or contain the situation.
- At the eruption of violence, civil officials selected many men, all of them white and some of them participants in that violence, and made those men their agents as deputies.
- In that capacity, deputies did not stem the violence but added to it, often through overt acts themselves illegal.
- Public officials provided firearms and ammunition to individuals, again all of them white.
- Units of the Oklahoma National Guard participated in the mass arrests of all or nearly all of Greenwood's residents, removed them to other parts of the city, and detained them in holding centers.
- Entering the Greenwood district, people stole, damaged or destroyed personal property left behind in homes and businesses.
- People, some of them agents of government, also deliberately burned or otherwise destroyed homes credibly estimated to have numbered 1,256, along with virtually every other
structure — including churches, schools, businesses, even a hospital and library — in the Greenwood district.

- Despite duties to preserve order and to protect property, no government at any level offered adequate resistance, if any at all, to what amounted to the destruction of the neighborhood referred to commonly as "Little Africa" and politely as the "Negro quarter."

- Although the exact total can never be determined, credible evidence makes it probable that many people, likely numbering between one and three hundred, were killed during the riot.

- Not one of these criminal acts was then or ever has been prosecuted or punished by government at any level, municipal, county, state, or federal.

- Even after the restoration of order it was official policy to release a black detainee only upon the application of a white person, and then only if that white person agreed to accept responsibility for that detainee’s subsequent behavior.

- As private citizens, many whites in Tulsa and neighboring communities did extend invaluable assistance to the riot’s victims, and the relief efforts of the American Red Cross in particular provided a model of human behavior at its best.

- Although city and county government bore much of the cost
for Red Cross relief, neither contributed substantially to Greenwood’s rebuilding; in fact, municipal authorities acted initially to impede rebuilding.

- In the end, the restoration of Greenwood after its systematic destruction was left to the victims of that destruction.

These things are not myths, not rumors, not speculations, not questioned. They are the historical record.

The 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission thereby has discharged the mandate to develop a historical record of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot.

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The final report of the Commission’s findings and recommendations . . . may contain specific recommendations about whether or not reparations can or should be made and the appropriate methods . . .

Unlike those quoted before, these words give this commission not an obligation but an opportunity. Nearly every commissioner intends to seize it.

A short letter sent Governor Frank Keating as a preliminary report in February 2000 declared the majority’s view that reparations could and should be made. “Good public policy,” that letter said, required no less. This report maintains the same, and this report makes the case.
Case, reparations — the words, themselves, seem to summon images of lawyers and courtrooms, along with other words, words like culpability, damages, remedies, restitution. Each is a term used in law, with strict legal meaning. Sometimes commissioners use those words, too, and several agree — firmly agree — that those words describe accurately what happened in 1921 and fit exactly what should happen now.

Those, however, are their personal opinions, and the commissioners who hold them do so as private citizens. Even the most resolute of its members recognizes that this commission has a very different role. This commission is neither court nor judge, and its members are not a jury. The commission has no binding legal authority to assign culpability, to determine damages, to establish a remedy, or to order either restitution or reparations. In fact, it has no judicial authority whatsoever.

It also has no reason or need for such authority. Any judgments that it might offer would be without effect and meaning. Its words would as well be cast to the winds. Any recommendations that it might offer neither have nor need judicial status at all. Statutes grant this commission its authority to make recommendations and the choice of how — or even if — to exercise that authority.

The commission’s majority is determined to exercise its discretion and to declare boldly and directly their purpose: to
recommend, independent of what law allows, what these commissioners believe is the right thing to do. They propose to do that in a dimension equal to their purpose. Courts have other purposes, and law operates in a different dimension. Mistake one for the other – let this commission assume what rightly belongs to law – does worse than miss the point. It ruins it.

Think of the difference this way. We will never know exactly how many were killed during the Tulsa race riot, but take at random any twenty-five from that unknown total. What we say of those we might say for every one of the others, too.

Considering the twenty-five to be homicides, the law would approach those as twenty-five acts performed by twenty-five people (or thereabouts) who, with twenty-five motives, committed twenty-five crimes against twenty-five persons. That they occurred within hours and within a few blocks of each other is irrelevant. It would not matter even if the same person committed two, three, ten of the murders on the same spot, moments apart. Each was a separate act, and each (were the law to do its duty) merits a separate consequence. Law can apprehend it no other way.

Is there no other way to understand that? Of course there is. There is a far better way.

Were these twenty-five crimes or one? Did each have a separate motive, or was there a single intent? Were twenty-five individuals responsible, those and no one else? The burning of
1,256 homes — if we understand these as 1,256 acts of arson committed by 1,256 criminals driven by 1,256 desires, if we understand it that way, do we understand anything at all?

These were not any number of multiple acts of homicide; this was one act of horror. If we must name the fires, call it outrage, for it was one. For both, the motive was not to injure hundreds of people, nearly all unseen, almost all unknown. The intent was to intimidate one community, to let it be known and let it be seen. Those who pulled the triggers, those who struck the matches — they alone were lawbreakers. Those who shouted encouragement and those who stood silently by — they were responsible.

These are the qualities that place what happened in Tulsa outside the realm of law — and not just in Tulsa, either. Lexington, Sapulpa, Norman, and Shawnee; Lawton and Claremore; Perry; Waurika, Dewey, and Marshall — earlier purges in every one already had targeted entire black communities, marking every child, woman, and man for exile.

There is no count of how many those people numbered, but there is no need to know that. Know that there, too, something more than a bad guy had committed something more than a crime against something more than a person. Not someone made mad by lust, not a person gripped by rage, not a heartbroken party of romance gone sour, not one or any number of individuals but a
collective body – acting as one body – had coldly and deliberately and systematically assaulted one victim, a whole community, intending to eliminate it as a community. If other black communities heard about it and learned their lessons, too, so much the better; a little intimidation went a long way. All of this happened years before, most fifteen or twenty years before Dick Rowland landed in jail, but they remained vivid in the recent memories of Greenwood’s younger adults.

This, or something quite like it, was almost always what happened when the subject was race. Here was nothing as amorphous as racism. Here were discrete acts – one act, one town – each consciously calculated to have a collective effect not against a person but against a people.

And is that not also the way of Oklahoma’s voting laws at the time? The state had amended its constitution and crafted its laws not to keep this person or that person or a whole list of persons from voting. Lengthen that list to the indefinite, write down names to the infinite – one still will not reach the point. For that, one line, one word is enough. The point was to keep a race, as a race, away from the polls.

Jim Crow laws – the segregation commands of Oklahoma’s statutes and of its constitution – worked that way, too. Their object was not to keep some exhausted mother and her two young children out of a “white car” on a train headed somewhere like
Checotah and send them walking six miles home. (Even if John Hope Franklin could recall that about his own mother and sister and himself as he accepted the Helmerich Award some three-quarters of a century afterwards.) No, the one purpose was to keep one race "in its place."

When Laura Nelson was lynched years earlier in Okemah, it was not to punish her by death. It was to terrify the living. Why else would the Lynchers have taken (and printed and copied and posted and distributed) that photograph of her hanging from the bridge, her little boy dangling beside her?

The Lynchers knew the purpose; the photographer just helped it along. The purpose had not changed much by 1921, when another photographer snapped another picture, a long shot showing Greenwood's ruin, smoke rising from fires blazing in the background. "RUNING THE NEGRO OUT OF TULSA" someone wrote across it, candor atoning for misspelling. No doubt there. No shame either.

Another photograph probably was snapped the same day but from closer range. It showed what just days before must have been a human being, maybe one who had spent a warm day in late May working and talking and laughing. On this day, though, it was only a grotesque, blackened form, a thing, really, its only sign of humanity the charred remains of arms and hands forever raised, as if in useless supplication.
Shot horizontally, that particular photo still turns up from time to time in the form of an early use: as a postcard. People must have thought it a nice way to send a message.

It still sends a message, too big to be jotted down in a few lines; but, then, this message is not especially nice either. The message is that here is an image of more than a single victim of a single episode in a single city. This image preserves the symbol of a story, preserves it in the same way that the story was told: in black-and-white.

See those two photos and understand that the Tulsa race riot was the worst event in that city’s history – an event without equal and without excuse. Understand, too, that it was the worst explosion of violence in this state’s history – an episode late to be acknowledged and still to be repaired. But understand also that it was part of a message usually announced not violently at all, but calmly and quietly and deliberately.

Who sent the message? Not one person but many acting as one. Not a “mob”; it took forms too calculated and rational for that word. Not “society”; that word is only a mask to conceal responsibility within a fog of imprecision. Not “whites,” because this never spoke for all whites; sometimes it spoke for only a few. Not “America,” because the federal government was, at best, indifferent to its black citizens and, at worse, oblivious of them. Fifty years or so after the Civil War, Uncle Sam was too
complacent to crusade for black rights and too callous to care. Let the states handle that — states like Oklahoma.

Except that it really was not "Oklahoma" either. At least, it was not all of Oklahoma. It was just one Oklahoma, one Oklahoma that is distinguishable from another Oklahoma partly by purpose. This Oklahoma had the purpose of keeping the other Oklahoma in its place, and that place was subordinate. That, after all, was the object of suffrage requirements and segregation laws. No less was it the intent behind riots and lynchings, too. One Oklahoma was putting the other Oklahoma in its place.

One Oklahoma also had the power to effect its purpose, and that power had no need to rely on occasional explosions of rage. Simple violence is, after all, the weapon of simple people, people with access to no other instruments of power at all. This Oklahoma had access to power more subtle, more regular, and more formal than that. Indeed, its ready access to such forms of power partially defined that Oklahoma.

No, that Oklahoma is not the same as government, used here as a rhetorical trick to make one accountable for the acts of the other. Government was never the essence of that Oklahoma. Government was, however, always its potential instrument. Having access to government, however employed, if employed at all — just having it — defined this Oklahoma and was the essence of its
power.

The acts recounted here reveal that power in one form or another, often several. The Tulsa race riot is one example, but only an example and only one. Put alongside it earlier, less publicized pogroms — for that is what they were — in at least ten other Oklahoma towns. Include the systematic disfranchisement of the black electorate through constitutional amendment in 1910, reaffirmed through state statute in 1916. Add to that the constitution’s segregation of Oklahoma’s public schools, the First Legislature’s segregation of its public transportation, local segregation of Oklahoma neighborhoods through municipal ordinances in Tulsa and elsewhere, even the statewide segregation of public telephones by order of the corporation commission. Do not forget to include the lynchings of twenty-three African-Americans in twelve Oklahoma towns during the ten years leading to 1921. Stand back and look at those deeds now.

In some government participated in the deed.
In some government performed the deed.
In none did government prevent the deed.
In none did government punish the deed.

And that, in the end, is what this inquiry and what these recommendations are all about. Make no mistake about it: There are members of this commission who are convinced that there is a compelling argument in law to order that present governments make
monetary payment for past governments' unlawful acts. Professor Alfred Brophy presses one form of that argument; there doubtless are others.

This is not that legal argument but another one altogether. This is a moral argument. It holds that there are moral responsibilities here and that those moral responsibilities require moral responses now.

It gets down to this: The 1921 riot is, at once, a representative historical example and a unique historical event. It has many parallels in the pattern of past events, but it has no equal for its violence and its completeness. It symbolizes so much endured by so many for so long. It does it, however, in one way that no other can: in the living flesh and blood of some who did endure it.

These paradoxes hold answers to questions often asked: Why does the state of Oklahoma or the city of Tulsa owe anything to anybody? Why should any individual tolerate now spending one cent of one tax dollar over what happened so long ago?

The answer is that these are not even the questions. This is not about individuals at all— not any more than the race riot or anything like it was about individuals.

This is about Oklahoma— or, rather, it is about two Oklahomas. It must be about that because that is what the Tulsa race riot was all about, too. That riot proclaimed that there
were two Oklahomas; that one claimed the right to push down, push out, and push under the other; and that it had the power to do that.

That is what the Tulsa race riot has been all about for so long afterwards, why it has lingered not as a past event but lived as a present entity. It kept on saying that there remained two Oklahomas; that one claimed the right to be dismissive of, ignorant of, and oblivious to the other; and that it had the power to do that.

That is why the Tulsa race riot can be about something else. It can be about making two Oklahomas one – but only if we understand that this is what reparation is all about. Because the riot is both symbolic and singular, reparations become both singular and symbolic, too. Compelled not legally by courts but extended freely by choice, they say that individual acts of reparation will stand as symbols that fully acknowledge and finally discharge a collective responsibility.

Because we must face it: There is no way but by government to represent the collective, and there is no way but by reparations to make real the responsibility.

Does this commission have specific recommendations about whether or not reparations can or should be made and the appropriate methods? Yes, it surely does.

When commissioners went looking to do the right thing, that
is what nearly all of them found and what they recommended in last year’s preliminary report. To be sure they had found the right thing, they have used this formal report to explore once more the distant terrain of the Tulsa race riot and the forbidding territory in which it lies. Now, they are certain. Reparations are the right thing to do.

What else is there to do? What else is there to find?
Murderous Race Riot Wrote Red Page in Tulsa Hist

Tuesday was the 50th anniv.
erty of the most infamous
and tragic of the many
riots that have marred the
history of the city.

The span of less than 24
hours in the history of North
Tulsa brought the ground
on May 31 when it was rum-
ored a young Negro, Dock
Rowland, who allegedly had
had an altercation with an
driver, Mrs. Sarah
Page, in the Drexel Building,
was to be

Mrs. Page had screamed
and said Rowland grabbed
her. She had a bruised arm
and reported the truck had
run over the woman. She
was

A Page

The riot began at 9 pm
on May 31 when it was run-
ored a young Negro, Dock
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had an altercation with an
elevator operator, Mrs. Sarah
Page, in the Drexel Building,
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stock of weapons was entered
and all guns and ammunition
taken

The riot soon shifted to the
southern fringe of North Tulsa.

The old four-story Red-Read
Flour Mill stood opposite
Greenwood Avenue on the
south side of the Frisco Tracks.
A night watchman
there was overpowered and
the mob broke into the build-
ing. They shattered every win-
dow on the third and fourth
floors, and fired thousands of
rounds into the heart of the
Negro area.

TULSA'S SMALL

police force was powerless to halt
the riot. Mayor T. B. Evans ap-
pelled to Governor Robertson
for help to stabilize the urban
area.

The riot was de-

pated several hours later
and arrived here in the after-
noon.

Shortly after midnight on
June 1, the white mob turned

to arson.

The first fire was set near
Archer Street and Boston Ave-
ue. The Tribune reported

THE DOWNTOWN fire com-
paany answered the alarm but
were driven off by rioters.

Fire Chief R. C. Adams then
concentrated on saving ware-
houses in the area.

The mob broke locks on
gasoline pumps and garages.

By dawn a pall of smoke
was over the entire north end
of Tulsa.

A Tribune reporter wrote in
the June 1 edition of the news-
letter: "The events resemble a
war, but with a simi-
larly dressed group of men."

THE ONLY sizable building
unharmed in the 25-block area
was Booker T. Washington
School.

The last stand by armed
blacks was sometime in the
morning at the base of Stand-
pipe Hill.

The Tribune reported that
Negroes there banded in
groups behind trees and in
buildings.

The National Guard mounted
two machine guns and poured
a deadly fire into the area.

The Negro group raised a
large white cloth as a surren-
der token, the Tribune report-
er stated.

THE GUARDMEN rushes
into the area and devoured
those who dared resist.

North Carolinian

Southern Baptist Head
Named to Second Term

ST LOUIS - Moral head
ahip is needed in a world
that has lost its sense of pur-
purpose, the re-elected presi-
dent of the Southern Baptist
Convention said. The SBC
has less emphasis on the sub-
topic of the Vietnam war than
did the American Baptist Con-
vocation which met last month
in Minneapolis.

DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR, STITCH FOR STITCH, YOUR
BEST SUIT VALUE IN ITS PRICE LINE IS

BRONLEY
ot Wrote Red Page in Tulsa History 50 Years Ago

The only stable building unharmed in the 26-block area was Booker T. Washington School.

The first fire was set near Archer Street and Boston Avenue. The Tribune reported

THE DOWNTOWN area was burned... The fire was driven off by firemen... The fire was concentrated on saving warehouses in the area.

The mob broke the locks on fire hydrants, burned... A large white cloth as a surrender token, the Tribune reporter stated.

THE GUARDIANS rushed into the area and diverted... They were formed into two columns... The fire was put out... The Negro group raised a large white cloth as a surrender token, the Tribune reporter stated.

Many of the black population ran north to take shelter in the Osage Hills. They were without food or water, and had little clothing. The American Red Cross began mobilizing early in the day, and by noon volunteer Tulsaans were touring the area north of Tulsa to return the fleeing blacks to their homes and offer whatever assistance was needed.

Most of Tulsa's white schools operated normally on June 1. Teachers told children to be calm, that the situation was in hand. In the Maple Ridge area, where many Negro servants lived, police and deputies took these people to the compounds, as well, on the protection theory.

By late afternoon, Gen. Barrett reported to Governor Robertson that he had the situation in hand. Tulsa was put under martial law, and citizens urged to stay off the streets after dark. The Pullman Co. refused to allow Negro porters to ride trains passing through Tulsa for several days.

Richard Lloyd Jones, publisher of the Tulsa World, wrote a front page editorial in the June 1 issue, which did much to calm the strikers. "Lynch law leads not to law but to lawlessness and lawlessness needs a reputation of government." Mr. Jones began.

"Lyncher law is a free brand in the hands of those who thoughtlessly elect to establish mob rule for law and order. Lynch law is an instrument of destruction and disaster to any community that falls its victim. Now is the time for every citizen to keep a cool head and keep out of mob collection..."
THE REV. ROBERT GOODWIN AND HIS FATHER, E. L. GOODWIN SR.

Black Community Observes
‘Golden Anniversary’ of Riot

“We were doing too well.”

There was a thriving black business community in Tulsa, and the Greenwood area was "brotherly" until the night of May 31, 1921. And day of June 1... said W. D. Williams.

Williams said in 1921 everything was rebuilt and in 1928 the Negro community was thriving, but it couldn't survive a race riot and depression together... “The black community died.”

He was one of several speakers Tuesday night at a "Golden Anniversary" commemoration of that race riot. The ceremonies were held in the Mt. Zion Baptist Church, old church, East 24th Street and North Elgin Avenue.

THE PRESENT CHURCH structure replaced an older building that was only 3 still 3; old when it was burned in the riot, said Mrs. Mabel Little, who recounted the old's history.

E. L. GOODWIN SR., publisher of the Oklahoma Eagle, said Tulsa blacks "fared pretty well under the segregation pattern, better than today," and today they now spend their money in stores on the southside.

The riot, he said, caused some of the northwest slums of Tulsa. The medicine was burned out, lumber dealers wouldn't sell and substandard homes were built.

In 1921, blacks were the objects of hate, "subject to the whims of the Ku Klux Klans," restricted by a cafe and "brutally pushed around by law enforcement," a practice still continued to a degree in Tulsa, said Goodwin.

"You have had rapid strides in recent years," said Goodwin. "We were retarded for a long time."

Then directing his remarks to the younger people in the audience of about 80, Goodwin said some of today's problems are caused by the black's own apathy, they must vote for both blacks and whites that will help their cause.

The blacks, he said need a good education, the same as a white child.

FURGED the younger group mostly in the Garfield Choir and the Children of Angels... to go into business.

You yourself have to climb out of the past it seems sometimes a pleasure to walk on the past, Goodwin said.

Be hard

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Fish Kill

Is Probed

SHAWNEE - State Health Department officials were expected to try to determine today what killed off approximately 300 fish in a small creek east of Shawnee.

Residents around the creek, six miles east of here in a state game area, fished a sample of the water and said it would be tested at the state Health Department's Poison Quality Control Laboratories in Oklahoma City.

Most of the fish were believed to be carp in the 1-pound range. There were some carp killed in the

Trixie Chooses Cake Flavor, Decorations

WASHINGTON - The White House chef Tuesday said a wedding cake was a lemon flavored white iced pound cake weighing 6 pounds. It was

White House chef Nancy Hill said the cake will have the initials of the President's daughter and husband engraved Edward Rice. It will be dressed in white and decorated with minted sugar flowers, white roses and pink gummed cherry blossoms.

There will be enough for everyone, she said, though only two guests have been invited to the wedding.

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Williams said in 1921 everything was burned, in 1925 everything was rebuilt and in 1928 the Negro community was thriving, but it couldn’t survive a race riot and depression together. The black community died.

He was one of several speakers Tuesday night at a “Golden Anniversary” remembrance of that race riot. The ceremonies were held in the Mt. Zion Baptist Church at East 20th Street and North Elgin Avenue.

THE PRESENT CHURCH been shed on their behalf in France and in Mississippi and is being shed in Vietnam. “We are here tonight to commemorate those stalwart blacks that stood up fore-square for you.”

He said, “you don’t want separateness, you want togetherness.”

Nearly 50 survivors of the riot were in the audience as Mrs. Little described events and the black business community that had existed in Tulsa.

She said there were reports that the Mt. Zion Church was filled with ammunition, but none was ever found and the report was never publicly declared false.

“We want the people on the
THE PRESENT CHURCH structure replaced an older building that was only 40 days old when it was burned in the riot, said Mrs. Mabel Little, who recounted the riot's history.

F. L. GOODWIN SR., publisher of the Oklahoma Eagle, said Tulsa blacks "fared pretty well under the segregation pattern, better than today," and today they now spend their money in stores on the southside.

The riot, he said, caused some of the northside slums of today. The northside was burned out, lumber dealers wouldn't sell and substandard homes were built.

In 1921, blacks were the objects of hate, "subject to the whims of the Ku Klux Klan," restricted by a curfew and "brutally pushed around by law enforcement . . . a practice still condoned to a degree in Tulsa," said Goodwin.

"You have made rapid strides in recent years," said Goodwin. "We were retarded for a long time."

Then directing his remarks to the younger people in the audience of about 200, Goodwin said some of today's problems are caused by the black's own apathy, they must vote for both blacks and the whites that will help their cause.

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"We want the people on the southside to know," said Mrs. Little, "that some of the best Negroes in the world are in Tulsa . . . we've never hurt anyone."

Fish Kill Is Probed

SHAWNEE (O) — State Health Department officials were expected to try to determine today what killed approximately 3,000 fish in a small creek east of Shawnee.

Residents around the creek six miles east of here said a state game warden took a sample of the water and said it would be tested at the state Health Department's Water Quality Control Laboratory in Oklahoma City.

Most of the fish were believed to be carp in the 1- to 2-pound range. There were some catfish in the kill.

Tricia Chooses Cake Flavor, Decorations

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House says Tricia Nixon's wedding cake will be a lemon-flavored, old-fashioned pound cake, six feet by 350 pounds.

White House chef Henry Haller said Tuesday the cake will have the initials of the President's daughter and bridegroom Edward Cox. It will be iced in white and decorated with white roses and pink tinge cherry blossoms.

There will be enough to serve 600 people, he said, although only 400 guests have been invited to the wedding.
Murderous Race Riot Wrote Red Page

Tuesday was the 50th anniversary of the most infamous day in Tulsa's history — the Tulsa race riot.

In the span of less than 24 hours, 35 blocks of North Tulsa were burned to the ground.

At least 31 persons were killed — nine whites and 22 blacks.

HOWEVER, EARLIER reports put the toll at much more. There were many conflicting reports. The June 1 edition of The Tribune in a page 1 story reported 9 whites and 68 blacks were dead, and an estimated 100 whites and 200 blacks injured.

In a Page 1 bulletin of the same issue, it was reported 175 men, women and children had been killed.

The death toll declined to nine whites and 18 blacks in three days and an additional four blacks died of burns or wounds, to bring the final count to 31.

How many died will never be known.

THE RIOT began at 9 p.m.

on May 31 when it was rumored a young Negro, Dick Rowland, who allegedly had had an altercation with an elevator operator, Mrs. Sarah Paige in the Drexel Building at 319 S. Main St., was to be lynched.

Mrs. Paige had screamed and said Rowland grabbed her. She had a bruised arm, and reported she struck him about the head with her purse.

He hurriedly left the elevator, but was arrested a short time later by police. This was in the afternoon.

Downtown restaurants and other businesses open the night of May 31 were buzzing with rumors that Rowland was to be lynched. Many whites gathered at the Courthouse out of curiosity, but if there was a lynching party, none appeared.

AN OPEN touring car containing several Negro men drove up. A shot or two was fired, then all hell broke loose.

White men began breaking into sporting goods and hardware stores, seizing rifles, pistols and shotguns. Every store in the downtown area with a stock of weapons was entered and all guns and ammunition taken.

The riot soon shifted to the southern fringe of North Tulsa.

The old four-story Rea-Read flour mill stood opposite Greenwood Avenue on the south side of the Frisco Tracks. A night watchman there was overpowered and the mob broke into the building. They shattered every window on the third and fourth floors, and fired thousands of rounds into the heart of the Negro area.

TULSA'S SMALL police force was powerless to halt the riot. Mayor T. D. Evans appealed to Governor Robertson to mobilize the National Guard.

Shortly after midnight, the governor ordered Brig. Gen. Barrett to mobilize units in Oklahoma City. They were rushed to Tulsa aboard a special train. A second special train of guardsmen was dispatched several hours later and arrived here in the afternoon.

By dawn a pall of smoke was over the entire north end of Tulsa.

A Tribune reporter wrote in the June 1 edition: "The ruins resemble a town hit simultaneously by fire and tornado... only chimneys, columns and gate posts are standing.

Dunbar School and Zion Baptist Church were marked by piles of brick and warped girders.
The Red Page in Tulsa History 50 Years Ago

Placed several hours later arrived here in the afternoon.

Shortly after midnight on the 1st, the white mob turned arson.

The first fire was set near the street and Boston Ave. The Tribune reported.

The Downtown fire company answered the alarm but were driven off by rioters. Chief R.C. Adler later concurred on saving warehouse in the area.

The mob broke locks on coltine pumps and garages. By dawn a pall of smoke over the entire north end Tulsa.

A Tribune reporter wrote in the June 1 edition: “The ruins resemble a town hit simultaneously by fire and tornado...”

Amarillo School and Zion Baptist Church were marked piles of brick and warped doors.

The only sizable building unharmed in the 35-block area was Booker T. Washington School.

The last stand by armed blacks was sometime in the morning at the base of Standpipe Hill.

The Tribune reported that Negroes there huddled in groups, behind trees and in outbuildings.

The National Guard mounted two machine guns and poured a deadly fire into the area. The Negro group raised a large white cloth as a surrender token, the Tribune reporter stated.

The guardsmen rushed into the area and disarmed those with weapons.

They were formed into two columns. One marched to Convention Hall, now Municipal Theater, and the other to McNulty Park, the old Western League Baseball Park at 11th Street and Elgin Avenue, where the Warehouse Market now stands.

The Tribune reported 50 wounded Negroes were at the National Guard Armory.

Tulsa had a population of some 7,000 Negroes and they were put into compounds including the hall, the ball park, the fairgrounds and Curtis Elying Field east of Tulsa.

Many of the black population ran north to take shelter in the Osage Hills. They were without food or water and had little clothing. Some ran as far as Bartlesville and Pawhuska.

The American Red Cross began mobilizing early in the day, and by noon volunteer Tulsans were touring the area north of Tulsa to return the fleeing blacks and render whatever assistance was needed, as the great majority of white Tulsans were outraged by acts of rioters.

Most of Tulsa's white schools operated normally on June 1. Teachers told children to be calm – that the situation was in hand.

In the Maple Ridge area where many Negro servants lived, police and deputies took these people to the compounds, as well, on the protection theory.

By late afternoon, Gen. Barrett reported to Governor Roberts that he had the situation in hand.

Tulsa was put under martial law, and citizens urged to stay off the streets after dark.

The Pullman Co. refused to allow Negro porters to ride trains passing through Tulsa for several days.

Richard Lloyd Jones, publisher of The Artic Book wrote a front page editorial in the June 1, 1921 issue, which did much to calm the stricken city.

“Lynching law tends not to law, but to lawlessness and lawlessness to a repudiation of government,” Mr. Jones began.

“LYNCH LAW is a firebrand in the hands of those who establish order with prejudice and dis that facts keep a mob. The home of black and white, the street, was no other site.

After which burned.

Remember Dad
June 20th

DR DOLLAR, STITCH FOR STITCH, YOUR VALUE IN ITS PRICE LINE IS

ONLEY
The ONLY sizable building armed in the 35-block area was Booker T. Washington High School. During the last stand by armed Negroes, the school was sometimes in the line of sight at the base of Stand-By Hill.

The Tribune reported that Negroes there huddled in basements, behind trees and in buildings.

The National Guard mounted machine guns and poured deadly fire into the area where the Negro group gathered. A white cloth as a surrender token was sent over.

MANY OF THE black population were put into compounds - including the hall, the ball park, the fairgrounds and the Flying Field of Tulsa.

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BY LATE afternoon Gen. Robert E. Anderson, a former governor of the state, reported think that he had the situation under control.

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Richard Lloyd Jones, publisher of the Tulsa Tribune wrote a front page editorial in the June 1 issue, which did much to calm the stricken city.

"Lynch law leads not to law but to lawlessness and lawlessness to a repudiation of government," Mr. Jones began.

"LYNCH LAW is a firebrand in the hands of those who thoughtlessly elect to establish mob rule for law and order. Lynch law is an impasioned appeal to the hatreds of prejudice. It brings ignominy and disaster to any community that falls its victim. . . . Now is the time for every citizen to keep a cool head and keep out of mob collections."

The Jones' editorial hit home, as a timely and courageous piece by a young man who had only recently purchased the newspaper. There was no further violence on either side.

After the agonizing weeks which followed the riot, the burned-out area was rebuilt.

TULSA is a black and white city, which never forget the day, its many acts of sadism and heroism, as well.

For 50 years The Tribune did not rehash the story, but the week of the 50th anniversary seems a natural time to relate just what did happen when a city got out of hand.
CASTE, RACE, AND POLITICS

A Comparative Study of India and the United States

by SIDNEY VERBA, Department of Political Science and National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago
BASHIRRUDIN AHMED, Center for the Study of Developing Societies (Delhi)
ANIL BHATT, Department of Political Science, University of Chicago

Caste, Race, and Politics presents some interesting differences between American blacks and Indian Harijans (Untouchables), raising (among other basic differences) the question: Can one compare across cultures as diverse as the United States and India? The volume represents a preliminary “trying-out” of some of the ideas for the analysis of a larger cross-national study of political participation currently being carried out under Professor Verba’s direction.

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THE TULSA RACE WAR OF 1921

R. HALLIBURTON, Jr.
Northeastern State College

Sixty-four people were lynched in the United States in 1921–29 of them were Negroes. During the previous two decades, more than three thousand people had been lynched in the United States (New York Times, 1921a). Lynching was not an unusual phenomenon in Oklahoma, and if the victims were black there was no censure. Oklahoma’s most erudite periodical, Barlow’s Weekly (1921a) editorialized succinctly:

In Oklahoma among thousands of people it is not considered a crime for a mob to kill a negro [sic]. In recent years there have been many lynchings in Oklahoma. There has yet to be chronicled the instance where any individual has paid a legal penalty for participating in murder as a part of a mob. There is yet to be chronicled the first instance where in Oklahoma an officer has been removed from office for failure to perform this

AUTHOR’S NOTE: This study is titled as it reads above because the authorities, press, and participants used the term “war” and other war terminology such as prisoners, skirmish line, concentration camp, casualties, refugees, and reconnaissance.
most primary duty of an officer, to wit: to protect the life of his prisoner from criminal violence. If the past is to be made a criterion for the future, it is perfectly safe at any time and at any place for any considerable number of men to gather, to take a prisoner from the hands of an officer and inflict the penalty of death.

The credibility of the above editorial is demonstrated by the lynching of an unidentified Negro, accused of attacking a white woman, at Holdenville, Oklahoma. On December 5, 1920, a white mob of fifty persons took the victim from the Hughes County Courthouse, hanged him from a telephone pole, and riddled the body with gunfire (New York Times, 1920). In July of 1920, Roy Belton, a white man accused of murdering a taxi driver, was taken from the Tulsa County Jail and lynched. “According to statements by many prominent Tulsans, local police officers directed traffic at the scene of the lynching, trying to afford every person present an equal chance to view the event” (White, 1921).1

Tulsa was a young, rich, rapidly growing, oil boom town. As the city grew in size and wealth, it continued to neglect the black section known as “Little Africa.” The absence of any race relations was interpreted as good race relations. Negroes had been in Tulsa since territorial days, and racism was not a new or unfamiliar problem. “Jim Crow” laws were among Oklahoma’s first legislative acts after statehood. The “Grandfather Clause” was enacted in 1910 and remained until the U.S. Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional in 1915. Segregation was more complete in Tulsa than in most American cities.

For more than a decade, Tulsa had been a bastion of lawlessness and corrupt politics. Prostitution, gambling, bootlegging, robbery, theft, narcotics, and other crime flourished openly. Just a few weeks before the riot, the Oklahoma State Legislature assigned two additional judges to Tulsa County to aid in clearing badly clogged dockets. The judges found more than six thousand cases waiting adjudica-

tion. Six percent of Tulsa’s residents were under indictment for some kind of crime (White, 1921; see also Comstock, 1921: 460; Tulsa World, 1921a).3

These malodorous conditions prevailed on Monday morning of May 30, 1921, when nineteen-year-old Dick Rowland, a Negro bootblack, entered the Drexel Building in downtown Tulsa to deliver a package. Upon entering the elevator to leave the building, Rowland apparently stumbled, brushed against and stepped on the foot of the white operator, Sarah Page. Mrs. Page, a young divorcee, screamed for help, causing Rowland to flee as a department store clerk ran to her assistance. Mrs. Page informed the rapidly growing crowd that the Negro had attempted to criminally assault her. The police were summoned and immediately began a routine investigation. Early Tuesday morning, two Negro police officers, Henry C. Pack and Henry Carmichael, arrested Rowland in the Negro section of town and placed him in the city jail. Mrs. Page subsequently identified Rowland as her assailant. Rowland, however, maintained his innocence by claiming that he stumbled and accidentally stepped on Mrs. Page’s foot. He explained that when Mrs. Page screamed, he became frightened and ran. Rowland’s preliminary hearing was set for Municipal Court on June 7 (Tulsa World, 1921b; Daily Oklahoman, 1921a).

At 3:15 p.m., the Tulsa Tribune (1921a) reached the streets with the following article emblazoned on the front page:

**NAB NEGRO FOR ATTACKING GIRL IN AN ELEVATOR**

A negro delivery boy [sic] who gave his name to the public as ‘Diamond Dick’ but who has been identified as Dick Rowland, was arrested on South Greenwood Avenue this morning by Officers Carmichael and Pack, charged with attempting to assault the 17-year-old white elevator girl in the Drexel building early yesterday.
He will be tried in municipal court this afternoon on a state charge.

The girl said she noticed the negro a few minutes before the attempted assault looking up and down the hallway on the third floor of the Drexel building as if to see if there was anyone in sight but thought nothing of it at the time.

A few minutes later he entered the elevator she claimed, and attacked her, scratching her hands and face and tearing her clothes. Her screams brought a clerk from Renberg’s store to her assistance and the negro fled. He was captured and identified this morning both by the girl and clerk, police say.

Rowland denied that he tried to harm the girl, but admitted he put his hand on her arm in the elevator when she was alone.

Tenants of the Drexel building said the girl is an orphan who works as an elevator operator to pay her way through business college.

Chief of Police John A. Gustafson, Sheriff William M. McCullough, Mayor T. D. Evans, and a number of other reputable citizens all declared that Sarah Page had not been molested and that no attempt at criminal assault had been made. Later Victor F. Barnett, managing editor of the Tribune, admitted that the statement about Mrs. Page’s facial scratches and torn clothes was false (Literary Digest, 1921).

Less than an hour after the Tribune story reached the streets, there was talk of a lynching “to avenge the purity of a white woman.” Police Commissioner J. M. Adkinson informed Sheriff McCullough at 4:00 p.m. that there was talk of lynching Rowland that night. Chief Gustafson, Tribune editor Barnett, and numerous others corroborated the statement that there was lynch talk on the streets of Tulsa (Literary Digest, 1921; White, 1921: 910).

Would a black man consider assaulting a white woman in a public and open elevator on the third floor of a busy business building on the main street of a city of one hundred thousand people? The paladins uttering lynching talk evidently never considered the question. A Negro editor (Franklin, 1967: 480) once asked

Why do they lynch Negroes, anyhow? With a white judge, a white jury, white public sentiment, white officers of the law, it is just as impossible for a Negro accused of crime, or even suspected of crime, to escape the white man’s vengeance or his justice as it would be for a fawn to escape that wanders accidentally into a den of hungry lions. So why not give him the semblance of a trial?

Law officers became sufficiently apprehensive about the street talk that they moved Rowland to the county jail for security. This was probably a judicious decision, because the jail was on the third floor of the courthouse. Nevertheless, no fewer than eighteen prisoners had escaped from the county jail during the previous two weeks (Daily Oklahoman, 1921b).

About 7:00 p.m., a crowd of white men began forming around the courthouse. Their number had increased to three hundred at 7:30 p.m., when Chief Gustafson arrived. Sheriff McCullough was at the courthouse with six guards and County Commissioner-elect Ira Short. Sheriff McCullough stationed the guards in the jail while he and Short remained on the first floor. Shortly, three unidentified men entered the courthouse. The Sheriff ordered them out and warned them to disperse. They left the building, but the growing crowd refused to disperse (Daily Oklahoman, 1921c).

Twenty-five or thirty Negroes, some of whom were reportedly armed, approached the courthouse at 9:30 p.m. They said they had come to protect Rowland. Sheriff McCullough and Deputy Barney Cleaver, a Negro officer, met them and successfully persuaded them to leave. The large white crowd, however, again refused to disperse after repeated orders. As the white throng grew in size and ill temper, the Sheriff and Short joined the guards in the jail. They disabled the elevator, leaving only the stairs as access to the third floor jail. They had iron bars at the top landing and were in a comparatively safe and barricaded position (Tulsa World, 1921b).

The white crowd was evolving into a mob of two thousand persons. This process was completed when three automobiles
loaded with Negroes appeared. The autos circled the courthouse while still others arrived. Most of the occupants were armed. The police made a feeble attempt to confiscate the weapons, but were singularly unsuccessful. About 75 Negroes left the autos, crossed the street to the courthouse and mingled with the white mob. This braggadocio incensed the whites, who demanded the blacks disarm and disperse. Then an unidentified white attempted to wrest a gun from a Negro. During the altercation the weapon discharged. Then, in the words of Sheriff McCullough, “all hell broke loose” (Literary Digest, 1921: 8).

All published accounts of this confrontation stipulate or infer that the whites were unarmed and that the blacks were heavily armed. Yet, during this first exchange of gunfire, at point-black range, only one person was wounded, and he was a Negro. A white man sitting in an auto almost a block away was killed by a stray bullet. This fusillade caused both races to disperse quickly, seeking shelter. The blacks began to flee north toward “Little Africa.” As they ran, several shots were fired at them from the courthouse area. These shots, some of which successfully hit, came either from law officers or from whites who had weapons. One black man was wounded in the abdomen. “He lay writhing on the sidewalk, under a billboard from which smiled winsomely the face of Mary Pickford, America’s Sweetheart.” Evidently several persons called ambulances for the wounded man, but when three arrived simultaneously the whites would not allow his removal. The ambulance attendants and theatre crowd stood by and watched him die. A few minutes later, another black corpse was found less than one hundred feet away (Prentice, 1931: 152).

The whites began organizing and planning strategy and tactics for reprisal. Their immediate task was to procure arms. The doors and windows of hardware and sporting goods stores and pawn shops were smashed and the premises looted. All kinds of weapons and ammunition were stolen along with such items as “bathing-suits, coats, tools, tires, and little things like watches” (Prentice, 1931; Literary Digest, 1921: 8). These white mobs were composed of diverse elements. One witness stated that their clothing ranged from “overalls to palm beach suits” (Tulsa World, 1921b).

By 10:00 p.m., the entire Tulsa police force had been alerted and began to arrive at the police station. They were then deployed along a line separating “Little Africa” from the white section of the city. Their orders were to prevent Negroes from entering the white area. About 10:30 p.m., the police received a report that the blacks were gathering for another “invasion” of the white district. White men began volunteering their services and automobiles to the police. About five hundred of these volunteers were given “special commissions.” Walter F. White, a New York City journalist and a very light-complexioned Negro, was unknowingly deputized by the authorities. After his “commission,” another “deputy” commented to White, “Now you can go out and shoot any nigger you see and the law’ll be behind you.” Later, news articles White had written revealed his identity as one of America’s best-known Negroes and an officer of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. White said he received “more than a hundred anonymous letters threatening my life” (White, 1929).

The officers of Tulsa’s National Guard kept Governor James B. A. Robertson and Adjutant General Charles F. Barrett apprised of developments. At 10:30 p.m., Governor Robertson telephoned General Barrett and advised him to telephone Tulsa’s Chief of Police or Sheriff to determine the seriousness of the situation according to their judgment. General Barrett contacted Chief Gustafson and asked if the National Guard could be of service. The Chief assured the Adjutant General “that he believed the civil authorities could control the situation” (Barrett, 1941: 207).

Nevertheless, “without official request the Adjutant General then [10:30 p.m.] ordered the units of the National
Guard in Tulsa mobilized and held in the armory to protect the arms and be in position to aid the civil authorities when called upon” (Barrett, 1941). The Tulsa Guard was already in process of doing this when the order arrived. It was fortunate that they had anticipated the order, because a white mob of three or four hundred attempted to break into the armory to obtain arms and ammunition. The mob dispersed only under threat of gunfire from within the building.

Conditions continued to deteriorate rapidly. After repeated pleas by the officers of Tulsa's National Guard, the civil officials capitulated and agreed to seek outside help. The Adjutant General had advised Major Byron Kirkpatrick by telephone of the procedure for the civil authorities to obtain the National Guard. Major Kirkpatrick immediately composed the following telegram:

Western Union Telegram
Tulsa, Okla., June 1, 1921.

Governor J.B.A. Robertson,
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Race riot developed here. Several killed. Unable handle situation.
Request that National Guard forces be sent by special train.
Situation serious.

Jno. A. Gustafson, Chief of Police
Wm. McCullough, Sheriff
V. W. Biddison, District Judge

Under Oklahoma law, the telegram had to bear the three signatures attached above. Major Kirkpatrick obtained them, but had great difficulty in reaching Sheriff McCullough at his barricaded position in the jail. Finally with the aid of a Tulsa World reporter who was acquainted with the Sheriff, Major Kirkpatrick obtained the necessary signature. The Sheriff signed the telegram reluctantly, however, explaining, “While I do not feel the situation warrants help from the

outside yet it is always best to play safety first.” (Tulsa World, 1921b).

By 11:00 p.m., the police and “deputies” began bringing in Negro prisoners. The fighting continued to escalate, and by midnight 250 prisoners had been captured. At this time, fighting was most pronounced around the Frisco Railroad Depot. It was in this area and at this time that the whites ignited some buildings concealing Negro snipers. The fiercest and most sanguine fighting occurred from midnight until dawn on Wednesday morning. During that time, the bellicose white mobs began systematically to capture, loot, and burn the entire Negro district. Police Commissioner J. M. Adkinson ordered Fire Chief R. C. Adler and Tulsa firemen to the scene. The white mobs would not allow them to combat the flames, however, and ordered them back to their station. Firemen were allowed to protect some houses owned by whites. Fires blazed all day Wednesday and continued smoldering and occasionally breaking into flames on Thursday afternoon. This mass destruction had a general pattern which involved breaking into a house by shooting off the lock and smashing everything breakable. Trunks and bureau drawers were torn open, pictures and telephones ripped from the walls, and bedding, furniture, and other inflammable goods were piled together, sprinkled with kerosene, and ignited (Prentice, 1931: 153).

The fury of the mob was evident by numerous heinous outrages. One of the most blatant aberrations was tying a rope around the neck of a black corpse, securing it to the rear bumper of an automobile, and dragging the body through the business district (Tulsa World, 1921b).10

Governor Robertson received the telegram requesting assistance at 1:46 a.m. on June 1. He immediately called Adjutant General Barrett and ordered him “to proceed at once with all the troops available, take charge of the situation, and restore peace at all costs.” A special train was made up by the Frisco Railroad to transport the Guard to
Tulsa. General Barrett issued orders for units in Oklahoma City, Wagoner, Muskogee, Vinita, and Bartlesville to hold themselves in readiness. Shortly after 5:00 a.m., the troop train, with the Adjutant General and some 150 Guardsmen aboard, rolled out of Oklahoma City. The engineer had orders to “make the run as rapidly as possible” (Barrett, 1941: 212).

Colonel L. J. F. Rooney, Commander of the First Battalion, Third Infantry Regiment of the Tulsa Guard, was in command of the Tulsa units until General Barrett arrived.11 His Guardsmen patrolled the banks, water works, electric generating plant and substations, and other downtown buildings with fixed bayonets while the wild mobs ran amok.12

Shortly after 8:00 a.m., the troop train arrived in Tulsa and halted in the midst of fifteen or twenty thousand blood-maddened rioters. . . . All of the colored section appeared to be on fire and desultory firing kept on between snipers on both sides while the Guard marched through the crowded streets. . . . Trucks, loaded with scared and partially clothed negro men and women were parading the streets under heavily armed guards.

General Barrett (1941: 155) said later, “In all my experience I have never witnessed such scenes as prevailed in this city when I arrived at the height of the rioting. Twenty-five thousand whites, armed to the teeth, were ringing the city in utter and ruthless defiance of every concept of law and righteousness. Motor cars, bristling with guns swept through your city, their occupants firing at will.”

When General Barrett conferred with the city officials, they admitted that they could not control the situation. Consequently, he requested authority from Governor Robertson to declare martial law and established his headquarters at City Hall (Barrett, 1941).13

Some townspeople thought the Guard should immediately begin to stop the looting, shooting, and burning. Instead, "they made preparations for breakfast." One citizen protested the leisurely breakfast and was summarily jailed (Prentice, 1931: 155).

Governor Robertson promptly granted the request for martial law in the following telegram,14 which arrived at 11:29 a.m.:

Western Union Telegram

June 1, 1921

Hon. Chas. F. Barrett,
Adjutant General,
City Hall,
Tulsa, Oklahoma.

I have declared martial law throughout Tulsa County and am holding you responsible for maintenance of order, safety of lives and protection of property. You will do all things necessary to be done to attain those objects.

J. B. A. Robertson, Governor

The Adjutant General had anticipated an affirmative reply and had formulated a proclamation which he immediately ordered printed and distributed. Martial law was declared throughout the county at 11:30 a.m. (Barrett, 1941: 213).

By the time the Guard was ready to begin patrolling, most of the fighting had ceased, but “Little Africa” was engulfed in flames. All available Guardsmen were ordered to aid the fire department in containing and suppressing the conflagration and disarming all unauthorized persons bearing arms. Additional troops from Muskogee, Vinita, Wagoner, and other cities were ordered to Tulsa and arrived at intervals throughout the day. The Adjutant General ordered Mayor Evans to withdraw all special police “commissions,” after determining that several of these men were ringleaders in the riot (Daily Oklahoman, 1921d).

Guardsmen quickly confiscated a truckload of weapons and arrested and jailed 65 looters. Looters had been carrying flour sacks from house to house, blowing safes, and stealing silver and other valuables (Daily Oklahoman, 1921d).
Officials ordered six airplanes into the air to observe looters and fires and to search for “refugees.” The planes communicated with officers on the ground by dropping written messages (Tulsa Tribune, 1921b). The harshness of even a benevolent rule by martial law was manifest in the following order by the Adjutant General:

FIELD ORDER NO. 3

Owing to the present conditions in Tulsa and Tulsa County—funerals of those killed during the riot will not be held in the churches of the city. Many of these churches are in use as camps for the refugees and it is against the policy of the military department to allow the use of same for funerals under the conditions of emotional stress which still prevails [sic] within the city [Barrett, 1941: 216].

The developments in Tulsa quickly became a national concern. On June 2, James W. Johnson, National Secretary of the NAACP, telegraphed Governor Robertson asking that he use all his powers to stop the “reign of violence and terror.” On the following day, Johnson wired President Warren G. Harding, seeking an “utterance” about the “violence and reign of terror at Tulsa.” The Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs protested the actions against Tulsa blacks in a terse telegram to Governor Robertson. The governor of Massachusetts, at the request of the National Equal Rights League, also appealed to President Harding. The United States Attorney General, Harry M. Daugherty, ordered a general inquiry into the riot by the Department of Justice. Preliminary reports, however, indicated that no federal question was involved (New York Times, 1921b). A United States Senate Subcommittee which was holding hearings on a “riot investigation bill” considered investigating the Tulsa riot—but also failed to take action (Gill, 1946: 87).

Governor Robertson, accompanied by Oklahoma Attorney General S. Prince Freeling, arrived in Tulsa on Thursday for a personal inspection. He was satisfied that the situation had been brought under control and ordered martial law to end at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, June 3. The Tulsa Chamber of Commerce objected strenuously, desiring the troops to remain at least a week longer (Daily Oklahoman, 1921c; also see New York Times, 1921c). Nevertheless, Field Order No. 7 was issued, complying with the governor’s order.

With the expiration of martial law, members of the American Legion were sworn in as special city police officers. Colonel Patrick J. Hurley, a future Secretary of War, organized a force of one hundred “minutemen” to aid the Sheriff’s office. Most of Hurley’s “minutemen” were former “Rough Riders” of the Spanish-American War (Douglass, 1921: 623).

The need for auxiliary police officers was to allay fear caused by rumors which inundated the city, to the effect that large numbers of blacks were advancing on the city to seek vengeance. Finally, the authorities sent out an airborne reconnaissance. Boley, Red Bird, Taft, and Wybark, all Negro towns, were reconnoitered. Every eastern Oklahoma town with a substantial black population was observed. The air surveillance witnessed no unusual activity, and its report helped alleviate fear. Nevertheless, as an added precaution, the Business Men’s Protective League was organized, and it placed armed guards on all roads into the city (Gill, 1946: 43). Their efforts were superfluous, however, because all violence had ceased. America’s worst race riot of 1921 had ended.

Tulsa’s black community suffered a catastrophic human loss. The total of casualties will never be known. Hospital and Red Cross records indicate that nearly a thousand were treated. It was reported, however, that many whites refused to report their injuries in order not to be identified with the riot. At least twenty-six Negroes and ten whites suffered violent death. The death toll may have been much higher. Many Negroes fled from the city and never returned. Persons
who were “missing” were presumed to have fled. Thirty-six bodies were found and buried without church funerals and without coffins. At least two of the deceased were never identified. Totally unconfirmed reports continue to this day that many black bodies were dumped into the Arkansas River or otherwise disposed. There were eight cases of premature childbirth which resulted in the deaths of the black infants. Moreover, an unknown number of injured Negroes, fleeing from Tulsa, sought aid in Muskogee, Sapulpa, and other area towns (Gill, 1946). One black mother, with a bizarre sense of humor, gave birth immediately after the holocaust and named her new daughter June Riot (Tulsa Tribune, 1921c).

Many of the dead and injured were completely innocent of any wrongdoing. The Negro janitor of the First National Bank was shot in the back while leaving work. A Negro porter in a prominent Tulsa hotel approached the manager on June 3, and said: “Boss, Ise gettin’ kinda weak.” He had been shot and had not revealed his wound for 24 hours for fear of being taken for a rioter (New York Times, 1921d).

Property losses were also enormous. Between 30 and 40 blocks had succumbed to the torch. No less than 1,115 residences had been destroyed. Another 314 homes had been looted, but not burned. Fire, pillage, and vandalism had obliterated the black business section. Property losses can only be estimated, but were probably between $2 and $3 million. When the violence ended, Tulsa Negroes were homeless (Gill, 1946: 84).

Some whites, cognizant of the plight of the black property owners, attempted to purchase their charred real estate at prices far below the market value. The Adjutant General stopped the practice by ordering the County Registrar of Deeds to stop registering titles from the destroyed area (New York Times, 1921c).

With thousands of the black population destitute, emergency measures were quickly fomented to assuage their suffering. Shortly after the riot commenced, the jail, police station, and courtroom were filled with prisoners. While rioting, shooting, looting, and burning continued unabated, thousands of black men, women, and children sought police protection. The Convention Hall was pressed into service as a detention center and by midnight Wednesday 1,500 Negroes were incarcerated there under armed guards. Not all blacks were there voluntarily, however. Officer Leo Irish “captured” 6 Negroes in the burned district, roped them together in single file, and led them running behind his motorcycle to detention at Convention Hall (Tulsa Tribune, 1921d).

Many Guardsmen were none too gentle in rounding up refugees. They frequently shouted obscenities and selecting epithets at their quarry and made excessive use of bayonets, often drawing blood. Many Guardsmen exhibited little or no compassion for the injured and suffering.10

As the excitement subsided, additional hundreds of blacks sought safety, food, shelter, and medical aid. McNulty Park was quickly transformed into another detention camp. Other Negroes, individually and in groups, were rounded up at gunpoint by police and Guardsmen and taken to the camp. By Wednesday evening, 4,000 people were in detention (Gill, 1946: 57).

After declaring martial law, the Adjutant General ordered Mayor Evans to appoint a Citizens Committee to care for the refugees. The committee was formed, and it secured use of the old fairgrounds for a detention camp. All Negroes were then moved from Convention Hall and McNulty Park to the new camp. The Tulsa County Commissioners then authorized food purchases for the refugees (Douglass, 1921: 622).

At the suggestion of the Adjutant General, the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce met on Thursday morning of June 2. The Adjutant General addressed the chamber and recommended the formation of more permanent machinery to assist in restoring normalcy to all community life. The Tulsa Executive Welfare Committee was created forthwith. Former Tulsa Mayor Loyal J. Martin served as Chairman. The
Executive Committee was charged with plenary responsibility for the care of refugees and the reconstruction of “Little Africa.” The Committee immediately began coordinating the efforts of the churches, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, YMCA, YWCA, NAACP, Boy Scouts, and other agencies (Douglass, 1921).

Reports began coming in from Bartlesville, Broken Arrow, Claremore, Collinsville, Dewey, Muskogee, Owasso, Sapulpa, and Sperry that black refugees had stopped at or passed through those towns in sizeable numbers. Most of these people eventually returned and were placed in the detention camp (Daily Oklahoman, 1921e).

The blacks were permitted to leave detention only for work. Upon leaving camp, they were issued green tags to wear. Their name, employer, and place of employment were listed on the tags. Any Negro found on the streets without an official and properly filled out green tag was arrested and sent to detention. Fortunately, the refugees were able to leave permanently at a rapid rate, made possible by the generous outpouring of help from penitent Tulsans and other Oklahomans. On June 15, 1921, the detention camp was empty (Gill, 1946: 66).19

The first step in reconstruction was to clean up the debris of the burned over district. But Street Commissioner Orville A. Steiner complained that he could not employ labor, though he was offering $3.50 per day. Mayor Evans immediately alleviated this problem by issuing the following formidable proclamation:

Notice is hereby given that all men are ordered to either get a job and go to work or if you have no job work will be furnished you by applying at the Booker T. Washington public school on Frankfort Street. All men who have no jobs and who refuse to work will be arrested as vagrants [Tulsa Tribune, 1921e; also see New York Times, 1921c].

Governor Robertson, during an inspection on June 2, ordered a Grand Jury investigation to attempt fixing of responsibility for the carnage and destruction. The Governor named District Judge W. Valjean Biddison the presiding jurist and ordered Attorney General Freeling to aid the probe.20 On June 9, a Grand Jury of twelve veniremen began work behind closed doors. After a week of investigation, the jury issued an invitation to everyone who possessed pertinent information to appear before it.31

While the official inquiry was being conducted, a pléthoric group postulated authoritatively about causes of the riot. Bishop E. D. Mouzon, preaching in the famed Boston Avenue Methodist Church, intimated that W. E. B. DuBois, who had spoken in Tulsa in March, might have had a sinister bearing on attitudes. The Bishop characterized DuBois as the most vicious Negro in the United States (Tulsa World, 1921d). Some “authorities” believed the trouble was due to Negroes who had been “preaching the gospel of so-called equality” (Daily Oklahoman, 1921e). W. E. B. DuBois saw racism, economic competition, and Negro pride as causative factors (Daily Oklahoman, 1921e). General Barrett succumbed to oversimplification, blaming “an impudent negro, a hysterical girl, and a yellow journal” (Independent, 1921).22 The Tulsa Ministerial Alliance stipulated that wholesale disregard for all moral and criminal codes, outlawing the Bible in public schools and immoral and uncensored motion pictures were to blame (Tulsa Tribune, 1921f). Clarence B. Douglass (1921: 620) blamed “a lawless element of white agitators, reds and bolsheviks.” Tulsa police said the I.W.W. had been “stirring up animosity between black and whites for months,” and that the Negro newspaper Tulsa Star had been urging blacks to demand racial equality (Daily Oklahoman, 1921e). Police and other “authorities” also blamed a national organization known as the African Blood Brotherhood and its Tulsa chapter (New York Times, 1921d).

Most all whites blamed Negroes for the riot. Many civic organizations and fraternal groups passed hackneyed resolutions expressing belief that the Negroes were to blame (Gill,
1946: 94). A Tulsa stenographer had a different perspective, however. After viewing events from her office window, she stated that “The whites here are much more to be blamed than the Negroes. It is largely an element of hoodlum white boys, craving excitement, and looking for any opportunity to start a race riot” (Outlook, 1921). Outlook magazine also theorized that “Race aversion (from which few of us are free) easily becomes race prejudice; race prejudice is quickly fanned into race hatred; race hatred among the ignorant and violent elements, black and white, may at any moment blaze into race war.”

Tulsa editor Richard Lloyd Jones editorialized (1921: 370):

As is too often the case in just such situations, the police are derelict of duty at the psychological moment when they have the power to prevent. As soon as this small band of armed black men came upon the scene, the Tulsa police, with or without the aid of county officials, should at once have thrown a line around them and marched them to jail. But they stupidly let the psychological moment pass. Then a white man struck a match to the incendiary mob-power by trying to take a gun away from a negro.

Former mayor Loyal J. Martin (1921: 893), Chairman of the Emergency Committee, declared: “We have neglected our duties and our city government has fallen down. We have had a failing police protection here. . . . We have neglected our duty as citizens.” Adjutant General Barrett “was emphatic in charging that failure of the local police officers to take proper action was responsible for the rioting.” He further charged that “deputies” holding “special commissions” were “chiefly instrumental” in inciting the outbreak and did most of the shooting (New York Times, 1921b).

Oklahoma newspapers commented extensively about the causes, results, and repercussions of the riot. Most of their fulminations only condemned the riot and demanded that law and order prevail. Few editors spoke of justice. The Oklahoma City Times cautioned blacks that “there is but one dominate [sic] race in America. . . .” The Okmulgee Democrat demanded “those guilty of the murders and arsons . . . must be hunted out and brought to speedy trial and punishment.” The Chandler News Publicist chastized Tulsaans, stating that they had reaped just what they had sown. The Frederick Leader saw a need to limit Negro population and “weed out constantly the vicious and the idle and to enforce segregation laws.” The Muskogee Times-Democrat blamed a black and white hoodlum element and lax law enforcement. The Lawton Constitution commented: “Negroes due to repeated lynchings over the state of members of their race, by white mobs, and a seeming laxity in officials in protecting their prisoners, especially when they are black men, from the mobs, evidently have taken the law into their own hands, for once in Tulsa” (Hariow’s Weekly, 1921b).

The Daily Oklahoman (1921e) editorialized: “It is true that, strictly speaking, this is a white man’s country. But the law guarantees protection to all and all should have it.” Most Oklahoma newspapers were sympathetic with Tulsa editor Richard Lloyd Jones’s generalization blaming “bad black men,” “beasts” who drank the “cheapest and vilest whiskey,” and who were “dope fiends” and “bullies and brutes” (Daily Oklahoman, 1921f).

The out-of-state press commented with a slightly different perspective. Louisville’s Courier-Journal quoted former President Grover Cleveland that “There is one problem in American life for which I foresee no solution. It is the race problem, the negro question.” The St. Louis Post-Dispatch stipulated, “We have in this country an ugly race problem, and to ignore it is only to postpone the reckoning.” The Dallas News assigned the guilt “mostly to the white race,” as did the Emporia Gazette. “The race problem is not being solved in any part of the country,” warned the Houston Post. The New York World added: “So long as the negro is denied . . . the rights and immunities guaranteed him . . . the
way is open to the repetition of such tragedies." Black journals, including the Kansas City Call, St. Louis Argus and Oklahoma City Black Dispatch, all indicated racism as the cause of the riot. The Fort Worth Star-Telegram declared the underlying cause as "professional agitators" dispensing "anti-white propaganda" denouncing the white people of the South by issuing "lurid descriptions of imaginary wrongs" done to the Negro race (Literary Digest, 1921: 7-9).

On June 25, the Grand Jury issued its report to Judge Biddison. After hearing all who requested to testify and the many who were summoned to appear, the Grand Jury stated, in part:

We find that the recent race riot was the direct result of an effort on the part of a certain group of colored men who appeared at the courthouse on the night of May 31, 1921, for the purpose of protecting one Dick Rowland. . . . We have not been able to find any evidence . . . that any organized attempt was made or planned to take from the Sheriff's custody any prisoner; the crowd assembled about the courthouse being purely spectators and curiosity seekers. . . . There was no mob spirit among the whites, no talk of lynching and no arms. The assembly was quiet until the arrival of armed negroes, which precipitated and was the direct cause of the entire affair.

We further find that there existed indirect causes more vital to the public interest than the direct cause. Among them were agitation among the negroes of social equality, and the laxity of law enforcement . . . of the city and county (Tulsa World, 1921f; also see Daily Oklahoman, 1921f).

The Grand Jury found that Negro police officers had been "insufficient" and recommended "colored town" be policed by white officers. It was stated unequivocally that "indiscriminate mingling of white and colored people in dance halls and other places of amusement be positively prohibited." The report ended with a demand that every law be rigidly enforced and a grave concern about Tulsa's public image. The panel was critical of Tulsa traffic policemen wearing guns on their "hip" and suggested that they might wear coats rather than appearing in shirtsleeves (Daily Oklahoman, 1921f).

Oklahoma Attorney General S. Prince Freeling refused to endorse the Grand Jury report and expressed dissatisfaction with the results of the investigation. Freeling desired indictments of several city and county officials (Harlow's Weekly, 1921e).

Police Chief John A. Gustafson and 86 others were indicted by the Grand Jury. Most of those indicted were charged for rioting, carrying weapons, looting, and arson. Gustafson was charged with dereliction of duty during the riot, plus other charges not associated with the disturbance. Upon the recommendation of Attorney General Freeling, Judge Biddison suspended Gustafson, who was arraigned in District Court. The mayor and entire city council were shocked and unanimously expressed the opinion that Chief Gustafson "would be honorably acquitted by a trial jury" (Tulsa World, 1921f; Daily Oklahoman, 1921f; New York Times, 1921e).

Some thought it "extraordinary" that Sheriff William McCullough was not indicted. Sheriff McCullough had testified "I went to sleep after I refused to give the negro to the whites. I didn't know there had been a riot until I read the papers the next morning at 8 o'clock." He said that he had not read the telegram to Governor Robertson before signing it and thought its purpose was to seek help to protect the prisoner (Harlow's Weekly, 1921b: 1; also see Daily Oklahoman, 1921g).

On July 22, after a two-week trial, the jury deliberated six hours before finding Gustafson guilty of the dereliction of duty charge—and other charges unassociated with the riot (Daily Oklahoman, 1921h). Although the Oklahoma penalty for inciting a riot was life imprisonment or death, court records indicate that of all who were arrested, indicted, and tried, only one was convicted. Garfield Thompson, a Negro, was arrested on the night of the riot for carrying a concealed
weapon, and ten days later was sentenced to thirty days in the county jail (Gill, 1946: 97). "Officials attempted to alleviate the humiliation of the citizenry by dropping all of the suits [charges] against the rioters" (Gill, 1946: 103).

In order to prevent future outbursts of violence and to preserve law and order, Tulsa enlarged its police department. According to Police Commissioner James M. Adkinson, the city increased its police force by twenty percent (Gill, 1946: 98).

Dick Rowland had been released from custody shortly after the riot. Sarah Page informed the Tulsa County Attorney that she did not wish to prosecute. On September 28, 1921, all charges against Rowland were dismissed (Gill, 1946: 102).

CONCLUSIONS

In 1921, Tulsa was a young, rich, rapidly growing oil boom town. As the city grew in size and wealth, it continually neglected the segregated black section. This absence of intercommunity race relations was interpreted as amicable race relations. Economic competition between the races and charges ofpeonage were occurring at the very time of rising black expectations as a result of the conclusion of World War I. Racism, discrimination, and exploitation were encouraged by a pronounced absence of law enforcement. Blacks and whites exhibited little respect for the law or officers of the law. There was widespread criminal activity by a large transient and resident criminal element of both races in the city. The law officers, press, church, power structure, and general public tolerated open lawlessness. Six percent of the city population was under indictment, and the criminal court dockets were badly clogged.

These conditions, plus a history of law officers surrendering prisoners to mobs, helped generate a lynch spirit in the city. The city churches and other forces of morality appeared to be more interested in denouncing the evils of dancing, movies, and pornography than in the basic questions of justice, human rights, and law and order.

Irresponsible journalism played a significant role in fomenting the riot. The timid actions of the sheriff toward the crowd gathered at the courthouse and the lack of coordination and cooperation between city and county officials allowed the riot to develop. The refusal to seek help from the National Guard until the riot was completely out of control was a serious mistake at best and probably dereliction of duty.

NOTES

1. Mob harassment, mutilation, whipping, tarring and feathering, and lynching had been common in Tulsa and across Oklahoma for the past decade.
2. Tulsa experienced a long police strike in 1919.
3. During the previous decade, most serious race riots had been preceded by sensational journalism.
4. White investigated 41 Lynchings and 8 race riots.
5. The author was Adjutant General of the Oklahoma National Guard during the Tulsa race riot and had been associated with the Guard for more than twenty years.
6. The files of the Oklahoma Adjutant General are void of any pertinent documents or other information relative to the Tulsa riot.
7. This information is contained in an official statement of Major James A. Bell to Lieutenant Colonel L. J. F. Rooney, J. B. A., in the Robertson Papers, Oklahoma State Library at the Capitol.
8. The telegram can be found in the Robertson Papers.
9. This is from the official statement of Major Byron Kirkpatrick to Lieutenant Colonel L. J. F. Rooney, in the Robertson Papers.
10. Some reports indicate that several Negroes were dragged through the streets behind automobiles.
12. The official statement of Major James A. Bell to Lieutenant Colonel L. J. F. Rooney, in the Robertson Papers.
13. Barrett was thoroughly familiar with the legal processes involved because as a former member of both the Oklahoma House and the Senate, he had authorized virtually all the state's military legislation.
14. The telegram is in the Robertson Papers.
15. There were many reports from the black community that rifle fire came from the aircraft (see Parrish, n.d.: 12).
16. The telegram from James W. Johnson to Governor J. B. A. Robertson is in the Robertson Papers.
17. The telegram is in the Robertson Papers.
18. This information is taken from an interview with David F. McColloch in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, on October 15, 1969.
19. Tulsa Negroes were required to wear the identity tags until July 7.
20. Governor J. B. A. Robertson, to Attorney General S. P. Freeing, June 3, 1921, in the Robertson Papers. Attorney General Freeing's files were stored for some time in a "pesthouse" and subsequently destroyed.
21. A telegram from Valjean Biddison to Governor J. B. A. Robertson, in the Robertson Papers. See also Tulsa World (1921c).
22. Barrett had previously been a newspaper editor in Shawnee, Oklahoma.
23. There are no extant court records of this trial.

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A BLACK WAS MURDERED in front of Tulsa's Convention Hall after he had surrendered. Blacks were marched to the half-buried trees. There, Tulsa physician A.C. Jackson, who had been named by the Mayo brothers as "the most able Negro surgeon in America," was murdered on one such march.

TRUCKS took the bodies of blacks killed in the riot to the fairgrounds and to the Arkansas River, where some of the bodies were dumped. Several hundred persons came from a haven for blacks, and there was talk in 1880 of making it "the only black state in the union," Ellsworth explained. "Black people came to the area from 1830 to 1860, calling it the "promised land.""

Three events happened in Tulsa prior to 1921 that set the stage for the riot that would destroy more than 1,000 homes occupied by blacks and burn the business district to the ground. "But the main attack on the riot were the police, press and judicial system," Ellsworth said.

THE TROUBLE BEGAN in 1917 when the Tulsa World newspaper claimed to have evidence implicating the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the bombing of the home of a wealthy Tulsa oil man. An oil worker had been arrested in the bombing and had denied he was an IWW member, but the World editorialized that his denial "confirmed the belief of the detectives that he is a member."

In Oct. 31 editorial entitled "Patience Has an End," the newspaper endorsed vigilante solutions, comparing IWW members to horse thieves and recommending similar treatment. "Right here is a good place to disagree with the statement, frequently expressed by Oklahoma editors, that the IWW's and other pro-union individuals should absolve the country," the World wrote. "As a matter of fact, there is no place for them to go. The only relief is a wholesale application of concentration camps. Or, what is hemp worth now, the long feet?"

The Tulsa World once again called for lynchings after 12 men were arrested during police raids of the IWW hall on Brady Street. In an editorial entitled "Get Out the Hemp," the newspaper advised: "If the IWW or its twin brother, the Oil Workers Union, gets busy in your neighborhood, kindly take occasion to decrease the supply of the hemp. A knowledge of how to tie a knot that will nick might come handy in a few days. It is no time to dally with the enemies of the country. The unrestricted production of hemp is as necessary to the winning of the war as the unrestricted production of gunpowder. We are either going to whip Germany or Germany is going to whip us. The first step in the whipping of Germany is to strangle the IWW's. Kill 'em just as you would kill any other kind of snake. Don't scoff 'em; kill 'em. And kill 'em dead. It is not time to waste money on trials and continuance like that. All that is necessary is the evidence and a firing squad. Probably the carpenters union will contribute the timber for the coffins."

The Oil Field Workers' Union had organized some 300 oil field workers in the Tulsa area under the IWW banner. Not only were the 12 IWW members found guilty by Judge T. D. Evans (who was mayor of Tulsa during the 1921 race riot), but five people in the courtroom who had served as witnesses for the defense were arrested and tried on the spot and likewise declared guilty.

EN ROUTE TO THE COUNTY JAIL, the 17 prisoners were kidnapped by a gang of 40 or 50 armed men in long black robes and masks. The 17 were taken to a ravine west of the city, stripped, tied to a tree and whipped with "five-eighths or three-quarters hemp." Hot tar and feathers then were applied to their burned backs. Police collusion was charged in the tragedy, and one of the whipped men stated "There were extra gowns and masks provided, which were put on by the Chief and one detective." "The 1917 IWW Incident revealed how disastrous the consequences could be for a group of Tulsans if the power of an influential newspaper, the city government and the local courts and police was brought to bear against them," Ellsworth said.

The mob that attacked the 17 men called itself the "Knights of Liberty" and was described by the Tulsa World as a "patriotic body." By 1921, the Ko Klux Klan in Tulsa had a membership of 3,000, including a women's Klan and a junior Klan of teenage boys.

A second incident which contributed to mob rule in Tulsa took place two years later. On March 17, 1919, a white ironworker was shot in the back on the streets of Tulsa. Before he died, he told police his assailants were two black men, but he could give only a sketchy description of them.

THREE BLACK MEN WERE ARRESTED in the case and rumors began to spread that there might be an attempt to lynch them. A group of 15 armed blacks drove to the city jail to investigate the safety of the defendants, and the next day the Tulsa Democrat newspaper wrote that "much talk of trouble with the colored element was heard. Subsequently, three black policemen were fined by two white women.

This event in 1919 revealed that there were serious doubts in the black community "as to whether the local white law enforcement machinery could be trusted upon to protect prisoners . . . ." Ellsworth said.

The race riot came on the heels of another violent event in Tulsa that shook the city some nine months prior to the riot. A white taxi driver was murdered by a white passenger. An 18-year-old man was arrested and held on the top floor of the courthouse, but a mob of 1,000 took him from his cell and lynched him at a spot along the Jenks road. Tulsa police reportedly directed traffic and helped control the crowd at the scene.

The Tulsa World called the event "a righteous protest," stating: "There was not a vestige of the mob spirit in the act of Saturday night. It was citizenship, outraged by government inefficiency and a too tender regard to the professional criminal." Police Chief John Gustinson said "it is my honest opinion that the lynching of Betton will prove of real benefit to Tulsa and vicinity. It was an object lesson to the hijackers and auto thieves, and I believe it will be taken as such."

The brutal beating of 17 men, the lynching of another and the obvious lack of police and court protection led up to the conviction by Tulsa blacks that one of their own was in critical danger when he was arrested on May 31, 1921 for attempted assault of a white woman.

RICHARD OWENS, 23, CLAIMED he had accidentally stepped on the foot of an elevator operator when he entered the elevator. After the screamed, Rowland was arrested and held on the top floor of the courthouse. Despite the lack of any evidence that Rowland actually tried to assault the woman, the Tulsa Tribune carried a sensational front-page headline as its afternoon issue: "To Lynch Negro Tonight." Two hours after the paper hit the streets, an angry mob of whites began to form at the courthouse, and a hundred men in nine months earlier. Only this time another mob of blacks also converged on the site.

"Nobody knows who fired the first shot," Ellsworth said. "Witnesses say: white man tried to disarm a black man and that started it."

Approximately 300 blacks were shot on the spot. The white mob then forgot about the black man who had been shot and turned its violence toward the city's north side: the black Greenwood section of town.

TULSA WAS BURNING! In a matter of hours, a vast section of Greenwood was ashes, the blackened and stifled corpses of its inhabitants protruding from the remains. Trackleads of bodies were
were murdered in the riot, although the exact number never was known. The Red Cross estimated as high as 300 deaths.

A Catholic Mexican American woman who saved the lives of two black youngsters during the Tulsa race riot 61 years ago still wonders what happened to the little boys she plucked from danger.

Mary Morales Aleman is in her 80's now, but the memory of her frightening experience during the notorious riot still remains fresh in her mind.

"I was born in Monterey of a Spanish and French mother," she began to tell her story from the wheelchair in which she spends most of her time.

"I came to this country at the age of 19, after graduating from the International Baptist College in Monterey, Calif."

MARRIED AT AGE 14, she was still childless when she moved to Tulsa and settled down on Quinley Street on the city's north side.

"When the race riot began, I had come to Tulsa to teach Spanish lessons for six months," she recalled.

"My husband was working in a restaurant. We operated a Mexican restaurant for years here."

"I remember him coming home and told me to 'close the doors, close the doors!' Men had started shooting and we heard noises that sounded like thunder or a bomb exploding.

As heroes of whites descended upon their section of town, shooting, burning and looting, blacks fled and sought refuge and safety in other parts of town.

"My husband said the blacks were fighting back and that they might try to get inside our house," Aleman said. "I stood at the door and saw the color blind people running."

The riot began on the evening of May 21, "already summer weather," as Aleman recalled. Blacks and whites had gathered in separate mobs at the county jail at Sixth Street and Boulder Avenue because of rumors that a young black prisoner might be lynched that night.

"I went outside and saw airplanes coming from the north to the south," Aleman said. "One of the planes had a gun like a machine gun on it that squeezed, it was like a war."

THE BLACK COMMUNITY was being attacked not only from the ground, but from the air as well. Several witnesses reported that the planes flew low to the ground and that shots were fired at the populace below.

"I saw two little black boys running and screaming," Aleman continued her story. "So I ran to the middle of the street and grabbed those kids. I was like a mother hen, but I thought we were going to be killed. I expected to die, but I did not let loose of the children."

As she stood with her arms around the boys in the middle of the street, she prayed and yelled at the planes, begging them not to shoot.

"One of the pilots was looking at us through binoculars," she explained. "I think they did not shoot when they saw I was not a black person."

The police took the frightened boys into her house and fed them to calm them down "because their hearts were pounding so."

"I never knew their names. They said their parents had told them to run and save themselves when the riot began. They left in a hurry to see if their parents were still living."

THE DIRECTOR OF A SQUAD of grave diggers reported that 150 blacks died in the riot, but Tulsa's black newspaper, The Oklahoma Eagle, claimed that as many as 300 were killed.

"We were just lucky," reflected the elderly member of St. Francis parish who has been widowed twice and has two children, eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

"It was faith," she corrected herself. "I believe you have to have a strong faith to live. My mother taught me different things to say to the good Lord, and I still thank Him for what He did for us that day."

After the riot, Aleman spent a year working with the Red Cross, helping blacks restore their lives. The City's promise to rebuild the black community came to nothing, but the Red Cross expended more than $200,000 in relief work from June to Christmas Eve, 1921.

The riot is just a memory now to people like Mary Morales Aleman, who survived and lived to tell her great-grandchildren about it. Still, after all these years, she continues to ponder it.

"I wonder if those two little boys still live here — and if they remember me?" she asks with a gleam in her eye.
Tulsa riot is burned into her memory

by Charlene Scott Warnken
EOC Staff

"I would rather be a Klansman in a robe of snowy white than a Catholic priest in a robe as black as night. For a Klansman is an American and America is his home, but a priest owes his allegiance to a dago pope in Rome."

Ruth Sigler Averv found that verse engraved on a Ku Klux Klan coin that was cast in Tulsa shortly after what she calls "the blackest day in Tulsa's history" - May 31, 1921.

Avery is writing a book about the Tulsa race riot that took the lives of scores of blacks and left thousands homeless. She, herself, witnessed the riot as a first grader at Holy Family School.

Avery has spent the past 13 years in researching and conducting oral interviews for the book she has entitled "The Fifth Horseman: the Conspiracy of Silence."

THE "WORST RACE RIOT in America" has been almost totally erased from Oklahoma records, but it remains "seared in my memory, every little detail of those days," Avery said.

"I was in a Holy Family school recital the night the riot began on May 31," she recalled. "The recital was held at the convention hall, and we were all dressed in white. My dress was made of crepe de chine and was accordion pleated. I was trying so hard not to get it dirty.

"I had one line to say: 'Mine's the nicest dolly there is in this whole town!' As soon as I said it, Father John Heiring rushed across the stage and the lights went on. It scared me because I knew that wasn't supposed to happen. He dismissed the recital and told everyone to go home and darken their homes. It was about 9:30 or 10."

"My aunt grabbed one of my arms and my brother the other, and they pulled me out of the convention hall and we ran to Main Street," she remembered.

"The streetcar was dark and the street lights had been shot out. The conductor said to get down on the floor, but I wasn't going to because of my dress. My See RIOT, page 2
from page 1

sunt pushed me down, and I was on top of my doll with the china head that was poking me in the stomach.

"WE WERE SCARED to death! They shot through the windows of the streetcar and shards of glass came from the windows. We were the first to get off, so we had to step over people on the floor. I was saying my Hail Marys; I was so afraid."

Avery and her family lived on East Eighth Street at the time. "We ran as fast as we could to get home because they were still shooting at the Courthouse on Sixth Street," she said.

The riot started at the Courthouse where both blacks and whites had gathered in the hundreds. A young black man was being held on the top floor of the Courthouse after being accused of assaulting a white woman in an elevator.

"The next morning this funny sound woke me up," Avery continued. "I looked out the window and saw two flatbed trucks with wooden sides full of dead bodies. They were just tossed up on top of one another, and I thought they looked like dolls with their arms and legs sticking out.

"On the second truck was a little boy about my age. He had on a plaid shirt and overalls and he was barefoot. His head was bumping around and his eyes were open. He was looking right at me — and I screamed. As far as I could tell, all of the bodies were black."

Avery's uncle decided to remove her and her brother to the country because of a rumor that blacks were coming from Muskogee to burn Central High School nearby. She hastily donned her white recital dress again and threw her night clothes into a paper sack.

"My uncle had an open flivver and we children sat in the back seat. He drove over to the north side to see what was happening. We went to the top of Standpipe Hill, where people were parked at the edge and looking down at Greenwood. To our right was a World War I veteran in khaki who was still shooting a machine gun. He said to us, 'Damn it to hell, you are in the range of fire.'"

"Then this man was shot in the shoulder and slumped against our car door. I tried to help him, but he pulled away angrily. I felt something sticky on my white dress, and I had his blood on it. I looked down into Greenwood and saw the churches and the town burning for 36 (square) blocks."

Avery, who was seven at the time, had led "a very sheltered life," and was shocked to the core by the riot's events.

"TULSA WAS SETTLED by southerners; the Yankees didn't come until oil was discovered born in Tulsa, and half of we were black: the name nursesmaid and chauffeur white people defended the at the point of a gun." The second day of the uncle found an elderly bl who had lost his wife in th shooting and looting north side, where blacks l ghetto that exists to this da Aver's best friend wa girl who lived with her I servants' quarters across tUniversity asked to apologize for 'anti-Catholic' art display

CHICAGO (N C) — An art exhibit at the University of Illinois in Chicago, labeled anti-Catholic by its critics, closed May 13 but efforts to get the university to apologize for showing the exhibit continued.

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights sent a letter May 16 to members of the Illinois House and Senate Committees on Higher Education asking that they see that the art exhibit, "riot go unrebuked and that nothing like it will ever happen again."

The letter, from the Catholic League's director of public affairs Michael Schwartz, said that university system by elevating an- ti-Catholic bigotry to the level of an officially embraced and espoused policy.

Some of the 40 paintings by Douglas Van Dyke depict Christ with the head of a pig on the cross, the Eucharist in a toilet bowl and bishops and the pope as instruments of the devil.

State legislators had responded to the art exhibit in a variety of ways.

Representative Roger P. McAuliffe sponsored a resolution that was adopted May 12 by the state House of Representatives which accused the that f. Barn of
ISTORIAN Ruth Sigler Avery is shown here with one of the books on Tulsa she has researched for a book she is writing on the race riot of 1921. Avery herself was a witness to the riot, she said.

"I never saw her again after the riot," she said. "A neighbor said the little girl's father had been shot in the back."

The anger and resentment of the riot of 62 years ago lives on inside Avery, who has found many Oklahomans unwilling to admit that the riot ever happened.

"Mention of it has been torn from Tulsa's old newspapers. The district court records are gone, as are the attorney general's records. Microfilm is missing from the library as is the record of the multimillion dollar lawsuit filed by blacks against the City of Tulsa. (The suit was dismissed in 1937.)

"Tulsa had very strong Ku Klux Klan activity at the time of the riot. The Klan started here in 1917 and there were thousands of members. They took in 600 new members the September following the riot. I remember seeing the Klan lined up in their white robes with torches on Main at Easton Street, where they had their 'Be No Klavern: 'Be no Catholic, be no nigger, be no Jew.' That was their motto."

Avery was oral historian for the Tulsa County Historical Society for six years. She calls the 1920s "the most violent decade in Oklahoma history."

"Machine guns were mounted on top of the Tulsa Hotel and aimed at Greenwood. The blacks lost everything in the riot, and no white man was ever jailed or punished for it. Yet the whites were the ones who invaded north Tulsa and burned it to the ground."

Avery has read a portion of her book on national radio, and has taped interviews with eyewitnesses from Tulsa's northside.

"THEIR STORIES brought tears to my eyes, to hear the feelings of those absolutely innocent people whose own neighborhoods were turned on them. People say I am trying to rile up the races, but I am just trying to tell the truth. I've talked to people who know where a large number of skeletons were found and to others whose relatives told the bodies to the incinerator."

"The riot has colored the history of Tulsa to this day. We still have the whites on the south side and the blacks on the north, and ours is not a history we can be proud of."

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A HystericAl white girl related that a nineteen-year-old colored boy attempted to assassinate her in the public elevator of a public office building of a thriving town of 100,000 in open daylight. Without pausing to find whether or not the story was true, without bothering with the slight detail of investigating the character of the woman who made the outcry (as a matter of fact, she was of exceedingly doubtful reputation), a mob of 100-per-cent Americans set forth on a wild rampage that cost the lives of fifty white men; of between 150 and 200 colored men, women and children; the destruction by fire of $1,500,000 worth of property; the looting of many homes; and everlasting damage to the reputation of the city of Tulsa and the State of Oklahoma.

This, in brief, is the story of the eruption of Tulsa on the night of May 31 and the morning of June 1. One could travel far and find few cities where the likelihood of trouble between the races was as little thought of as in Tulsa. Her reign of terror stands as a grim reminder of the grip mob violence has on the throat of America, and the ever-present possibility of devastating race conflicts where least expected.

Tulsa is a thriving, bustling, enormously wealthy town of between 90,000 and 100,000. In 1910 it was the home of 18,182 souls, a dead and hopeless outlook ahead. Then oil was discovered. The town grew amazingly. On December 22, 1920, it had bank deposits totaling $65,449,985; almost $1,000 per capita when compared with the Federal Census figures of 1920, which gave Tulsa 72,075. The town lies in the center of the oil region and many are the stories told of the making of fabulous fortunes by men who were operating on a shoe-string. Some of the stories rival those of the "forty-niners" in California. The town has a number of modern office buildings, many beautiful homes, miles of clean, well-paved streets, and aggressive and progressive business men who well exemplify Tulsa's motto of "The City with a Personality."

So much for the setting. What are the causes of the race riot that occurred in such a place?

First, the Negro in Oklahoma has shared in the sudden prosperity that has come to many of his white brothers; and there are some colored men there who are wealthy. This fact has caused a bitter resentment on the part of the lower order of whites, who feel that these colored men, members of an "inferior race," are exceedingly presumptuous in achieving greater economic prosperity than they who are members of a divinely ordered superior race. There are at least three colored persons in Oklahoma who are worth a million dollars each; J. W. Thompson of Claremore is worth $500,000; there are a number of men and women worth $100,000; and many whose possessions are valued at $25,000 and $50,000 each. This was particularly true of Tulsa, where there were two colored men worth $150,000 each; two worth $100,000; three $50,000; and four who were assessed at $25,000. In one case where a colored man owned and operated a printing plant with $25,000 worth of printing machinery in it, the leader of the mob that set fire to and destroyed the plant was a linotype operator employed for years by the colored owner at $48 per week. The white man was killed while attacking the plant. Oklahoma is largely populated by pioneers from other States. Some of the white pioneers are former residents of Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee, Texas, and other States more typically southern than Oklahoma. These have brought with them their anti-Negro prejudices. Lethargic and unprogressive by nature, it sorely irks them to see Negroes making greater progress than they themselves are achieving.

One of the changes made against the colored men in Tulsa is that they were "radical." Questioning the whites more closely regarding the nature of this radicalism, I found it means that Negroes were uncompromisingly denouncing "Jim-Crow" cars, lynching,peonage; in short, were asking that the Federal constitutional guaranties of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" be given regardless of color. The Negroes of Tulsa and other Oklahoma cities are pioneers; men and women who have dared, and men and women who have had the initiative and the courage to pull up stakes in other less-favored States and face hardship in a newer one for the sake of greater eventual progress. That type is ever less ready to submit to insult. Those of the whites who seek to maintain the old white group control naturally do not relish seeing Negroes emancipating themselves from the old system.

A third cause was the rotten political conditions in Tulsa. A vige ring was in control of the city, allowing open operation of houses of ill fame, of gambling joints, the illegal sale of whiskey, the robbing of banks and stores, with hardly a slight possibility of the arrest of the criminals, and even less of their conviction. For fourteen years Tulsa has been in the absolute control of this element. Most of the better element, and there is a large percentage of Tulsaans who can properly be classed as such, are interested solely in making money and getting away. They have taken little or no interest in the election of city or county officials, leaving it to those whose interest it was to secure officials who would protect them in their vice operations. About two months ago the State legislature assigned two additional judges to Tulsa County to aid the present two in clearing the badly clogged dockets. These judges found more than six thousand cases awaiting trial. Thus in a county of approximately 100,000 population, six out of every one hundred citizens were under indictment for some sort of crime, with little likelihood of trial in any of them.

Last July a white man by the name of Roy Belton, accused of murdering a taxicab driver, was taken from the county jail and lynched. According to the statements of many prominent Tulsans, local police officers directed traffic at the scene of the lynching, trying to afford every person present an equal chance to view the event. Insurance companies refuse to give Tulsa merchants insurance on their stocks; the risk is too great. There have been so many automobile thefts that a number of companies have canceled all policies on cars in Tulsa. The net result of these conditions was that practically none of the citizens of the town, white or colored, had very much respect for the law.

So much for the general causes. What was the spark that set off the blaze? On Monday, May 30, a white girl
by the name of Sarah Page, operating an elevator in the
Drexel Building, stated that Dick Rowland, a nineteen-
year-old colored boy, had attempted criminally to assault
her. Her second story was that the boy had seized her
arm as he entered the elevator. She screamed, and

It was found afterwards that the boy had stepped per-
dent on her foot. "It seems never to have occurred to
the citizens of Tulsa that any sane person attempting
actually to assault a woman would have picked any place in
the world rather than an open elevator in a public building
with scores of people within calling distance. The story of
the alleged assault was published Tuesday afternoon by the
Tulsa Tribune, one of the two local newspapers. At four
o'clock Commissioner of Police J. M. Adkison reported to
Sheriff McCullough that there was talk of lynching Row-
land that night. Chief of Police John A. Gustafson, Captain
Wilkerson of the Police Department, Edwin F. Barnett,
managing editor of the Tulsa Tribune, and numerous other
citizens all stated that there was talk Tuesday of lynching
the boy.

In the meantime the news of the threatened lynching
reached the colored settlement where Tulsa's 15,000 colored
citizens lived. Remembering how a white man had been
lynched after being taken from the same jail where the
colored boy was now confined, they feared that Rowland
was in danger. A group of colored men telephoned the
sheriff and proffered their services in protecting the jail
from attack. The sheriff told them that they should
be called upon if needed. About nine o'clock that night,
a crowd of white men gathered around the jail, numbering
about 400 according to Sheriff McCullough. At 9:15 the
report reached "Little Africa" that the mob had stormed
the jail. A crowd of twenty-five armed Negroes set out
immediately, but on reaching the jail found the report un-
true. The sheriff talked with them, assured them that the
boy would not be harmed, and urged them to return to their
homes. They left, later returning, 75 strong. They
persuaded them to leave. As they complied, a white man
tried to disarm one of the colored men. A shot was
fired, and then—in the words of the sheriff—"all hell broke
loose." There was a fusillade of shots from both sides and
twelve men fell dead—two of them colored, ten white. The
fighting continued until midnight when the colored men,
greatly outnumbered, were forced back to their section of
the town.

Around five o'clock Wednesday morning the mob, now
numbering more than 10,000, made a mass attack on Little
Africa. Machine-guns were brought into use; eight Aero-
planes were employed to spy on the movements of the
Negroes and according to some were used in bombing the
colored section. "All that was lacking to make the scene
a replica of modern "Christian" warfare was poison gas.

The colored men and women fought gamely in defense of
their homes, but the odds were too great. According to the
statements of onlookers, men in uniform, either home
guards or ex-service men or both, carried out all of the
Little Africa, and after looting the homes, set fire to them.

Many are the stories of horror told to me by former
people—but by white residents. One was that of an freed
colored couple, saying their evening prayers before retiring
in their little home on Greenwood Avenue. A mob broke
into the house, shot both of the old people in the backs of
their heads, blowing their brains out and Systeming them
over the bed, pillaged the home, and then set fire to it.

Another was that of the death of Dr. A. C. Jackson, a
colored physician. Dr. Jackson was worth $100,000; had
been described by the Mayo brothers "the most able Negro
in America," was respected by white and colored alike, and
was in every sense a good citizen. A friend of Dr. Jackson's
home. He fought in defense of his wife and children and himself. An officer of the
of the S. S. Adkins who knew Dr. Jackson came up at that time
and assured him that if he would surrender he would be
protected. This Dr. Jackson did. The officer sent him
under guard to Convention Hall, where colored people were
being placed for protection. On route to the hall, dis-
armed, Dr. Jackson was shot and killed in cold blood. The
man who had assured Dr. Jackson of protection stated to
the "Dr. Jackson was an able, clean-cut man. He did only
what any red-blooded man would have done under similar
circumstances in defending his home. Dr. Jackson was
murdered by white riffraffs."

It is highly doubtful if the exact number of casualties
will ever be known. The figures originally given in the
press estimate the number at 100. The number buried by
local undertakers and given out by city officials is ten white
and twenty-one colored. For obvious reasons these officials
wish to keep the number published as low as possible,
but the figures obtained in Tulsa are far higher. Fifty
blacks between 160 and 200 Negroes is much nearer the
real number of deaths. Ten whites were killed during
the first hour of fighting on Tuesday night. Six white
men drove into the colored section in a car on Wednesday
morning and never came out. Thirteen whites were killed
between 6:50 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. Wednesday. O. T. John-
son, Commandant of the Tulsa Citadel of the Salvation
Army, stated that on Wednesday and Thursday the Salva-
don Army fed thirty-seven Negroes employed as grave
diggers and twenty on Friday and Saturday. During the
first two days these men dug 120 graves in each of which
a dead Negro was "buried." No coffins were used. The
bodies were dumped into the holes and covered over with
dirt. "Added to the number accounted for were numbers of
others—men, women, and children—who were incen-
\ted in the burning houses in the Negro settlement.

One story of was told to me by an eye-witness of five colored men
trapped in a burning house. Four burned to death. A
fifth attempted to flee, was shot to death as he emerged
from the burning structure, and his body was thrown back
into the flames. There was an unconfirmed rumor afloat in
Tulsa of two truck loads of dead Negroes being dumped
into the Arkansas River, but that story could not be con-

What is America going to do after such a horrible car-
\nage—\partnership for the sake of civilization and stopped
\not by any of the crimes now being charged to the Bolsheviks in Russia? How much longer
\will America allow these pogroms to continue unchecked?

Is there a lesson in the Tulsa affair for every American
who "unconditionally believes that Negroes will always be the
beat, and subjugative creatures that circumstances have


Dick Rowland was only an ordinary bootblack with no
standing in the community. But when his life was threat-
ed by a mob of whites, every one of the 15,000 Negroes
of Tulsa, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, was willing
to die to protect Dick Rowland. Perhaps America is wait-
ing for a nationwide Tulsa to wake her. Who knows?
WALTER WHITE
AND THE POWER OF OBSERVATION

FOLLOW THE PRESIDENT
OUTLAW LYNCHING

83 WOMEN LYNCHED SINCE 1889

"CRIME" CONFERENCE SHOULD CONSIDER LYNCHING

BY ROBERT E. JAKOUBEK
1928, White led forty-one inquiries into the lynchings, or mob killings, of African Americans. Most took place in the Deep South, and sometimes he came face-to-face with death.

In 1917, the year before White moved to New York, more than fifty African Americans were lynched. Most often these lynchings took place in the rural South, at night, and attracted little notice. The NAACP wanted to bring lynching into the light of day, to shock the nation with the truth.

The NAACP decided White was the perfect man for the job. He was smart, energetic, reliable, and brave. And he looked white. With his blond hair, blue eyes, and convincing Georgia drawl, he could move freely among southern whites. To him a white person would open up, perhaps telling the truth about a lynch mob.

In an attempt to educate the public, White directed the NAACP’s antilynching campaign to pay for newspaper ads like this one.
Tulsa race riot omitted from history books

CAMILLE WOOD

Blacks have a legacy that is not being taught in history books, Author Ron Wallace told more than 70 people Wednesday.

Information about the Tulsa race riot was omitted from history books, keeping most Americans ignorant of the mass destruction that occurred in the Greenwood community of Tulsa, Okla.

The Ku Klux Klan attacked Greenwood on June 1, 1921. The community was the only U.S. city in history to be bombed.

Wallace said he learned of the Tulsa Race Riot tragedy just five years ago after speaking with an 89-year old historian.

Greenwood was nick-named Black Wall Street by the New York Stock Exchange because of the wealth it had as a black community, Wallace said.

"They built business and community so prosperous it was a rival to anyplace," Wallace said.

Black Wall Street, also known as Little Africa, was a community within itself. The 15,000 residents were wealthy blacks who lived within an isolated society with its own theaters, banks and libraries.

Jim Crow laws, which required blacks to stay indoors after 6 p.m. every night, forced them to construct a close knit blanket of kinship and strength, Wallace said.

Although burning the midnight oil indoors, blacks continued to build their prosperous community by networking among themselves and with Jewish merchants.

"We did not come from slavery, but from a proud culture," Wallace said.

U.S. history is flawed because Americans have learned black history is only about slavery and civil rights, Wallace said.

Today, only a small percentage of people cause racial chaos, he said.

"Eighty percent of Americans don't care what color people are," Wallace said.

Freeman M. Davis II, coordinator of K-State's Office of Multicultural Affairs, said anytime an ethnic group has had an effect on society, their achievements have been neglected or simply omitted.

"If we had no significant impact, then it was recorded," Freeman said.

Wallace Gary, sophomore in secondary education, said he felt it was important to talk about blacks' successes.
"Anytime black people want to get together to do something positive, it's worth being talked about and exposed," Gary said. "We're the only culture in America that has had its infrastructure systematically destroyed."

"Black Wall Street: A Lost Dream" was sponsored by the Multicultural Student Council, the Native American Student Body, American Ethnic Studies, KSU Hillel, K-State Multicultural Affairs Office and the Department of History.

Wallace took book orders and said he would cover Black Wall Street again at 6:30 tonight at the University of Kansas' Spencer Museum of Art.

A movie about Black Wall Street will probably be released within a few years, Wallace said.
Re: Black Wallstreet

Earl Dunovant (dunovant@PIPELINE.COM)

- Messages sorted by: [ date ] [ thread ] [ subject ] [ author ]
- Next message: ARD Inc: "Re: Christian Perspective - MMM"
- Previous message: Linda Elam: "Let's move on to the positive"
- Maybe in reply to: Jeffrey J Hogan: "Black Wallstreet"

On Oct 15, 1995 19:35:28, 'Jeffrey J Hogan <jjh91231@PEGASUS.CC.UCF.EDU>' wrote:

>Some colleagues were mentioning Black Wallstreet recently. Apparently
>they had come across a recent article of opinion on the happening.

This was posted here a while back by Isaac. It's a web page he maintains
and is probably the article your colleagues read. Beyond that, check out
"Death in a promised land: the Tulsa race riot" by Scott Ellsworth and
"Anatomy of four race riots; racial conflict in Knoxville, Elaine
(Arkansas), Tulsa, and Chicago 1919-1921" by Lee E. Williams and Lee E.
Williams II.

Excerpt from Black Elegance Magazine (issue unknown)
Title: Ron Wallace Co-Author of Black Wallstreet: A Lost Dream Chronicles a
Little Known Chapter of African-American History in Oklahoma
By line: As Told To Ronald E. Childs

BLACK WALLSTREET

If anyone truly believes that the last April attack on the federal building in
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma was the last tragic bombing ever to take place on
United States soil, as the media has been widely reporting, they're wrong-plain and
simple. That's because an even deadlier bomb occurred in that same state nearly 75
years ago. Many people in high places would like to forget that it ever happened.

Searching under the heading of "Riots," "Oklahoma" and "Tulsa" in current
editions of The World Book Encyclopedia, there is conspicuously no mention
whatever of the Tulsa race riot of 1921, and this omission is by no means a
surprise, or a rare case. The fact is, one would also be hard-pressed to find
documentation of the incident, let alone and accurate accounting of it, in any other
"scholarly" reference or American History book.

That's precisely the point that noted author, publisher and orator Ron Wallace, a
Tulsa native, sought to make nearly five years ago when he began researching this
riot, one of the worst incidents of violence ever visited upon people of African
decent. Ultimately joined on the project by college Jay Jay Wilson of Los Angeles,
the duo found and compiled indisputable evidence of what they now describe as "A
Black Holocaust in America."
The date was June 1, 1921, when "Black Wallstreet," the name fittingly given to one of the most affluent all-Black communities in America, was bombed from the air and burned to the ground by mobs of envious whites. In a period spanning fewer than 12 hours, a once thriving 36-Black business district in northern Tulsa lay smoldering—A model community destroyed, and a major African-American economic movement resoundingly defused.

The nights carnage left some 3,000 African Americans dead, and over 600 successful businesses lost. Among these were 21 churches, 21 restaurants, 30 grocery stores and two movie theaters, plus a hospital, a bank, a post office, libraries, schools, law offices, a half dozen private airplanes and even a bus system. As could have been expected the impetus behind it all was the infamous Ku Klux Klan, working in consort with ranking city officials, and many other sympathizers.

In their self-published book, Black Wallstreet: A Lost Dream, and its companion video documentary, Black Wallstreet: A Black Holocaust in America!, the authors have chronicled for the very first time in the words of area historians and elderly survivors what really happened there on that fateful summer day in 1921 and why it happened. Wallace similarly explained to BE why this bloody event from the turn of the century seems to have had a recurring effect that is being felt in predominately Black neighborhoods even to this day.

The best description of Black Wallstreet, or Little Africa as it was also known, would be liken it to a mini-Beverly Hills. It was the golden door of the Black community during the early 1900s, and it proved that African Americans had successful infrastructure. That's what Black Wallstreet was all about.

The dollar circulated 36 to 100 times, sometimes taking a year for currency to leave the community. Now in 1995, a dollar leaves the Black community in 15-minutes. As far as resources, there were Ph.D.'s residing in Little Africa, Black attorneys and doctors. One doctor was Dr. Berry who owned the bus system. His average income was $500 a day, a hefty pocket change in 1910.

During that era, physicians owned medical schools. There were also pawn shops everywhere, brothels, jewelry stores, 21 churches, 21 restaurants and two movie theaters. It was a time when the entire state of Oklahoma has only two airports, yet six Blacks owned their own planes. It was a very fascinating community.

The area encompassed over 600 businesses and 36 square blocks with a population of 15,000 African Americans. And when the lower-economic Europeans looked over and saw what the Black community created, many of them were jealous. When the average student went to school on Black Wallstreet, he wore a suit and tie because of the morals and respect they were taught at a young age.

The mainstay of the community was to educate every child. Nepotism was the one word they believed in. And that's what we need to get back to in 1995. The main thoroughfare was Greenwood Avenue, and it was intersected by Archer and Pine Streets. From the first letters in each of those three names, you get G.A.P., and that's where the renowned R and B music group The Gap Band got its name.
They're from Tulsa.

Black Wallstreet was a prime example of the typical Black community in America that did businesses, but it was in an unusual location. You see, at the time, Oklahoma was set aside to be a Black and Indian state. There were over 28 Black townships there. One third of the people who traveled in the terrifying "Trail of Tears" along side the Indians between 1830 to 1842 were Black people.

The citizens of this proposed Indian and Black state chose a Black governor, a treasurer from Kansas named McDade. But the Ku Klux Klan said that if he assumed office that they would kill him within 48 hours. A lot of Blacks owned farmland, and many of them had gone into the oil business. The community was so tight and wealthy because they traded dollars hand-to-hand, and because they were dependent upon one another as a result of the Jim Crow laws.

It was not unusual that if a resident's home accidentally burned down, it could be rebuilt within a few weeks by neighbors. This was the type of scenario that was going on day-to-day on Black Wallstreet. When Blacks intermarried into the Indian culture, some of them received their promised '40 Acres and A Mule' and with that came whatever oil was later found on the properties.

Just to show you how wealthy a lot of Black people were, there was a banker in the neighboring town who had a wife named California Taylor. Her father owned the largest cotton gin west of the Mississippi [River]. When California shopped, she would take a cruise to Paris every three months to have her clothes made.

There was also a man named Mason in nearby Wagner County who had the largest potato farm west of the Mississippi. When he harvested, he would fill 100 boxcars a day. Another brother not far away had the same thing with a spinach farm. The typical family then was five children or more, though the typical farm family would have 10 kids or more who made up the nucleus of the labor.

On Black Wallstreet, a lot of global business was conducted. The community flourished from the early 1900s until June 1, 1921. That's when the largest massacre of non-military Americans in the history of this country took place, and it was lead by the Ku Klux Klan. Imagine walking out of your front door and seeing 1,500 homes being burned. It must have been amazing.

Survivors we interviewed think that the whole thing was planned because during the time that all of this was going on, white families with their children stood around the borders of their community and watched the massacre, the looting and everything—much in the same manner they would watch a lynching.

In my lectures I ask people if they understand where the word "picnic" comes from. It was typical to have a picnic on a Friday evening in Oklahoma. The word was short for "pick a nigger" to lynch. They would lynch a Black male and cut off body parts as souvenirs. This went on every weekend in this country, and it was all across the county. That's where the term really came from.
The riots weren't caused by anything Black or white. It was caused by jealousy. A lot of white folks had come back from World War I and they were poor. When they looked over into the Black communities and realized that Black men who fought in the war had come home heroes that helped trigger the destruction.

It cost the Black community everything, and not a single dime of restitution—no insurance claims—has been awarded the victims to this day. Nonetheless, they rebuilt. We estimate, that 1,500 to 3,000 people were killed and we know that a lot of them were buried in mass graves all around the city. Some were thrown into the river. As a matter of fact, at 21st Street and Yale Avenue, where there now stands a Sears parking lot, that corner used to be a coal mine. They threw a lot of the bodies into the shafts.

Black Americans don't know about this story because we don't apply the word holocaust to our struggle. Jewish people use the word holocaust all the time. White people use the word holocaust. It's politically correct to use it. But we Black folks use the word, people think we're being cry babies or that we're trying to bring up old issues. No one comes to our support.

In 1910, our forefathers and mothers owned 13 million acres of land at the height of racism in this country, so the Black Wallstreet book and videotape prove to the naysayers and revisionists that we had our act together. Our mandate now is to begin to teach our children about our own, ongoing Black holocaust. They have to know when they look at our communities today that we don’t come from this.

To order a copy of Black Wallstreet, contact Dularon Entertainment, Inc., P.O. Box 2702, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 74149; or call 1-(800)-682-7975

-- Earl Dunovant
Former Tulsan Tells of 1921 Race Riot Experience

BY ED GOODWIN
Eagle Managing Editor

Mary Tecoma Taylor Maupin was 15 years old and a junior at Booker T. Washington High School when the infamous Tulsa Race Riot began on May 31, 1921. She had been brought to Tulsa in 1907, at the age of 2, by her uncle and aunt, the late Dr. and Mrs. Robert T. Bridgewater, who reared her.

Dr. Bridgewater graduated from Meharry Medical College in 1905 and was the first black physician to practice in Tulsa.

Now 92, and living in Louisville, Ky., Mary Maupin reflected on May 31, the eve of the riot. She said, "Dr. Bridgewater was late coming home because he had worked at the hospital caring for people who had been shot. As a precaution against us being victims of stray bullets, he had us sleep on mattresses on the floor. The next morning, Uncle was called to go to the hospital. When he opened the front door, there was a mob standing in the front yard. A shot was fired in the house. He slammed the door, and we ran out the back. We stopped in the yard of the high school a few blocks away. As we arrived, we met others who were sharing the same experience. Suddenly an airplane flew very low and dropped a torpedo. As dirt sprayed us, we were forced to disperse.

"Later the state militia arrived. The riot-zone area was put under martial law. We were herded like cattle into a truck and taken to a ball park. Dr. Bridgewater was taken to the hospital to treat the wounded. After being told his house was still standing, he came for us. Some white people came for their servants and acquaintances.

"When we got home, we found that it indeed was standing, but oil had been poured on my music in a cabinet to start a fire. Maupin played piano and organ and had played for the church choir at Vernon AME. She continued, "Our house was spared because of Judge Oliphant, a family friend who lived nearby, on Standpipe Hill. He told the firemen to put out the fire because he owned the property. He was allowed to take the deeds to Dr. Bridgewater's property and other important papers. As a result, three houses were left standing in the 500 block of North Detroit.

"The safe which contained our personal valuables had been put in the front yard. We were told that a sledgehammer had been used to take off the door. In addition to removing the abovementioned papers, jewelry silver, clothing, money and other valuables were taken by looters. China, glassware and other dishes were smashed on the hardwood floors. To add to the humiliation, my aunt later saw a shopper downtown wearing a blouse I had made in school. Although the wearer, upon request,

See TULSAN Page 5
returned the blouse to my aunt, I could not bear to wear it again.

"After the riot, our home was shared with other people whose homes were destroyed, namely: Dr. and Mrs. J.J. McKeever, Professor and Mrs. Charles Davis Roberts and their baby, Charles David Roberts Jr. and the Bowns."

Oscar D. Washington, poet and writer of St. Louis, Mo., said he was 9 years old when he and his sister, Helen, fled north Tulsa during the riot walking down the Santa Fe Railroad tracks to Vinita. At that time his grandparents Henry and Hannah Hale lived on an acreage at 15th and Peoria streets.

Maupin graduated from Booker T. Washington High School, with the Class of '22 with 10 others including Eunice Cloman Jackson. She subsequently matriculated at Wilberforce University in Zena, Ohio, where she met her husband, Miller R. Maupin, now 96.

The couple settled in his native Kentucky, in the city of Louisville. They had four boys and three girls. The eldest, Milburn T. Maupin, is deceased but had the honor of having an elementary school named for him there. Mary Maupin also had a teaching career.

The modest, articulate Maupin said the Lord has blessed her family with good minds and morals. Among six living are Roslyn Anderson of Dayton, Ohio. She is a retired financial analyst at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Robert T. Maupin, retired government physicist now part-time with the Environmental Protection Authority; Dr. W. Carlile Maupin, retired middle school principal Idabell Jacob, retired elementary school teacher and former principal of a church school in Louisville. Also, LaVaunt Maupin, principal of Lowell Elementary in St. Louis and Lolita McRoy retired from the Social Security Services and owns a travel agency in Kansas City.
Unmarked graves may hold race riot victims

By Jane Bresen
World Staff Writer

The Tulsa Race Riot Commission has uncovered three local sites where members buried victims of the 1921 Race Riot may be buried in unmarked mass graves.

Historians with the commission began using ground-penetrating radar to search in and around Oaklawn Cemetery, Newblock Park and Rolling Oaks Cemetery, previously known as the Booker T. Washington Cemetery.

The hunt, which began in July, culminated in a meeting Thursday, when commission members and others close to the sites discussed the commission’s findings and began planning a search for the mass graves.

Revelations of the search came to light in a meeting Thursday, when the commission discussed its research findings and began planning a search for the mass graves.

SITES:

Commission members believe that 300 people died during the riots.

FROM A-1

work on a report that is scheduled to be submitted to the Oklahoma Legislature by May.

The report will seek to provide a clearer picture of the race riots, said Bob Blackburn, commissioner chairman.

That report will likely change history books.

Research that began in 1997 has led commission members to believe that close to 300 people died during the riots instead of the fewer than 100 victims official records indicate.

So far, searches for graves have been inconclusive. However, state archaeologist Bob Brooks, who works with the Arkansas Archeological Survey, said the results were not discouraging.

There are a host of other non-invasive research methods that can still be used, he said.

The question of how many people actually died during the riots has been a nagging concern for local historians for years, Ellsworth said.

"There is no other question in my mind as unanswered as the number of people who died in the Tulsa riots," he said. "There has never been an official state body to look seriously and objectively at the race riots."

World-renowned forensic anthropologist Clyde Snow was on hand at Thursday’s meeting. Snow was famous for helping the Argentine government uncover some 10,000 skeletons found in mass graves dug by the death squads of a military government that ruled the country from 1966 to 1982.

If mass graves are found, and skeletal remains exhumed, available technology may be able to reunite families with their loved ones. Snow said.

With remains identified, families can obtain a bone from the cemetery, Snow said.

The commission will resume its search of the three sites by late spring. If remains are located, Snow has agreed to assist with the findings.

Because of research done by the commission, some persistent rumors about where bodies were buried have been discounted.

"We don’t believe that bodies were dumped in the Arkansas River. We have talked to more than 300 people, we have 40 taped interviews, and we’ve dug up documents nobody knew existed," Ellsworth said.

In Oaklawn Cemetery, two headstones indicate that riot victims are buried there. Official city records show that no riot victims are buried in the cemetery, but funeral home records show 25 are buried there, and evidence points to at least 80 more, he said.

Out of respect for families, Ellsworth said the commission elected to remain quiet about their findings until interviews were completed.

Now the commission needs help, he said.

Anyone with information about the Tulsa Race Riots or mass burial sites is asked to call either the Tulsa Historical Society at 723-4984, the Greenwood Cultural Center at 596-1020 or the office of Oklahoma state archaeologists at 405-225-7211.

An additional search is on for newer workers who were working for the city in the 1940s. Evidence exists that the workers may have buried against a mass grave site near Newblock Park while digging a sewer line there, Ellsworth said.

"If any oldtimers know about this, any old sewer line workers, any Newblock employees, anyone who can help us out, we’re joking that they call us," he said.

The commission was created in 1997 by the state Legislature to study what happened during the riots and to make recommendations on reparations for black survivors.

Julie Bryant can be reached at 581-0461.
Recalling race riot

Peaceful life shattered

Tulsa woman, 85, recalls race riot

By JULIE BRYANT

Annie Beaird was a 7-year-old playing jacks with a neighborhood friend when the Tulsa race riot exploded onto her street and abruptly erased the peaceful existence she knew.

More than 77 years later, 85-year-old Beaird lives in a modest home in north Tulsa, only a few miles from the site of the riot. She is not bitter, but she is quick to say she is rather unimpressed with the Tulsa Race Riot Commission’s effort to dig up the history and the remains of the brutal event that raped her family.

Around noon on May 31, 1921, the day historians say the riot broke out, the Katy Train rolled into Tulsa carrying Beaird, her mother and four siblings. They had spent the previous week visiting relatives in Muskogee, and Beaird says she was happy to be home again.

Later that evening outside her home at Greenwood Avenue and Easton Street, Beaird sat on the sidewalk playing with a friend when a dark Model T Ford carrying a load of black men came cruising down Greenwood.

PHOTO COURTESY GREENWOOD CULTURAL CENTER

Mount Zion Baptist Church burns during the 1921 riots.
RIOT:

Family took off on foot with only the clothes on their backs.

FROM A4

"There were guns poking out the window. They were threatening. Get your guns! Get your guns!" she said.

Beaird's mother yelled for her to come inside. Her father was still at work at a Tulsa hotel. That left the little girl and her mother home alone with a baby, Beaird's two younger brothers and her older sister.

"When my dad got home, they tried to get him to join the riot. But he said he wasn't going anywhere because everything we had was in the house," she said.

But by the next morning, it had become too dangerous to stay. With only the clothes on their backs, the family took off on foot going north on Greenwood.

"We were dodging bullets. My dad kept grabbing at us to keep us out of the way," Beaird said.

As they walked up the street, Beaird said, she could look back and see white people and black people shooting at and killing each other up on what was known as Standpipe Hill.

The family eventually made it to an area just north of Pine Street near some coal pits where other black Tulsaans had gathered.

As they bended together, the first U.S. troops began to arrive.

"We were all scared to death. We thought they were coming to kill us. We ran down into the pit, and they had to help us all out," she said.

The soldiers took the families to the Tulsa Airport, Beaird said. For three or four days they lived there with assistance from the Red Cross.

When word of casualties made it to the airport, there would be an announcement, she said. During one such announcement, officials shouted out that her cousin Leroy Carter had been killed.

Actually, soldiers had shot his belt buckle off, Beaird said, laughing. "We laughed about that for years," she said.

Apparently Carter had been standing in the middle of the street, too scared to move, when he got hit in the belt buckle. He was later reunited with his family.

Beaird's family was eventually brought to live in the basement of a house owned by the white family her father worked for. During the riot many whites came looking for their black workers and rounded them up along with their families and sheltered them for a period of time, she said.

When dust and smoke from the riot had settled, her family realized that they had lost everything.

Weeks after the rioting, Beaird's mother spotted some of their possessions piled up along First Street, along with furniture and clothing that belonged to other riot victims.

"The stuff was for sale," she said, and the family had no money with which to buy their own things back.

In fact, they would never see their possessions again. After the riots the Red Cross set up tent houses for riot victims, and the Beairds lived in one of these tents for years, renting the land where it sat.

Today, Beaird says the time to repair damage done by rioters has come and gone.

"What can you do about it now but let bygones be bygones?" she asked, waving one hand in exasperation.

What the Tulsa Race Riot Commission can do is help Tulsa move beyond this," said commission chairman Bob Blackburn.

The commission is considering the possibility of monetary reparations, an official apology and/or an exhibit devoted to the race riot.

The recent efforts by the commission to track down the remainders of riot victims and to come up with a more accurate figure for exactly how many people died during the riots and then who they were is not being done to punish, but to provide healing, he said.

"There is still some deep-seated resentment among us," Blackburn said.

Commission members hope that the database of information they have been collecting on the riots since 1997 will someday be available to the public.

"The database will be an ongoing project. People will have access to it and will be able to add to it," Blackburn said. The database helps the commission paint a clearer picture of what the north area of Tulsa was like in the 1920s.

"We now know who owned properties, what kind of businesses there were, how the community grew. We want to put a human face on this story," he said.

Money to fund the commission's effort has come from a $50,000 state appropriation to the Oklahoma Historical Society. Blackburn said the commission was directed to use the money to support the commission. Consultants and historians brought in to help the commission with their findings are paid from that $50,000, he said.

The Oklahoma Historical Society receives a $6 million in state appropriations each year to fund the society's effort to educate the public.

"We're basically playing catch-up with African-American history in this state. We've put together a slavery exhibit. We're putting together another exhibit now on all-black towns," Blackburn said.

As the $50,000 begins to dry up, Blackburn said, the commission will begin looking to the private sector to help finish the project.

Bryant can be reached at 918-669-1061.
Setting the record straight

Riot victims' graves believed at three sites

By Jack Warner
World Staff Writer

Side by side they sit in Oaklawn Cemetery, though there are no official records to show that they exist. Two headstones inscribed with the date June 1, 1921, mark the graves of two apparent male victims of the Tulsa Race Riot.

Since 1927 the Tulsa Race Riot Commission, and a handful of historians who have volunteered their expertise, have worked quietly, sifting through old funeral home records and speaking with more than 200 families in an effort, they say, to set the record straight.

The commission is funded through the Oklahoma Historical Society, which received a $50,000 state appropriation to help commission members develop a report on the Tulsa Race Riot that will be submitted to the Oklahoma Legislature.

Revisiting the question of how many people died in the Tulsa Race Riot has been an important point of focus for the commission, said Dick Warner, a local historian who has worked with the commission and serves on the board of the Tulsa Historical Society.

Warner has led an effort to find the burial records of those killed in the riot.

According to official city records, no riot victims are buried in Oaklawn Cemetery, he said. But records from three local funeral homes including the Mitchell Funeral Home, which no longer exists, tell a different story.

The records indicate that at least 20 victims of the riot were buried at Oaklawn Cemetery, Warner said.

Jim Crow laws once dictated who could use the cemetery, dividing it into black and white burial sections. The two marked headstones are in the cemetery's southwest corner, where historians believe blacks were buried.

The headstones are near what was once known as porter's or porter's field, sold Scott Ellsworth, author of "The Promised Land: The History of the Tulsa Race Riot." The cemetery was a place of refuge for blacks during the riot.

Ellsworth, who has studied the headstones, said that if the victims are laid to rest at Oaklawn Cemetery, it is a possible site for the victims' graves.

The commission has been looking at the records of those who died in the riot, but there are no guarantees that the victims will be buried there.

In July 1998, commission officials began a search in these areas using ground-penetrating radar, but their search was inconclusive.

Recently, a man has come forward with new evidence that three black men may have been killed in the riot at Oaklawn Cemetery, Ellsworth said.

Work underway forensic anthropologist Steve Sowers has been ordered to assist the commission if it finds human remains. Sowers said technology may allow officials to reunite family members with the remains of their loved ones.

But if a mass grave site is found near Newblock Park, local historian Hill O'Brien, who is assisting the commission, wants to make sure officials haven't stumbled on a mass grave site left over from the Civil War.

O'Brien, who has studied Oklahoma Civil War history, said he believes any human remains around Newblock Park may belong to those killed in the Civil War.

See NEWS A-22
RIOT:
Mass graves could reveal that 300 people died in race riot.

FROM A-17
who were trying to flee Oklahoma during the war and were killed.
O’Brien also said he knew strongly that mass graves were left
over from the riots exist.
“Too many eyewitness accounts, it’s not good for Tulsa. If it turns
out that 300 people died, it makes it one of the bloodiest riots in his-
tory,” he said.
Any effort to repair damages, even more than 77 years after the
event, is warranted, he said.
“There has never been any retri-
bution. That leftover hatred has been a cancer in our community
since 1921. We need to set history
straight,” O’Brien said.
When the commission began its work in 1997 it was believed that
only about a dozen survivors of the riot were still alive. Commis-
sion member Eddie Faye Gates said that number has grown to 30.
One riot survivor, who said she prefers to remain anonymous, said
she still finds it hard to sleep with
out the lights on.
When the riot occurred, she was
10 years old. Her mother and fa-
ther were going through a divorce,
and her mother was working hard
to keep their house, she said.
As the two attempted to escape
town on the day after the riot
started, they were separated.
“Just as we got to Pine Street,
my mother remembered that she
had forgotten the deed to the
house. She ran back to get it, and
we got separated,” she said.
She later learned that her moth-
er had dodged bullets on her way
back and was captured as she at-
tempted to jump a fence. Mother
and daughter were reunited shortly
after the rioting ended. They were
able to keep their house, she said.
“I had often wondered why I
never liked to sleep in the dark.
That night (when the riot broke
out) we couldn’t have any lights
on,” she said.
Correcting the history books

Those who look back to see ahead
Tulsa Race Riot Commission
Members:
Curtis Ballard, historian, in resi-
dence at Langston University, black
history specialist.
Bob Blackbum, deputy director
of the Oklahoma Historical Society
and chairman of the Tulsa Race
Riot Commission.
Joe R. Burns, race riot survivor,
appointed by Mayor Susan Savage.
Peter Churchwell, PIS employee,
apPOINTed by the mayor.
Wren Clark, former Rogers
University administrator, civil rights
specialist, appointed by the mayor.
Ada Deutschendorf, state rep-
resentative, D-Lawton.
Eddie Faye Gates, retired edu-
cator, historian and author, appoint-
ed by the mayor.
Jim Lloyd, Tulsa attorney, ap-
pointed by the mayor.
Robert Milnes, state senator.
Grace Muse, executive direc-
tor of the Oklahoma Human Rights
Commission, ex-officio member of
the Tulsa Race Riot Commission.
State Wade, executive director
of the Oklahoma Historical Society,
ex-officio member of the Tulsa
Race Riot Commission.
Jimmie L. White Jr, history pro-
Fessor at Corners State College.
Advisors to the commission:
Scott Ellsworth, historian, au-
ctor of “Death in the Promised
Land—The History of the Tulsa
Race Riot of 1921.”
John Hope Franklin, black his-
torian, retired history professor at
the University of Chicago and Dukk
University.

Jodie Bryant can be reached at
591-0601.
EDITORIALS

The race riot
Can commission dig up truth?

After interviews with families of victims and the remembrance of survivors of the 1921 Tulsa race riot, a commission hopes to establish whether or not hundreds of bodies of black citizens were buried in unmarked graves. Research begun in 1997 has led commission members to believe perhaps 300 people died instead of the official record of 106.

So far, searches for bodies, using ground-penetrating radar, have been inconclusive. But the search will resume later this spring at three sites, including Newblock Park, Oaklawn Cemetery and Rolling Oulsa Cemetery, once known as the Booker T-Washington Cemetery.

There have always been claims that black victims were buried in a mass grave at Newblock Park, or that bodies were tossed in the Arkansas River. A reading of the voluminous newspaper accounts at the time show that the first reports of the death toll were higher than the final official count. Black people have always felt that the real number was somehow covered up; yet reporters and editors at the time never made that contention.

The commission is asking any one who might have information about mass burial sites to contact the Tulsa Historical Society at 713-4948, the Greenwood Cultural Center at 596-1020 or the office of Oklahoma state archaeologists at 405-325-7211.

The commission was created in 1997 by the Legislature to study what happened during the riot and to make recommendations for reparations to black survivors.

The mystery about how many people died has haunted historians.

"There is no other question in my mind as unanswered as the number of people who died," said Scott Ellsworth, author of the 1982 book "Death in the Promised Land: The History of the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921."

The hope, of course, is that 300 people did not perish during that tragic, sorry chapter in Tulsa's history — that official reports are correct and that the death count as finally reported was essentially accurate.

But it certainly is understandable that black Tulsans — particularly those whose ancestors were victims — want to satisfy themselves of the actual toll. The commission should pursue its work until its members are satisfied that all has been done that can be done to verify numbers.

Maybe enough evidence will emerge to prove how many died and we can put this question to rest once and for all. But after 78 years it is more likely that the search will end as so many historical mysteries do. We never will know with certainty where all the bodies are buried.

One thing is certain: Even if the report of 100 deaths of blacks is essentially accurate, the tragedy of 1921 is not lessened. It is a blot on the history of Tulsa that simply cannot be removed. But we cannot know too much about the events of that tragic day in 1921, so the commission should be encouraged to do all it can to set the record straight.

Race riot panel a worthy salve

I think the Race Riot Commission study is a good thing. This commission is not trying to stir up racial hatred; rather, it is trying to resolve issues that have been festering for 77 years. Healing comes when you face those issues. So facing it, trying to find the bodies (which is exactly what the Jewish people have done after the Holocaust), brings healing. And Germany is paying reparations to ex-slave laborers. They are acknowledging that there is no real healing until you come to grips with the past. This Tulsa commission is trying to resolve long-simmering issues that have not been dealt with so we can move on.

Riot probe only reopens wounds

The race riot investigation going on in Tulsa is completely uncalled for. We've been trying for years to bring people together and heal racial bias and hatred. We've made great strides. All this will do is revive hatred. I don't think reparations are in order.

Past should remain unearthed

Why are we wasting our time investigating the race riot that happened in 1921? That's one of the problems with race relations today. We are not willing to put the past behind us and get on with our lives. We keep wanting to dig up things that make everyone upset and angry at each other instead of forgiving what has happened and looking forward to the future.

Let race riot rest in peace

I resent the use of $50,000 of taxpayer money to stir up old tensions and animosities through the Tulsa Race Riot Commission. The event occurred more than 70 years ago.

Let bygones be bygones

I read the comments of the 85-year-old black woman concerning the 1921 race riot (Jan. 31 paper). She was "unimpressed" with the Tulsa Race Riot Commission and their attempts to inflame and incite race relations in Tulsa. The woman stated, "Let bygones be bygones." I agree. The commission has spent $50,000 of taxpayer money. It only wants to justify its existence and get more of our money.

Race riot panel findings telling

I hope the commission studying the race riot of 1921 gets to the bottom of what happened in that chapter of this city's history. The possibility of over 200 people being killed and of over 200 of those deaths being covered up by the government helps to explain why the political culture of this part of the country is so reactionary, so out of step with the United States of America. It goes a long way toward telling this new transplant to Tulsa just what in the world it is he has moved into.

Tulsa must face its past

In reference to the Race Riot Commission: Tulsa cannot move into the future until it addresses the past.
Panel Recommends Reparations
In Long-ignored Tulsa Race Riot

Findings Expected to Fuel a Legislative Debate

BY JIM YARDLEY

TULSA, Okla., Feb. 4—Nearly 80 years after this city erupted in what many historians regard as the nation’s bloodiest race riot, a state commission today recommended that reparations be made to the aged black survivors who watched as people were shot, burned alive or tied to trees and dragged to death.

The preliminary findings of the Tulsa Race Riot Commission are expected to provide a contentious debate in the Oklahoma Legislature, which convenes on Monday. The Legislature created the commission more than two years ago to investigate a massacre long obscured in history. But the issue of reparations is controversial. Many lawyers who oppose any payment to recent survivors suggest that a majority of residents share that opinion.

A final decision on reparations may be many months away, at best, and the commission estimates that their cost. The Legislature must first decide whether to extend the life of the commission, whose term expires on Monday even though it has not completed a final report. But the commission’s 7-to-4 vote in favor of reparations was a firm statement that advocates hope will lend moral weight to the hiring of survivors.

“The Legislature may not do what we think is the right thing,” said Dr. Vivian Stringer, a member and the state’s attorney general.

But the world is looking at them, so whatever they do will reflect on the state of Oklahoma.

The riot occurred in 1921, and while 40 deaths have been documented, the commission’s historian, Scott Ellsworth, has said that investigators and records indicate that the actual death toll could be as high as 300 people. In justifying reparations, the commission noted that the attack began in response to the Tulsa massacre in Rosewood, Fla., as whites destroyed the small town and killed at least six black residents. In 1921, the Florida Legislature provided $2 million to compensate survivors.

The commission also noted that Congress authorized $1 billion to revitalize southern-black communities after the 1980s.

“We note there is an Oklahoma City University law professor who researched the issue for the commission said there was compelling legal and moral justification for reparations, even though the historical record was incomplete. He said preliminary research indicated that the state’s officials not only failed to protect the lives of black residents but also contributed to the disaster by deporting many members of the white mob that attacked Greenwood.

Gov. Frank Keating, a Republican, has endorsed direct reparations to survivors but expressed skepticism about broader payments. In today’s meeting, the commission recommended seeking to uncover facts and determine culpability.

Panel Suggests Reparations
In Tulsa Race Riot of 1921

Continued From Page 1

voted against the reparations resolution because they did not think the problem should be solved by the state, unlike the city of Tulsa, bears any culpability for the massacre. Mr. Milarch, said many lawmakers are likely to oppose reparations for fear that allowing them could establish a precedent for other communities to seek redress for past injustices.

"Where does it end?" said Mr. Milarch, a Republican who said he had agonized over the issue and considered the riot a blight on the state’s history.

The workings of the Race Riot Commission have sparked a remarkable and often uncomfortable period of introspection in Oklahoma. For decades, the survivors and their families have lived with the guilt and shame of the 1921 riot.

The commission’s recommendation to the legislature is a section of the report, which was released on Monday.

The commission comprises 16 members, including two state senators, two state representatives, and two members of the Tulsa City Council. It is the first time in history that such an investigation has been conducted.

The commission was established in 2013 by the Oklahoma legislature as part of its response to the ongoing civil rights movement.

The report calls for the state to establish a commission to investigate and report on the events leading up to the Tulsa race riot, which occurred on May 27, 1921.

The report also recommends that the state establish a fund to provide reparations to survivors and their families.

The commission’s recommendation comes as Oklahoma is preparing to mark the 100th anniversary of the riot, which resulted in the deaths of 300 African Americans and the destruction of the Greenwood district, once known as "black Wall Street."
Opening old wounds

There is much being said and written about the work of the riot commission. While many applaud the efforts of the panel, there are those who question the need or wisdom of digging up the past. There can be no question about the need of trying to find out what happened and what to do about it. And its much to early to determine either one at this point.

In war, or any other great tragedy, there is the first reaction to not say anything and to hope it all goes away. Or there is just fear of retaliation. Remember those were dangerous times.

Should old wounds be open? That is an interesting way of addressing this problem. For there to be a wound, there had to be an injury. Serious injuries either don't heal or they scar over, but they do not go away with time. Sometimes they fester and never heal. That may be the case in Tulsa. The horror of 1921 has never healed because they have not been treated. This city should not waste another second avoiding the truth no matter how uncomfortable it is to deal with.

To the panel, press on and remember that in seeking the truth, stop at nothing in finding it, but to expect a similar effort will be made to hide it.

Should There Be a Riot Commission?

By Louis Gray
News Analysis

After reports of the riot commission's mission and efforts made the news, there came a backlash of harsh comments about the need of a panel to reopen old wounds. In letters to the editor in the Tulsa World and on street corners around the city, the debate has been waged on the work of the commission.

The provocative work of the commission has unearthed many feelings long buried in the collective memories of Tulsa. Should there be a riot commission in the first place? What good is it do? And who should benefit?

After World War II the horror of the concentration camps of Europe shared the headlines along with the ending of the war. The crimes of the war were brought into the public spotlight. Through trials against Nazis, even recently. After witnesses and other evidence was brought out, a true picture of what happened slowly took shape. The question was asked, "why go after criminals after so long and why not let the horrible crimes die?" Locally, the same question is being asked and answered.

The commission is being funded through the Oklahoma Historical Society with a $30,000 grant. The final report is to be sent to the Oklahoma legislature for possible action. They have held hearings and interviews and looked over records and evidence. They are even looking at mass graves.

Yolanda Charney is a leader in both the Hispanic and Jewish communities and from her background she had some insight into the questions asked of the commission. Charney read the "Call to the Editor" section of the Tulsa World and was moved to write a response.

"I support the work of the commission, I know they caught a lot of flack over all of this," Charney said. The former president of the Tulsa Jewish Federation said she was instrumental in creating a Holocaust Survivors Group. "We need to set the record straight about what happened" she said.

"The Jewish community never came to grips with the Holocaust until all the survivors started speaking out and bringing all the stories to the surface," she said. Charney said not only was the non-Jewish community not talking about the horrors of the Holocaust but "many families never told their children about what happened."

Charney said Tulsa needs to "talk about the riot so that they can get beyond it."

First District City Councilman Joe Williams said: "It's important to accurately document the race riot." He said there is "misinformation, and efforts to hide it or destroy it and we owe it to the victims to tell the truth and to seek it."

While some have questioned the benefit of opening up old wounds, Williams responded: "It's more important to tell the truth then to worry about how some people might react to it."

Dyanne Mason is the Director of the Human Rights Department for the City of Tulsa and said "there is a justified need for the riot commission, there can be no closure until all questions are answered."

Dwayne Midgett on the staff of Mayor Savage said: "personally, I believe the riot commission's work has lot of merit." Midgett said the commission should be trying to learn about "actual cause of the riot."

He said there are a lot of "old tales" about what really happened and the community needs to find out "correct information."
Panel Tries to Get a Clearer Picture of 1921 Race Riot

By The New York Times
TULSA, Okla., Feb. 20 — Nearly 78 years after one of the deadliest racial confrontations in the nation's history, a multiracial commission of citizens and historians is trying to determine how many people really were killed in the Tulsa race riot and whether survivors are entitled to reparations.

The 11-member Tulsa Race Riot Commission, created by the Oklahoma Legislature in 1997, is even looking for mass graves where the bodies of dozens of blacks who may have been killed in the riot on June 1, 1921, were dumped.

“We were suspicious of the official figures of the time,” said Bob Blackburn, chairman of the commission and deputy executive director of the Oklahoma Historical Society. “We also wanted to come up with a portrait of what north Tulsa looked like before the riot.”

The exact number of people killed in the riot, which destroyed a 20-square-block area of north Tulsa known as Greenwood, a primarily black neighborhood, was never determined. Newspaper accounts at the time varied, with some reporting as many as 76 dead. But some historians, citing survivors' accounts, have put the figure as high as 300.

The riot was touched off after a black shoeshine man was arrested after a white girl said he tried to assault her in an elevator. The man was eventually cleared and all charges were dropped, but not before a mob of armed white men showed up at the Tulsa County Courthouse threatening a lynching.

That prompted the city's black residents to take up arms and head for the jail. A scuffle led to gunfire, and firebombs and shootings went on for a day before the Oklahoma National Guard arrived.

Using old census records, mortgage notes, city directories, building permits and other official documents, the commission is developing a database to try to reconstruct north Tulsa on paper and determine who owned the burned properties and what it was worth.

Mr. Blackburn said the commission had found that many more whites owned property in north Tulsa than was initially thought. And, like their black counterparts, they received no compensation after their property was destroyed. Still, the commission's most controversial work has been in trying to provide a more accurate death toll.

The commission has hired archeologists and forensic pathologists to assist in the search for mass graves. Radar was used to search for mass graves in some cemeteries in the area last July, but none were found.

Scott Ellsworth, a former historian at the Smithsonian Institution and author of “Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921,” is one of the advisers to the commission.

The historian John Hope Franklin, whose father lost his home in the riot, is also an adviser to the commission. Mr. Franklin last year headed the advisory board to the President's Initiative on Race.

Mr. Ellsworth said the commission had examined records from a defunct funeral home showing that the city was billed for the burial of 30 people who died in the riot and who had not been identified previously as riot victims.

He also said that while searching a city-owned cemetery for mass graves, the commission found two headstones with no names on them dated June 1, 1921. He said the commission thought these graves to be those of previously unidentified riot victims, most likely black.

And there were numerous accounts of bodies being dumped into the Arkansas River, he said.

“This may well be the worst incident of racial violence in American history,” Mr. Ellsworth said of the Tulsa riot. He said it was quite likely that at least 300 people were killed.

In addition to the death toll, the commission hopes to answer a number of other questions, many of them grounded in local lore. Blacks here have long maintained that whites used airplanes to bomb homes, churches and businesses in north Tulsa. The commission hopes to find records showing whether any Tulsa residents owned airplanes in 1921.

Mr. Blackburn says he realizes that it will be difficult to put to rest decades of speculation over the riot, storytelling fueled by a long and deep silence on the part of whites in Tulsa.

Kinsey Booker says he hopes the commission's work will get to the bottom of what happened in 1921. Mr. Booker, now 85, was 8 years old when the riot occurred, and he remembers hiding in an attic with his mother and four siblings as white men set the family's house on fire.

Although they escaped, Mr. Booker's family lost its home and possessions, and was never compensated.

"At first, I hated all white people," he said, adding that his view changed when a white business man took his family in after the riot.

Mr. Booker, too, has heard the stories about mass graves and bodies dumped in the river. "I think there's some truth to that," he said.

The commission could be most useful in educating the public about the riot, he said, noting that many Oklahomans know little or nothing about the outbreak of violence.

Mr. Booker said he also liked the idea of reparations, even if it was just a monument on Greenwood Avenue. "That would be better than nothing," he said.
Commission Gaining New Knowledge About Riot

Rep. Don Ross termed it "incredible" the news information being gathered by members of the Tulsa Race Riot Commission about Tulsa's darkest historical day.

"It's amazing how much progress we've made and how much is being learned about what really happened during the race riot," Ross said.

How many homes and businesses were destroyed by fire is one area that apparently was vastly underestimated.

"The original damage figure was about $1 million, but studies the month it appears a realistic estimate is at least $13 million," a commission representative believes even today.

"We have studied city directories, fire insurance reports, census data, along with rummaging through old property certificates and mortgage records," Blackshear said. "We are gathering a database as we specific facts check, we will have the information.

"We have come to pretty much the same figure as the official report compiled at the time by the Red Cross and that was about $11.5 million," Blackshear said. In today's market, the value of property destroyed would be over $13 million.

"We need to know this in the event reparations are paid to surviving family members, or even in the event we make a future apology," Blackshear noted.

By C. David Cost
Eagle Writer

Riot Commission Wants Answers About Mass Burials

"Where are the victims of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot buried? That has been the major question from the day the riot commission was created. In the past few months, we have been trying to find those who were killed and identify them.

"At the time insurance companies had lists of widows and orphans that were insured. The claims were paid and the policies transferred to the widow or orphans. We have been trying to track those down as well.

"We have been trying to track down the list of those who were killed and identify them. We have been trying to find the family members of those who were killed and identify them.

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HOWER:

The shameful, terrifying truth of the riots is that Americans killed Americans.

FROM H-1

would come around, I would think. ‘You know, I ought to do a document. I have the material.’ But my mother would always say, ‘No, Bob, don’t open old wounds. Let sleeping dogs lie.’

“Yes, in ’92, when the Los Angeles riot was on TV everywhere, you could see it, people were saying, ‘We’re glad something like that didn’t happen here.’ And I thought, ‘It did. And it was worse.’”

It wasn’t long before Hower was experimenting with his new computer, putting his grandfather’s material into a scrapbook-style compilation he called “Angels of Mercy” (a term some of the riot’s survivors used to describe Red Cross workers). At first, he made copies of the work for family members. Eventually, with the help of an intrigued computer expert, Hower put “Angels of Mercy” on a web page, and scores of Internet orders followed.

“People would e-mail and say, ‘I’m sure interested. I never heard about that,’” he recalled. “I’m not sure how we heard about it. People didn’t talk about it. People didn’t teach it. And no wonder. It was a shameful thing. It still is.”

As director of Red Cross relief efforts for the riot, Maurice Willovs not only kept a sheaf of contemporary clippings — including an infamous Tulsa Tribune editorial — but also filed meticulous reports to Red Cross headquarters and even jotted down unofficial thoughts and opinions on the situation. In the latter, he expressed the idea — reinforced by other material — that the riot was actually a well-planned plot to move the black community farther out of town and make the Greenwood area real-estate available.

All of this material found its way into the book, a work Hower emphasizes is not his, but his grandfather’s. And when Hower eventually hooked up with publisher — and history buff — Larry Sanders of the Tulsa-based Homestead Press, “Angels of Mercy” shed its homemade status and became a large, perfect-bound, laminated paperback called “The 1921 Tulsa Race Riot: Angels of Mercy.”

“To avoid any of my own editorial influence, I tried to arrange the material chronologically, just as my grandfather did,” said Hower. “No. See 8, H-5

World

body’s going to criticize me for what I said, because I didn’t say anything. It’s all from him.

“I do expect that I’ll be criticized for publishing it by people who have that attitude of ‘why bring it up?’” he added. “I bring it up because of what I say on the first page: This book is offered as an example of what can happen in America when racial tensions cause us to forget to love one another.”

With the publication of “The 1921 Tulsa Race Riot: Angels of Mercy,” he added, there are now three books out on the topic. At the end of his own book, he notes the other two.

“Death in a Promised Land” was a research project by Scott Ellsworth, and he did a masterful job of giving the history prior to and just after the riot. Hower said. “Also, there’s the book put together by the Loves (Race Riot 1921 Events of the Tulsa Disaster), who are descendants of Mary Parrish. She was a young woman who was a reporter, and she gives eyewitness accounts, although it’s not documented. Still, I recommend it.

“I didn’t write this book,” he added. “The people who were there wrote it. And it’s all documented. It’s nasty, frightening, shameful, scary and hard to believe, because it’s about Americans killing Americans. That’s the whole thing about it.”

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1998

TULSA

SEEN HOWER

STEPHEN PINGRY / Tulsa World

‘Angels’ in his closet

Bob Hower’s book on the ’21 Tulsa race riot born of a merciful fate

BY JOHN WooLEY

World Entertainment Writer

On the cover of his new book on the infamous Tulsa race riot, veteran TV newscaster Bob Hower notes that, during the 20 or so hours the fighting and conflagration raged, “more Americans killed fellow Americans than at any other time since the Civil War.”

In a recent conversation about the book, Hower added that if it hadn’t been for that awful altercation, he wouldn’t be here at all.

“So, if the riot had happened a day later, my father would gone to New York, and I wouldn’t be here.”

Hower, of course, became one of Tulsa’s most famous faces, spending the final 16 years of a 35-year television career at KTUL-TV. (It was at KTUL that he first began thinking about using the photos, clippings, letters and other documents that his maternal grandfather had meticulously compiled and kept on the riot.

“Each time the anniversary date of the riot

1921 TULSA RACE RIOT
Tulsa's riot an eternal blemish

By RANDY KREHBIEI World Staff Writer
2/27/00

The entire "race war" was as unjustified as it was unnecessary. Because of it Tulsa is blazoned as a community where tolerance does not exist, where the constitution of the United States can be enforced or suspended at will; where prejudice and race bigotry rules .

Tulsa World
June 2, 1921

The writer of this Tulsa World editorial, which appeared one day after the 1921 riot that left the city's Greenwood district a smoldering ruin, lamented the descent of "matchless Tulsa" into "the depths of infamy."

Nearly 80 years later the "murderous vandalism," as the World called it, still sullies the city's reputation.

While civic and business leaders fume about a motel chain advertisement that suggests Tulsa is not the most exciting place to visit, international news reports spurred by the activities of the Tulsa Race Riot Commission portray the city in much the same tones as the World editorial.

"Tulsa's dirty secret," the riot has been called in both television news programs and newspaper stories. A New York Times Magazine piece talks about a "conspiracy of silence" and Tulsa's "racist past."

Just last week, on the same day the Pittsburgh Public Schools hired Tulsa Superintendent John Thompson, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette carried an editorial headlined, "The lasting shame of Tulsa."

It had nothing to do with Thompson or Tulsa's education system.

Like many of the pieces about Tulsa and the riot, the Post-Gazette's is burdened by inaccuracies, misrepresentations and tortured conclusions that fly in the face of all evidence.

It also, however, repeats what the World and virtually every Tulsa civic leader at the time proclaimed as an essential and undeniable fact -- a terrible thing was done, one that demanded justice.

"Nobody likes to see something negative about their city," said Mayor
Susan Savage, but she admits that at times the national and international press' discovery of the riot has gotten under her skin more than most unfavorable stories.

"I have been interviewed for just about every story that's been done, but I'm rarely quoted," she said.

MSNBC, she said, wanted Savage to debate the issue of reparations. She says "Nightline" didn't call back after Savage refused to go on the program and confirm the existence of a "cover-up."

"The only two things most reporters want to know is what I think of digging in Oaklawn Cemetery and will I allow it, and what do I think about reparations."

Somewhat curiously, one source who is frequently quoted is Oklahoma City state Rep. Bill Graves. While agreeing that something terrible happened, the conservative and Southern-sounding Graves maintains the riot is Tulsa's problem.

"I'm not sure why they always want to talk to me," said Graves. "Maybe it's because I'm willing to say I don't think people who didn't have anything to do with the riot ought to have to pay reparations."

Savage said she refuses to discuss reparations until the riot commission completes a final report, something not expected for another six months. She is vexed by the Oaklawn Cemetery controversy, which as it turns out may not be quite as murky as previously thought.

Cemetery records show no riot dead there. A front-page story from the June 3, 1921, Tulsa World, however, routinely reports that 16 black men -- one of whom, Ed Howard, would likely have been charged with inciting the riot had he lived -- were indeed buried "separately and in plain caskets" at Oaklawn Park.

Those identified in the story match names on a list compiled from funeral home records by local historian Dick Warner.

That, of course, doesn't mean more aren't there, perhaps in the sort of common grave the commission and state workers have been searching for.

But such stories in the World and its rival, The Tulsa Tribune, as well as the national press and a wealth of public records from that era seem to run counter to the perception that the riot was kept secret or engineered by the Ku Klux Klan.

A survey of Oklahoma history books dating from the mid-1920s through the present reveals that all, with the exception of a few written by the statistically minded Edward Everett Dale, included some mention of the riot. Gen. Charles Barrett's four-volume "Oklahoma After Fifty Years," published in 1939, includes 15 pages on what Barrett called "the most serious and deadly outbreak of lawlessness that ever blotted the name of Oklahoma."

None of the histories mentions Klan involvement, and neither do the
World and Tribune, both of whom would give substantial coverage to the growth of the local KKK in the months following the riot. Indeed, historians say one of the bitterest ironies of the entire incident is that the fear and anger it elicited from Tulsa's white population almost certainly helped propel Klansmen into positions of power in the months and years ahead.

"There's not a particle of evidence to connect the Klan with the riot," writes Charles Alexander, whose book "The Ku Klux Klan In the Southwest" is considered the best authority on Klan activity in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana during the 1920s, "but it is likely that the brief, devastating race war gave some spur to the Klan's growth in Tulsa."

Interestingly enough, some of the more dubious riot information has come from the commission itself. While official conclusions are months away, individual committees and subcommittees have taken to issuing statements and interim reports that have dismayed commission chair Bob Blackburn and embarrassed even some sympathetic to restitution. One privately called a paper passed around by a subcommittee at the Feb. 4 commission "a joke."

Whatever their validity, assertions made in the Feb. 4 paper and by some commission members pushing for payments to riot survivors and families who suffered property losses have made their way into national and even international reports of the riot. This, in turn, has made the Tulsa riot an exhibit in the case for reparations to all descendants of American slavery.

Savage said she finds all of this disturbing.

"I'm troubled by some of the inflammatory statements being made, both by people here and in the conclusions drawn by some reporters who don't seem to have spent much time here," she said. "I guess the question is whether this whole thing is to fix blame for some sort of legal action or to try to understand what happened and arrive at some sort of reconciliation."

Randy Krehbiel, World staff writer, can be reached at 581-8365 or via e-mail at randy.krehbiel@tulsaworld.com.
Confronting shame

New evidence fuels Oklahoma panel's search for truth about black toll in 1921 Tulsa riot

By Arnold Hamilton
Oklahoma Bureau of The Dallas Morning News

TULSA, Okla. — Clyde J. Eddy never doubted that victims of the 1921 Tulsa race riot were buried in mass, unmarked graves.

He saw them.

Mr. Eddy, then 10, said he and a cousin were walking past a city cemetery, just days after the carnage, when they noticed six or eight white men digging. As many as six large wooden crates sat nearby.

"We were like any little kids would be, we got curious," he said. "We lifted the lid on one crate... The stench was terrible. There were three bodies [of black men] in it."

Nearly 78 years after marauding whites looted and torched Tulsa's black neighborhoods, historians have uncovered powerful new evidence — including Mr. Eddy's account — suggesting that many more than 106 people perished in America's most deadly urban race conflict.

Now, a statewide panel is struggling to uncover the complete, unvarnished story — along with trying to find what many believe are unmarked, mass graves of hundreds more victims.

Beyond that, the 11-member Tulsa Race Riot panel is working to ensure that the history of the race carnage in Tulsa in 1921, stand in front of a memorial marking the destroyed black economic center of Tulsa.
Panel confronting shame of riot

Continued from Page 1A.

The Riot Commission hoped to finally confront a shameful moment that ended with the deaths of 250 to 300 people in Tulsa.

But 78 years later, that moment is still a source of pain and anger for many who lived through it.

The 1921 Tulsa Race Riot was a pivotal event in American history, and its legacy continues to shape the city of Tulsa and the nation as a whole.

**Reports of mass graves**

Stories persisted for years about unmarked mass graves. Some accounts suggested that bodies were dumped in the Arkansas River - though there were no reports of any washing up downstream - or cremated in the city incinerator.

The massacre zone in part by local grave diggers and possibly by the National Guard, may have had as much to do with public health concerns as with the outburst of brutality, experts say.

Although gunshot victims claimed most of the casualties, some also believed to have perished inside burning buildings.

The result was a city littered with bodies decaying rapidly.

*What trig**

Tulsa's black neighborhoods were almost destroyed in rioting that began the evening of May 31, 1921, and continued on the next day.

The conflict was triggered when a 21-year-old black man, Dick Rowland, was accused of assaulting an 18-year-old white elevator operator.

Mr. Rowland apparently stepped on the girl's foot accidentally while leaving the washroom, causing her to fall back. When he grabbed her arm to keep her from falling, she screamed.

When police arrived, the girl accused Mr. Rowland of assault, and he was arrested.

**Solving the mystery**

Two cemeteries and a city park may be the keys to solving the mystery of what happened to other victims.

The commission has interviewed survivors of the conflict and pored through courtroom records, mortgage notes, building permits, cemeteries directories and other documents.

The panel has focused its search on Newblock Park, the city's Oaklawn Cemetery and the privately owned Oaklawn Cemetery, formerly known as Booker T. Washington Cemetery, in far southeastern corner of downtown, is adjacent to the Arkansas River, near where witnesses saw the bodies.

In addition, witnesses in the 1940s reported finding skeletal remains in the park when the city built a sewage pumping station.

Oaklawn Cemetery is where Mr. Eddy's body was filled with bodies and where Salvation Army records indicate that at least 18 to 20 bodies were packed into a half-dozen or so wood-

**Above:** Estimates put the damage in 1921 at $1.1 million. The Red Cross estimated that 1,115 homes were destroyed and an additional 314 were damaged.

**For Mr. Rowland?** He was kept safe by authorities.

**No one can give you the story,** the white man countered.

**The Dallas Morning News**

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*References to specific dates and individuals have been omitted for privacy reasons.*
After riot, survivor's family lived in tent on site of arson-razed home

By Arnold Hamilton

Tulsa World News Service

TULSA, Okla. — Kinney Booker was only 8 years old when a white mob took his father away and torched his family's home.

But he vividly remembers the scene: Bullet raining on his family's roof as he, his mother, Ophelia, and four siblings hid in the attic.

The unmistakable smell of smoke from the arsonist's torch. The fear of not knowing what happened to his father as the family marched with other blacks to instrument camps.

"My poor sister — she was 6 — asked, 'Is the world on fire?'" recalled Mr. Booker, now 85. "I said, 'Not exactly, but we're in a lot of trouble here.'"

Almost 70 years after marauding whites leveled black Tulsa, Mr. Booker and others are speaking out in hopes that the story of the 1921 race riot finally will be told in its entirety.

"They wanted to squash it, cover it up, but it happened — just like slavery," he said.

Mr. Booker said he and his family were detained overnight at Tulsa's Convention Hall along with hundreds, if not thousands, of other blacks, seeking refuge from the gunfire, torching and looting. It was hours, he said, before he learned that his father, Hood Booker, also was safe in the building.

The next day, he said, blacks were permitted to leave if accompanied by white employers who pledged to care for them. His father's boss, oil tycoon Homer F. Wilcox, took the family in until martial law was lifted and rebuilding could begin.

"We lost everything," said Mr. Booker. "They burned up everything. At one time I hated all white people because I blamed them for it."

But Mr. Wilcox's generosity, he said, helped him realize that not all whites were evil and responsible for the carnage.

Mr. Booker said his family lived for months in a tent on the site where their home once stood. He said rebuilding was slow because many white merchants didn't want to sell construction materials to blacks.

"I hated Tulsa," he said. "I didn't want to stay anymore, but my father had a good job" as Mr. Wilcox's chauffeur and handyman.

Later, Mr. Booker did move away, first to New Orleans, where he attended college, and eventually to Los Angeles. He lived there for 50 years and taught school.

After his wife died, Mr. Booker returned to Tulsa 13 years ago to marry a childhood sweetheart. The union ended in divorce. He said the memories of the riot are still so painful that he would rather live elsewhere, but can't afford to move.

He now rents a small apartment in Tulsa's predominantly black north side. His three children have piled away. His closest living relative is his younger sister, Dorothy, 400 miles away in St. Louis.

Even today, he said, he still thinks about the riot. "I can't forget about it," he said.
Mass graves hold the secrets of American race massacre

By James Langton in New York

INVESTIGATORS are searching for the graves of up to 400 blacks, Americans in an attempt to end the 79-year cover-up of one of the most heinous acts of mass slaughter in the country's history.

Dr Clyde People, 67, a former Sunday School teacher, is fighting to stop the process of exhumation which was due to start yesterday. He said: "I'm not willing to let them start exhuming the graves."

"I'm not willing to let them start exhuming the graves."

The scene in the small town of Bozeman, Montana, is a familiar one. A historic site, a place of memories, a place where history is still written in the bones of those who were killed.

Dr. Stanley of the University is determined to stop the exhumation. He has discovered evidence of a mass grave near Bozeman, Montana, a place where history is still written in the bones of those who were killed.

The scene in the small town of Bozeman, Montana, is a familiar one. A historic site, a place of memories, a place where history is still written in the bones of those who were killed.

We are all aware of the importance of keeping these sites open to the public. It is our duty to keep these sites open to the public. It is our duty to keep these sites open to the public.
among black survivors of the riot that the number of victims was far higher than the official report of between 36 and 100. One 88-year-old man, Clyde Eddy, has come forward to say that he saw boxes of dead blacks being buried secretly in crates in unmarked graves at a city cemetery. Four other possible sites of mass graves are also to be investigated.

The violence followed the arrest of Dick Rowland, a black shoeshine boy on May 31, 1921. Newspaper reports wrongly claimed that he had sexually assaulted a 17-year-old white girl in the lift of the office block where they both worked.

Later, gangs of blacks and whites clashed outside the county courthouse where he was being held. In the violence that followed, gangs of heavily-armed whites poured in to town. More than 30 city blocks were levelled, many of them in a thriving commercial district known as "Wall Street".

Some 10,000 blacks were left homeless and more than 1,000 buildings were burnt to the ground. Order was re-established only a day later with National Guardsmen called from Chicago and over 4,000 federal troops patrolling the streets.
A Costly Legacy / Tulsa mulls reparations for black survivors of riot

BY: By Martin Evans. STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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Tulsa, Okla.—On June 1, 1921, Kinny Booker, an 8-year-old black boy, hid in the attic of his Tulsa home. Downstairs, a white mob interrogated his father.

They asked my father, "Do you have a gun?" Booker said, recalling the 1921 race riot that leveled Tulsa's black community. "I couldn't hear what my father answered, but I did hear him say 'Please don't set my house on fire' real loud so we could hear him."

A few days later, Clyde Eddy, a 10-year-old white boy, was walking past Tulsa's Oaklawn Cemetery when he saw a group of men digging what appeared to be a mass grave. Several large packing crates were nearby, and he was astonished by what he saw when he peered inside.

"There were bodies in them, black men," Eddy recalled. "I saw three bodies in one crate. The next one had four bodies."

Booker and Eddy grew up on opposite sides of railroad tracks that in 1921 split Tulsa into two communities, one black and one white.

And although both men lived through the worst race riot in Tulsa's history, during which armed whites rained bullets on the black community, looting and burning indiscriminately, they and many Tulsans disagree over whether and how Tulsa should redress the black community for the terror and destruction it endured.

Like many black Tulsa residents, Booker passionately believes the government should pay cash reparations.

Like many whites in Tulsa, Eddy balks at the suggestion, saying the riot was the work of a "certain element" that is long dead.

"Nobody likes to see something like that happen," Eddy said. "It's kind of a smear on Tulsa. But that was [more than] 75 years ago. Who are you going to pay the money to?"

For most of the 78 years since the bloody uprising, which claimed as many as 300 lives, Tulsa has tried to forget.

White city officials quickly backed away from early proposals to help rebuild the black community where it had stood. Black survivors refused to discuss their humiliation with their children. School textbooks made no mention of the incident. Generations grew up with no knowledge of the devastation.

"I never did talk about it much before this year," said Booker, who said he has only recently spoken publicly about his memories. "Some people have seen me on TV and said, 'I didn't know you went through all that.'"

"It was something that passed, and we just tried to forget about it," Booker said. "It was devastating to come back and see everything destroyed, to come back and have nothing."

Interest in the riot surged in Tulsa's black community after the Florida Legislature in 1994 awarded $150,000 each to eight survivors of a 1923 riot in Rosewood. In that Gulf Coast hamlet, a white mob killed 56 blacks and burned nearly every house to the ground.

Two years ago, the Oklahoma Legislature established the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission to determine what happened during the Tulsa riot and to suggest possible reparations that could range from a financial award to individual survivors of the riot to a formal apology from city
and state officials. A nonbinding recommendation is expected soon.

The commission has identified 61 black survivors of the riot living today, although it believes dozens more may be scattered across the country. Another survivor, Paul Fellows, 84, died last Monday. Two others died earlier last month.

Now, even Tulsans who disagree on how past wrongs should be addressed often say they are proud their hometown is willing to grapple with such a racially tinged issue.

"There were race riots all around the country. Tulsa is one of the very few places that has faced up to it and is looking into it," said Dick Warner, a white volunteer who is assisting the riot investigation. "I'm proud of it because it's history, and I want to get history straightened out."

In 1921, segregated Tulsa was home to 11,000 blacks, large numbers of them middle-class homeowners and entrepreneurs, according to historian Scott Ellsworth, whose book "Death in a Promised Land" is considered the definitive study on the riot. Barred from jobs and stores downtown, Tulsa's black community built stores, restaurants, theaters, offices and pool halls along a thriving section of Greenwood Avenue, making Tulsa's "black Wall Street" one of the most prosperous black communities in the country.

But the early decades of this century were hostile times for blacks all across America. When Oklahoma won statehood in 1907, its Senate's first act was a 37-2 vote approving a bill creating white-only sections on trains and streetcars for "the comfort" of passengers. Between 1917 and 1919, white rioters invaded black neighborhoods in Pennsylvania, Illinois, Nebraska, Minnesota and several southern states. And in 1921, lynchings claimed the lives of at least 51 blacks nationwide.

It was in this tense environment that a Tulsa bootblack named Dick Rowland crossed paths with a young white elevator operator named Sarah Page on May 30, 1921. When Page screamed as Rowland emerged from her elevator, rumors—never substantiated—quickly spread that he had assaulted her.

When Rowland was arrested the next day, a white mob assembled outside the jailhouse. A group of blacks, concerned that a jailhouse lynching took place a year earlier might be repeated, rushed onto the scene. A gun went off, shooting began, and the blacks retreated into Tulsa's Greenwood district north of the railroad tracks.

At dawn on June 1, white rioters, many armed with guns stolen from hardware stores, stormed across the tracks and into the black community. Many sped about in open cars, shooting at black residents as they went. Others went door-to-door, looting homes and businesses before burning them to the ground.

Police, who later claimed they could not contain the advancing whites, focused instead on rounding up blacks, many of them home or business owners trying to keep white looters from descending on their property.

In all, 6,000 blacks — more than half of Tulsa's black population — were herded into detention centers, some of them housed in cattle and hog pens at a local fairgrounds. Many others fled to the countryside.

Blacks, who photos show being led at gunpoint, were detained for a week or longer and were not permitted to leave unless a white employer vouched for them. Blacks caught on the street without a green identification card with their employer's name and address were subject to arrest.

"They marched the Negroes down Greenwood with our hands held high, while whites hooted and shouted names," W.D. Williams, a black schoolteacher who lived through the riot, said in a 1971 interview. "It is still the most humiliating day of my life." As one of the few teachers who taught his students about the riot, Williams, who died in 1984, is credited with keeping the story alive.

Photographs taken the day after the riot show the black community as a vast plane of smoking bricks and blackened rubble, with the high school as the only building standing. Various records indicate that 191 businesses and 1,256 homes went up in flames, and that another 314 homes
were looted. The siege caused damages equaling an estimated $13.2 million in 1997 dollars, according to testimony before the state commission.

The number of victims, both white and black, remains unclear, with government sources saying as few as 27 at the time and Red Cross officials at the time estimating a total of 300. Members of the commission have said researchers using ground-penetrating radar have found patterns consistent with a mass grave at the Oaklawn Cemetery.

Two weeks after the riot, Tulsa Mayor T.D. Evans blamed black residents for the riot and said it had been good for the city. "It was good generalship to let the destruction come to that section where the trouble was hatched up," Evans said in an address to the City Commission.

With little help from the white world, black Tulsans rebuilt the Greenwood business district, which continued to thrive through World War II. The district was razed as part of a bitterly contested 1970s urban-renewal project. Today, supporters of reparations say the government failed to fairly protect the black community and acted improperly by indiscriminately arresting blacks while allowing white vigilantes to roam free.

"Some blacks don't believe in reparations, but I do," said Booker, 86, whose family lost its home and a car in the flames. "Some white people say, 'We weren't responsible,' but we made reparations to the Japanese when we interned them. All the Negroes who had their homes destroyed ought to get something."

Rep. Don Ross (D-Tulsa), a black Oklahoma legislator who favors cash reparations, said he is not optimistic such legislation could pass in Oklahoma, as it did in Florida.

"In a legislative body? No," said Ross, whose efforts led to the creation of the riot commission. But Ross said he hopes the legislature will approve at least some form of reparations, perhaps scholarships for descendants of riot victims or tax incentives to promote economic development in Tulsa's black community.

"There is a lot in my community that is a derivative of the riot and the inability to generate wealth," Ross said. "There is the whole intimidation factor that said if you prospered, you would get hurt by whites. Black folks did exactly what white folks asked them to do. They built their community. And it was taken away from them."

ILLUSTRATION/PHOTO: Photos by Dave Crenshaw - 1) Tulsa's black community under siege 1921 after a black man was arrested in the assault of a white woman. The photo, from Tulsa archives, displays writing by an unknown person. 2) Kinny Booker, whose family survived the riot, believes victims should get cash reparations. 3) Clyde eddy, who saw a mass burial, says the riot was the work of an "element" long dead.


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**Fighting to Be Heard**

Black Seminoles sue for a place in history

**U.S.-Seminoles Treaty of 1856**

*Article 2...* And inasmuch as there are among the Seminoles many persons of African descent and blood, who have no interest or property in the soil, and no recognized civil rights, it is stipulated that hereafter these persons and their descendants, and such other of the same race as shall be permitted by said nation to settle there, shall have and enjoy all the rights of native citizens, and the laws of said nation shall be equally binding upon all persons of whatever race, who may be adopted as citizens or members of said tribe.

By Ron Jackson

In the heyday of the Black Seminoles in the American South, when they had independent communities, they were able to maintain a degree of autonomy and control over their affairs. The Seminoles were a people of African descent and mixed descent, with a rich history of resistance against white supremacy. They lived in communities in the southeastern United States and were known for their resilience and determination. Their history is intertwined with the history of slavery, resistance to dispossession, and the struggle for recognition and rights.

**Pro bono case**

The case of Black Seminoles in the Seminole Freedmen's Civil Rights Act of 1866 involved African-American Seminoles who had been enslaved by their ancestors and were seeking redress for their mistreatment by the U.S. government. The case was significant because it challenged the legal status of African-Americans and paved the way for future civil rights litigation.

**Death with meaning**

Davi and other Black Seminoles are determined to ensure they didn't die in vain. They chose to be remembered by the ways they lived and the causes they fought for. Their legacy is a testament to their perseverance and the fight for justice.

**Back to court**

Where is the lawsuit now? The lawsuit initiated by the Seminoles against the U.S. government is a case of major significance. It seeks compensation for the dispossession of their ancestors and the recognition of their rights as sovereign nation.

*The content is based on historical and legal events related to the Black Seminoles and their struggle for recognition and rights.*
TULSA, Okla. (AP) — A commission investigating the 1921 Tulsa race riot is expected to take a vote on reparations at a Feb. 4 meeting, even as issues of historical fact continue to be debated, its chairman said today.

The Tulsa Race Riot Commission is due to report its recommendation on the controversial issue of reparations to state lawmakers on Feb. 7.

A final report with the commission's conclusions on historical and archeological findings, however, won't be ready until spring, commission chairman Bob Blackburn said.

The meeting's agenda had not been set by this morning, but Blackburn said it would include a discussion on reparations. In absence of historical conclusions, he said the commission could consider making its recommendation on legal or moral findings.

A subcommittee of the commission has proposed a $33 million reparation package that would include scholarships, a museum and tax breaks to encourage business development — in addition to direct payments to more than 70 living survivors.

Blackburn said that, in his opinion, a recommendation "that detailed and that aggressive" could limit "the next step."

"We will have full opportunity to discuss that, but I think we've got to keep focused on what will continue this dialogue," he said. "We've got to have something that continues the process."

Other commission members have voiced their support for the proposal.

The 11-member commission has spent more than two years investigating the May 31, 1921, outbreak that led to the destruction of Tulsa's black business district. Some historians estimate as many as 300 people died, but that figure remains in dispute.

State. Rep. Don Ross, whose legislation helped create the commission, has introduced a new bill to extend the commission's tenure.

Blackburn hopes a legislative committee will be assigned to look at the commission's findings and its recommendations. That would allow debate and discussion to continue through the year, he said.

"I don't think this is an issue you want debated on the floor of the House and Senate," he said. "I think elected officials need to hear our findings in a more deliberate and less-pressured atmosphere."

Blackburn said the commission's investigation had expanded the historical evidence "but not substantially." Also, work has yet to begin in the excavation of a Tulsa cemetery believed to hold a possible mass grave.

Blackburn said he did not know whether that work would be completed by next week's meeting. He would not say when the excavation would take place, saying it "would be done as quietly as possible."
BURIAL grounds are supposed to be sacred. Indeed, when private development threatens to disturb an ancient burial ground, there's usually an outcry. When someone disturbs a more recent gravesite, the act is considered worthy of criminal prosecution.

Conventional wisdom is turned on its head in the case of a Tulsa burial site where historians can't wait to begin digging up bones. The rather macabre development is related to the Tulsa race riot of 1921. There's such an eagerness to find answers about the riot's causes and effects that no one seems to care that a burial ground is being disturbed.

Bob Brooks, an archeologist, wants to begin limited excavation in Tulsa's Oaklawn Cemetery early next month. It could take up to three days, and there is some urgency about the matter because the Tulsa Race Riot Commission has a Feb. 7 deadline to report to the Legislature. The excavation is predicated on the belief that a mass grave holds remains of riot victims.

Commission Chairman Bob Blackburn admits that the cemetery "dig" will not produce conclusive answers about how many died on that terrible day. "If there is one thing I am certain of," he told the Tulsa World, "is that we will never know how many people were killed."

The mysteries of the riot will probably never be solved; but that won't stop the commission from asking for reparations. The commission's findings will be questioned regardless of the outcome because it has a conflict of interest. On the one hand, it is charged with investigating the riot. On the other, at least some of its members are strong advocates for reparations. We therefore question the objectivity of any commission report. A commission that wants reparations has a vested interest in swaying its report in order to make the case for remedies.

It would be better if the investigation were handled by historians who could present an objective overview of the facts and leave the advocacy to another group. The Legislature should take the commission's dual role into account before appropriating any money related to the riot.

The Oklahoman believes the commission and the Legislature should focus their efforts on building a first-class memorial in the area where the riot had its worst consequences. We do not oppose the use of some public funds for this project, but it should be financed primarily by donations, similar to the Oklahoma City National Memorial and the planned World War II memorial in Washington. The idea of giving cash to individuals believed to be survivors of victims is absurd and divisive. A memorial fund drive would bring people together rather than divide them and bring visible public recognition to one of the ugliest instances of racial disharmony in
U.S. history.

If the people of Tulsa wish to vote a special tax to pay for direct reparations, that's their business. But it is not the responsibility of all Oklahoma taxpayers to fund any reparations that may be recommended by the commission.
Race riot digging canceled

By RANDY KREHBIELE World Staff Writer
2/1/00

Weather and conflicting evidence lead to indefinite postponement.

Excavation of a site suspected of holding dead from the 1921 Tulsa riot has been postponed indefinitely, state archeologist Robert Brooks said Monday.

"In a way, the weather we've had the last few days has been a fortunate break," said Brooks. "It's given everybody a chance to stand back and reassess the evidence."

Archeologists were to begin digging up a 3-by-6-foot silver of Oaklawn Cemetery on Tuesday. The excavation, under the auspices of the Tulsa Race Riot Commission, was to determine if an area identified by witnesses and sounding equipment might be a common grave holding as many as 12 people killed in the riot.

However, last week's snow, unfavorable weather forecasts and the discovery of records indicating that graves unrelated to the riot might be located in the suspected area combined to convince Brooks that a delay was in all parties' best interests.

The sounding equipment can tell searchers only that some sort of pit, about 15 feet square, probably was dug on the location. It does not indicate what, if anything, is buried there.

Doubts about the site began to arise three weeks ago, when Assistant City Attorney Paul Prather discovered records indicating someone named Ed Baker was buried in the center of the suspected site less than two weeks before the riot.

Baker's grave, if it is where it is supposed to be, is not marked.

Initially, authorities said they could work around the Baker grave. Brooks, however, said the grave's very existence is reason to re-examine the site. He said there will be more tests, and it is unclear when or if the excavation will occur.

The project is in some question because the riot commission's authorization expires Feb. 7, the first day of the Legislative session. If that authorization is not extended, the excavation could be dropped.

Brooks, however, said Rep. Don Ross, D-Tulsa, "firmly believes the
commission will be extended."

Ross could not be reached for comment.

Whether an extension would include additional funding is another unanswered question. The commission used up its $50,000 appropriation months ago and has spent $25,000 in Oklahoma Historical Society funds, said Bob Blackburn, commission chairman and OHS executive director.

As things stand now, the commission is to hold its last formal meeting at 1 p.m. Friday on the Oklahoma State University-Tulsa campus. The meeting will be devoted to writing a preliminary report that can be presented by the Feb. 7 deadline.

Randy Krehbiel, World staff writer, can be reached at 581-8365 or via e-mail at randy.krehbiel@tulsaworld.com.
79 years after riot, a reconciliation call

By RANDY KREHBIEL World Staff Writer
5/31/00

Seventy-nine years ago Wednesday night mounting racial tension exploded into one of the most intense episodes of civil violence the United States ever experienced.

The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 killed at least 40 people and probably more, left thousands homeless and did millions of dollars worth of damage. The 14 hours of mayhem gave rise to countless stories, many of which can no longer be proved or disproved.

While for some feelings still run high, others are saying the time has come to move past recriminations to reconciliation.

"At some point we moved from the story of how bad it was to what we're going to do about it," said Rep. Don Ross, D-Tulsa.

Ross, who was instrumental in establishing the Tulsa Race Riot Commission, is pushing for a $5 million memorial at B.S. Roberts Park on the north edge of Oklahoma State University-Tulsa. Ross has gotten tentative legislative support for the idea, which he says would be "the largest monument depicting African American history in the world."

"The time," said Ross, "has come for reconciling ourselves and history."

A service planned for 5 p.m. Sunday at Mount Zion Baptist Church, 419 N. Elgin Ave., is intended as a starting point.

"One of my concerns is that whatever happens can be healing," said the
Rev. Byron Williams of Greater Union Baptist Church, a spokesman for the group of churches that organized Sunday's event.

"We shouldn't get caught up in the logistics of who did what during the riot. Our purpose is not to deal with specifics but with the common human problems we still face today."

The event is sponsored by a number of area organizations as well as the Tulsa Race Riot Commission.

"We see this as the beginning of a healing process," said Pete Churchwell, a spokesman for the commission.

The commission itself is trying to move toward a resolution of its duties. Funding mechanisms put into place on the final day of the Legislative session should provide the means to complete a series of reports by early next year.

In a memo to commission members, Churchwell outlined the course of action he intends to take as chairman. He is expected to assume that position in June.

The first phase involves the writing of six specialized reports by consultants to the commission. These are: historical narrative and analysis, John Hope Franklin and Scott Ellsworth; analysis of riot deaths, Dr. Clyde Snow; analysis of property losses, Larry O'Dell; archaeological report, state archeologist Bob Brooks and geophysicist Allen Whitten; riot grave sites, physical anthropologists Lesley Rankin-Hill and Phoebe Stubblefield; and legal and constitutional analysis, Oklahoma City University law professor Al Brophy.

A summary of the six reports will then be written by the commission's current chairman, Oklahoma Historical Society Executive Director Bob Blackburn, and University of Oklahoma Professor Danney Goble.

Many of those involved in the commission's investigation say some questions are likely to remain unanswered. Issues such as the extent to which activities before and after the riot may have been part of the riot remain as enshrouded as ever.

One version of what Greenwood resident Mary E. Jones Parrish termed "the Tulsa disaster" will be shown at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday on the Cinemax cable network. "The Tulsa Lynching of 1921: A Hidden Story" highlights Parrish's memoirs of the event as well as those of other survivors and dips into some of the conspiracy theories.

"While I would quibble with some of the things the movie portrays as historical fact, the story is told in a very compelling way," said Churchwell. "Its general theme is accurate."
Apology Alone Just 'Hot Air'
Tulsa World June 22, 1997
By Rik Espinosa Staff Writer

Apologies.
Reparations.
The sin of the father.
The legal and religious language of guilt and forgiveness swirl around the scene of contemporary race relations.
President Clinton's consideration of a request to make a formal apology from the federal government for slavery has prompted much debate nationally.
Rep. Tony Hall, D-Ohio, proposed the federal apology. The resolution is now being considered by the House Judiciary Committee.
The proposal for a national apology over racial issues has some precedent in Tulsa. But one Tulsa legislator says apologies, while a step in the right direction, do not blot out a history of oppression.
Gov. Frank Keating, Mayor Susan Savage and Rep. Don Ross, D-Tulsa, have formally apologized for the state's part in the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921. County Commissioner Lew Harris said he does not recall any Tulsa County official issuing an apology.
'I called for an apology from public officials for the racism that destroyed north Tulsa during the 1921 race riot,' Ross said.
'I did apologize. I was the first public official to apologize.
Keating apologized last October in ceremonies pardoning J.B. Stradford, the owner of a 65-room hotel in the Greenwood District, which was destroyed in the 1921 riot. Stradford was indicted by an all-white grand jury in 1921 for inciting the riot. Stradford fled to Chicago to avoid prosecution.
'It is regrettable that we have to come here to recognize an embarrassment, a historical event that never should have happened,' Keating said.
Savage apologized during ceremonies marking the 75th anniversary of the race riot, saying that 'the whole community regretted the incident,' mayoral aide Jim East said.
Ross will meet with Oklahoma Historical Society officials Thursday to discuss what the first steps of the newly created nine-member Commission on the 1921 Race Riot will be and the intent of the legislation that created the board.
Ross sponsored the recently signed legislation that set up the commission to study the riot. Names of prospective commission members have been submitted to the governor, and the Tulsa City Council still needs to submit names of possible members to Savage.
A proposal to provide $5 million in reparation for riot survivors was cut from the bill early in the legislative process.
Ross still holds hope that reparations will come.
'Some kind of reparations are due to the 20 or so survivors (of the riot), or some sort of programs are needed to correct the residuals of the riot,' Ross said.
'What the riot did was stop the accumulation of wealth, and a whole community
had to begin again,' he said.

The actions and inactions of the city, county and state governments before and
after the 1921 Tulsa race riot are the reason many believe apologies should be
extended and reparations made.

The headline in the Bartlesville Daily Enterprise on June 2, 1921, read, 'Blame
Tulsa Law Officers For Rioting; Deputies Are Ones Who Started Firing First.'

The Tulsa datelined story began: 'At a meeting in the Municipal Building today,
various Tulsa citizens charged that complete fall down of city and county law
enforcement officials was responsible for the rioting and incendiaryism here
Tuesday night and Wednesday morning which so far has resulted in the known
deaths of nine white men and 18 Negroes, the wounding of nearly 300 persons
and the fire loss to Negro property estimated at $1,500,000.'

The build-up to the riot began in the last days of May 1921, when the
now-defunct Tulsa Tribune published a provocative story about how a white
teen-age elevator operator was 'assaulted' by a black man. Dick Rowland, the
man involved, had gone to the fourth floor of the Drexel Building in downtown
Tulsa to use the only restroom in the building reserved for blacks, reports said.

As he was entering the elevator, which had not stopped level to the floor,
Rowland tripped and fell into the elevator, grabbing the arm of Sarah Page,
reports said.

Page is quoted in the June 1, 1921, Tulsa World as saying, 'When he grabbed
my arm, I screamed and he fled.'

Tulsa Police Chief of Detectives James Patton was quoted in the same article.
He attributed the riot to yellow journalism.

'When an afternoon paper(3,8),(994,991) came out with a colored and untrue
account, so far as we had been able to ascertain, of the entire affair, we
concluded that it would be best for the safety of the Negro to place him behind
the bars of the county jail.'

Patton went on to say, 'If the facts in the story as told the police had only been
printed I do not think there would have been a riot whatsoever.'

Rowland was arrested on May 31 and held in the county jail. When the
afternoon Tribune was published, it reportedly included an inflammatory editorial
saying there was going to be a lynching as a result of the alleged assault.

All copies of the Tribune editorial have been torn out of copies of the Tribune
for that date that were microfilmed in local and state records, and no copy of the
editorial is known to exist. This is part of what many people charge was a
cover-up in the aftermath of the riot.

A group of blacks, fearing Rowland was going to be lynched as had another
man two months before gathered at the courthouse jail. Groups of whites began
to form in the area, and the group of blacks eventually moved several blocks
away, toward the Greenwood District.

An Associated Press dispatch printed in the Topeka, Kansas, Daily Capital said:
'Following the firing of the first shot, about 10 o'clock at night, at Sixth and
Boulder Streets, the fighting spread to various parts of the city, including the business section. At one time 2,000 armed white men were reported to have engaged the Negroes.'

The Associated Press story in the Houston Chronicle said: 'The first attempts to fire the Negro section were made about 1:30 o'clock this morning when white men openly threatened to destroy the locality.'

The fire destroyed more than 1,000 homes and businesses, and no one knows the actual death toll. Early accounts said hundreds had died; accounts in the days following the riot said nine whites and 31 blacks were killed. However, there are eyewitness accounts of truckloads of dead blacks being driven out of town and printed accounts of the bodies of dead blacks being thrown into the Arkansas River and buried in ravines in the Osage Hills.

News stories tell of several thousand blacks, some fleeing the inferno in their night clothes, being herded into makeshift holding areas at a baseball park near 11th Street and Elgin Avenue, the Convention Center now called the Brady Theater and stock pens at the fairgrounds.

Opal Kern Schad, who was white, lived at the corner of Detroit Avenue and Fairview Street and wrote of watching the shooting and burning in the area. 'I asked my father what was being done with the bodies. His answer was, 'Hauling them to the Osage Hills, putting them in ravines and bulldozing dirt over them.'

Historian Eddie Faye Gates writes in her history of north Tulsa that 'there was a grand jury investigation which was held in June of 1921, but even there, punishment was mild loss of political seats and patronage.'

Stories in the World said the grand jury returned indictments against 64 blacks and against Police Chief John Gustafson for neglect of duty. There is no record of anyone being convicted of any charges in the aftermath of the riot.

Page never filed a complaint against Rowland, and the city of Tulsa dropped all other charges Sept. 28, 1921.

Legal suits were filed against the city as a result of the riot. An article in the World dated July 1, 1937, said 56 damage suits seeking several million dollars in damages filed against the city were voluntarily dismissed at the request of the plaintiffs' attorneys.

'The suits charged that (the mayor and city commissioners) entered into a conspiracy with numerous unidentified persons against the property, life and liberty of the Negro residents of Tulsa by permitting white citizens to raid hardware stores, arm themselves and kill numerous citizens of the Negro race as well as destroy Negro property.'

The article went on to say that a damage suit against the city was tried in 1922, but it was 'dismissed in favor of the city officials.'

The earliest newspaper from Tulsa in the microfilm files of the Oklahoma Historical Society is 'The Tulsa Review' dated June 15, 1894. Along with the front page ads from The Tulsa Roller Mills, T.J. Wilson Watchmaker and the Brady Shoe Co. is a large article for the village's fourth of July picnic.

In the listing of activities, including a 'Base Ball Game' for 'the championship of the territory' between the Tulsa Picked Nine and the Caney Celebrated Club,
target shooting, cane pitching, sack race and a backward race, is an obscure reference to 'nigger baby throwing.'

Historians have no reference to such an event.

The social stigma of being a person of color in early Oklahoma was reinforced through city and state Jim Crow laws.

One of the first laws of the town of Tulsa in 1899 called for a separate school for 'colored children.' The schools were segregated until the late 1950s.

O.P. Sturm wrote in the December 1906 Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine about the gathering of delegates to the state's constitutional convention that 'the Negro question was paramount.'

'After all,' he continued, 'the domination of the Negro in politics is all right so long as he does not dominate. When he attempts to take charge of a white man's country it is different.

An example was furnished at both Coweta and Muskogee, where the dusky sons of Ham nominated a Negro for delegate. The white Republicans took pains to see that the Democrat was elected in both instances. This election has put the ban on Negro immigration to Oklahoma.'

The social conditions leading up to the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 included city ordinances that restricted blacks and whites from living in a neighborhood where 75 percent of the other race lived. This restricted blacks to about 35 blocks of north Tulsa in the area of Greenwood Avenue and Pine and Archer streets.

In her book, 'Growing Up with Tulsa,' Opal Kern Schad recalled, 'The public parks and rides in the parks were reserved for blacks on Emancipation Day.' The day, June 17, is now celebrated as Juneteenth.

Kern Schad remembered the race riot in her book. 'Segregation was still in effect. The seating arrangement for the Ethel Waters concert had to be made to take care of this. Miss Waters was a noted Negro singer. The Convention hall was divided down the middle. One side of the middle aisle were whites, on the other side of the middle aisle the Negroes were seated both downstairs and balcony.'

She recalled living on the edge of the black section. She said her father was not able to sell the house because 'whites didn't want it and blacks weren't allowed to buy it.'

Some say they should not have to apologize for the actions of their ancestors or that their ancestors were blameless for slavery. And many black leaders are quick to point out that they are not speaking of individuals but of institutions when they say an apology for slavery is necessary.

But Gates, a north Tulsa author, historian and educator and author of 'They Came Searching,' a history of north Tulsa and the race riot, said apologies are definitely important.

'Some blacks say we need action not words. I welcome the apology. Sometimes just the recognition and acknowledgment of something is very soothing and healing,' Gates said. 'We're not blaming the living individuals. But, you do need to recognize who put this into place European-Americans.'
Jack Henderson, president of the Tulsa chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said his personal opinion was that an apology for slavery would not do any good.

"Better than an apology would be fairness and equal treatment in housing and employment and promotions — let's just do the right thing," he said.

"I think the only thing this country can do at this point is to open their arms and their hearts and their minds and say, 'Let's make this a unified front, and let's treat all people equal on all levels and all aspects,'" Henderson said. "That, to me, would be the greatest apology the country could give."

Rep. Ross said he thinks apologies are important, but he believes the United States has already apologized for slavery through its civil rights programs.

"An apology without recompense, in my view, is subterfuge if not altogether hot air," he said. "The good thing about that: It does finally say that, 'We as a people are responsible for the sins of our fathers,' which most whites don't want to admit."
Governor appoints commission to study Tulsa's 1921 Race Riot

BY MICHAEL DAVY
Assistant to the Governor

July 10, 1987

TULSA WORLD

Our Historical Society

The Oklahoma Historical Society is now investigating the 1921 Race Riot with a commission appointed by Governor Norman. The study will involve an in-depth look at the events leading up to the riot, the impact it had on the city and state, and the long-term effects it had on society. The commission's work will be guided by a team of historians, archivists, and experts in race relations. The goal is to create a comprehensive report that will provide a clear understanding of the events that led to the riot and its implications for the future.

Commission outlines research on 1921 riot

The commission has set up a website for public input, which can be accessed at tulsaraceriot.com. Public comments can be submitted through the website or by mailing them to the Oklahoma Historical Society. The commission is also holding public meetings throughout the state to gather input and insights from affected communities. The goal is to create a diverse and inclusive record of the events leading up to the riot.

Tulsa's 1921 Race Riot

The 1921 Race Riot was a violent event that took place in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on May 31, 1921. The riot was sparked by a racial incident involving a black man and a white woman. The ensuing violence led to the deaths of 39 black people and the destruction of the Greenwood District, a prosperous black neighborhood.

The riot began with a mob of white people who were incensed by a rumor that a black man had raped a white woman. The rumor was false, but it was used as an excuse to launch a widespread attack on the black community. The riot lasted for four days and left a lasting impact on the city and state of Oklahoma.

The Oklahoma Historical Society is committed to preserving the history of the state and its people. The commission is working to ensure that the events of the 1921 Race Riot are not forgotten and that their lessons are learned.

Continued from Page 1

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Can Victims Be Repaid?

Reparations: Resurrecting Painful History, or Just Apology?

By Jean Pagel

Editor's Note: "Black Wall Street of America" was the name given to the Tulsa race riot that occurred in 1921. The name refers to the city's African American community, which was destroyed during the riot. The riot, also known as the Tulsa Race Massacre, was one of the worst race riots in U.S. history. The Tulsa Race Riot Commission was established in 1997 to investigate the causes of the riot and to develop a plan for reparations for the victims. The plan was approved by the Oklahoma Legislature in 2011 and is currently being implemented.

Worshipers remember Tulsa riot

By Ron Brown

The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 was a race riot that took place in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The riot was sparked by a dispute over aatu, a high-priced black shoe that was owned by a white man. The riot lasted for three days and resulted in the deaths of 39 people, most of them African Americans. The riot was one of the worst race riots in U.S. history.

Black and white together

Service of repentance to mark race riot anniversary

By Ron Brown

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Student reconstructs historic Tulsa district

By Bradley Jones

The Greenwood District was a business center for African Americans in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It was destroyed during the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, which is one of the worst race riots in U.S. history. The riot lasted for three days and resulted in the deaths of 39 people, most of them African Americans. The riot was sparked by a dispute over aatu, a high-priced black shoe that was owned by a white man. The riot was one of the worst race riots in U.S. history.

Building a greater unity

The Greenwood district was destroyed during the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, which is one of the worst race riots in U.S. history. The riot lasted for three days and resulted in the deaths of 39 people, most of them African Americans. The riot was sparked by a dispute over aatu, a high-priced black shoe that was owned by a white man. The riot was one of the worst race riots in U.S. history.

SERVICE:

The service will include a communion service, the prayer of extol and the confessions of the body of Christ.
Reward offered for missing newspaper article

Tribune story may hold clues to cause of deadly 1921 race riot

By Bob Strong

Last year, a woman who knew the man who once owned the Tulsa Daily Express newspaper said that she had a story about a 1921 race riot in Tulsa that might be of interest to the newspaper.


State

Setting the record straight

Riot victims' graves believed at three sites

By Irwin New

Police, who have been investigating the 1921 race riot in Tulsa, say they have found evidence that suggests that victims of the riot were buried in three different locations.


Black photographer crossed barriers

Former resident's work on display

By David Gerould

William Prentiss Greene, a black photographer, had a successful career in the 20th century. His work is now on display in a special exhibit at the Oklahoma Historical Society.


Tulsa Race Riot Commission Searching for Mass Graves

By Kelly Hart

The Tulsa Race Riot Commission is searching for evidence of mass graves from the 1921 race riot in Tulsa. They are seeking the public's help in finding any remains that may be buried.


Spiritual Food for the Heart

By Christian Science

A book titled "Spiritual Food for the Heart" was published in 1910. It contains a collection of essays and lectures on the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science.


If you go

A collection of works by William Prentiss Greene includes a book titled "The Tulsa Race Riot," which details the 1921 event in Oklahoma. The book includes photographs taken by Greene during the riot.


Inside

Chester Cowlis, a photographer for the Oklahoma Historical Society, has used photography to document the history of the Tulsa Race Riot. The photographs have been used in a new book titled "Tulsa's Race Riot: A Photographic History."
Unmarked graves may hold race riot victims

The Tulsa Race Riot Commission has un- covered three local sites where victims of the 1921 Race Riot may be buried in unmarked graves. The commission is beginning an underground excavation at each site, including Oaklawn Cemetery, Newkirk Park and Rolling Oak Cemetery, previously known as the Booker T. Washington Cemetery.

The story, which began in July, came to a close as it was revealed that two local families still live close to the sites.

The commission's work is far from over. It may take years, even decades, to uncover the truth about the site.

The Tulsa Race Riot Commission is an entity that was established in 1991 to investigate the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot. The commission received a $2 million grant from the federal government to conduct the investigation.

The commission is currently investigating three sites in Tulsa: Newkirk Park, Oaklawn Cemetery and Rolling Oak Cemetery. These sites were previously covered by a garbage and debris, and the commission has been working to clear them.

The commission's work is supported by a combination of government funding and private donations.

Tulsa Race Riot Commission
Tulsa, OK 74103

Elaborating on the investigation:

The commission's work is not yet complete, and it is expected that the investigation will continue for several years.

The commission is working to identify and locate the remains of as many victims as possible. The commission is also working to document the experiences of the survivors and to educate the public about the history of race relations in Tulsa.

The commission is working in partnership with local communities and organizations to ensure that the voices of survivors and their families are heard. The commission is committed to providing a thorough and accurate account of the events of the Tulsa Race Riot.
Recalling race riot

Annie Beaird, a Tulsa race riot survivor, recalls the brutal 1921 event from her home in north Tulsa, only a few miles from the site of the riot.

Peaceful life shattered

Tulsa woman, 85, recalls race riot

By Julie Bryant
Word Staff Writer

Annie Beaird was a 7-year-old playing jacks with a neighborhood friend when the Tulsa race riot exploded on to her street and abruptly erased the peaceful existence she knew.

More than 77 years later, 85-year-old Beaird lives in a modest home in north Tulsa, only a few miles from the site of the riot. She is not bitter, but she is quick to say she is rather unimpressed with the Tulsa Race Riot Commission's effort to dig up the history and the remains of the brutal event that raped her family.

Around noon on May 31, 1921, the day historians say the riot broke out, the Katy Trolley rolled toward Tulsa carrying Beaird, her mother and four siblings. They had spent the previous week visiting relatives in Muskogee, and Beaird says she was happy to be home again.

Later that evening outside her house at Greenwood Avenue and Easton Street, Beaird sat on the sidewalk playing with a friend when a dark Model T Ford carrying a load of black men came cruising down Greenwood.

See RIOT A-9

Mount Zion Baptist Church burns during the 1921 riots.
RIOT:

Family took off on foot with only the clothes on their backs.

FROM A-1

"There were guns poking out the window. They were hollering, 'Get your gun! Get your gun!'" she said.

Beaird's mother yelled for her to come inside. Her father was still at work at a Tulsa hotel. That left the little girl and her mother home alone with a baby, Beaird's two younger brothers and her older sister.

"When my dad got home, they tried to get him to join the crowd, but he said he wasn't going anywhere because everything we had was in the house," she said.

But by the next morning it had become too dangerous to stay. With only the clothes on their backs, the family took off on foot going north on Greenwood.

"We were dodging bullets. My dad kept grabbing at us to keep us out of the way," Beaird said.

As they walked up the street, Beaird said, she could look back and see white people and black people shooting at and killing each other up on what was known as Standpipe Hill.

The family eventually made it to an area just north of Pine Street near some coal pits where other black Tulsans had gathered.

As they huddled together, the first U.S. troops began to arrive.

"We were all scared to death. We thought they were coming to kill us. We ran down into the pit, and they had to help us all out," she said.

The soldiers took the families to the Tulsa Airport, Beaird said. For three or four days they lived there with assistance from the Red Cross.

When word of casualties made it to the airport, there would be an announcement, she said. During one such announcement, officials shouted out that her cousin Leroy Carter had been killed.

Actually, soldiers had shot his belt buckle off, Beaird said, laughing.

"We laughed about that for years," she said.

Apparently Carter had been standing in the middle of the street, too scared to move, when he got hit in the belt buckle. He was later reunited with his family.

Beaird's family was eventually brought to live in the basement of a house owned by the white family her father worked for. During the riot many whites came looking for their black workers and rounded them up along with their families and sheltered them for a period of time, she said.

When dust and smoke from the riot had settled, her family realized that they had lost everything.

Weeks after the rioting, Beaird's mother spotted some of their possessions piled up along First Street along with furniture and clothing that belonged to other riot victims.

"The stuff was for sale," she said, and the family had no money with which to buy their own things back.

In fact, they would never see their possessions again. After the riots the Red Cross set up tent houses for riot victims, and the Beairds lived in one of these tents for years, renting the land where it sat.

Today, Beaird says the time to repair damage done by rioters has come and gone.

"What can you do about it now but let bygones be bygones?" she asked, waving one hand in exasperation.

What the Tulsa Race Riot Commission can do is help Tulsa move beyond this, said commission Chairman Bob Blackburn.

The commission is considering the possibility of monetary reparations, an official apology and/or an exhibit devoted to the race riot.

The recent efforts by the commission to track down the remains of riot victims and to come up with a more accurate figure for exactly how many people died during the riots and who they were is not being done to punish, but to provide healing, he said.

"There is still some deep-seated resentment among us," Blackburn said.

Commission members hope that the database of information they have been collecting on the riots since 1997 will someday be available to the public.

"The database will be an ongoing project. People will have access to it and will be able to add to it," Blackburn said. The database helps the commission paint a clearer picture of what the north area of Tulsa was like in the 1920s.

"We now know who owned properties, what kind of businesses there were, how the community grew. We want to put a human face on this story," he said.

Money to fund the commission's efforts has come from a $50,000 state appropriation to the Oklahoma Historical Society. Blackburn said the commission was directed to use the money to support the commission. Consultants and historians brought in to help the commission with their findings are paid from that $50,000, he said.

The Oklahoma Historical Society receives $6 million in state appropriations each year to fund the society's effort to educate the public.

"We're basically playing catch-up with African-American history in this state. We've put together a slavery exhibit. We're putting together another exhibit now on all black towns," Blackburn said.

As the $50,000 begins to dry up, Blackburn said, the commission will begin looking to the private sector to help finish the work.

Julie Bryant can be reached at 581-8461.
Should There Be a Riot Commission?

By Louis Gray

News Analysis

After reports of the riot commission's mission and efforts made the news, there came a backlash of harsh comments about the need of a panel to reopen old wounds. In letters to the editor in the Tulsa World and on street corners around the city, the debate has been waged on the work of the commission.

The provocative work of the commission has unearthed many feelings long buried in the collective memories of Tulsans. Should there be a riot commission in the first place? What good can it do? And who should benefit?

After World War II the horror of the concentration camps of Europe shared the headlines along with the ending of the war. The crimes of the war were brought into the public view. Through trials against Nazis, even recently, after witnesses and other evidence was brought out, a true picture of what happened slowly took shape. The question was asked, "why go after criminals after so long and why not let the horrible crimes die?" Locally, the same question of being asked and answered.

The commission is being funded through the Oklahoma Historical Society with a $50,000 grant. The final report is to be sent to the Oklahoma legislature for possible action. They have held hearings and interviews and looked over records and evidence. They are even looking for mass graves.

Yolanda Charney is a leader in both the Hispanic and Jewish communities and from her background she had some insight to the questions asked of the commission. Charney read the "Calls to the Editor" section of the Tulsa World and was moved to write a response.

"I support the work of the commission, knowing they have caught a lot of flack over all of this." Charney said. The former president of the Tulsa Jewish Federation said she was instrumental in creating a Holocaust Survivors Group. "We needed to set the record straight about what happened" she said.

"The Jewish community never came to grips with the holocaust until all the survivors started speaking out and bringing all the stories to the surface," she said. Charney said not only was the non-Jewish community not talking about the horrors of the holocaust but "many families never told their children about what happened."

"Our community needs to talk about the riot so that they can get beyond it," said Dwayne Midgett, Assistant Publisher and publisher of the Tulsa Eagle.

"Its important to accurately document the riot," he said. "It is an important time in American history" and that how we deal with it will determine the future of the nation.
Commission studies role of aircraft in race riot

Use of any Oklahoma National Guard aircraft in the race riot has been ruled out.

By Du E. Ernest

National Guard.

One of the greatest mysteries of the 1921 Tulsa race riot was the role of aircraft during the melee. There has always been a strong and tradition that aircraft were used to shoot at blacks, or to bomb blacks, or to bomb north Tulsa,” said Bob Norris, Jr., an aviation enthusiast and adviser to the Tulsa Race Riot Commission on the role of the Oklahoma National Guard.

Possible bombing or incendiary material might have included cases of flammable gas, sticks of dynamite, torpedoes, and kerosene lamps. Torpedoes were rig bomb shelters in torpedoes and lighted.

The Race Riot Commission has been charged with finding out as much as it can because much information in the riot’s aftermath was either reported inaccurately or went unreported.

“A lot of folks discounted the bombing story and theory because it just sounded so preposterous. But you have accounts from blacks and whites that aircraft were used,” Norris said.

New information being uncovered by historians working for the state-funded Tulsa Race Riot Commission disproves claims that planes used during the riot were Oklahoma National Guard aircraft.

Amateur historian Dick Warner said the four-military airplanes in the state when the riot began May 31, 1921, were at Fort Sill.

“One of them was in maintenance and one was not out of its crate, and the other two could fly but never left the ground, so that ruled out the military,” Warner said.

However, the city of Tulsa had an observation plane in the air, he said.

“The police chief had a plane or planes in the air, and they were trying to spot people, and they would notify authorities on the ground,” he said.

There were reports that the New York Times hired a local photographer in the air during the Tulsa Race Riot in 1921.

Lough said her grandmother always said the use of the word “riot” was very misleading.

“She said, “It wasn’t just a riot, people were killing them (blacks), it was a slaughter.” Lough recalled.

In another second-hand account, a man told of being in a barber shop in Tulsa in the 1930s when an old man began bragging about dropping dynamite from a plane during the race riot.

“We don’t know who this fellow was who told this story,” Warner said.

Norris sats that in 1921 there were no radios in planes.

“The only way they could communicate with the ground was to use a peep-toeing of pilot officers or the police station and drop a message,” Norris said.

The communications were in real-time with officers on the ground. Norris thinks that may have been before some people saw dropping and assumed they were bombs.

A Curtiss airplane was found in Tulsa in 1921. The Curtiss southwest Airplane Co. Airport had just opened at Memorial Drive and Apache Street but the first large Tulsa airport was located at Hardin Ave. and Admiral Place.

“I found a Chamber of Commerce report dated Jan. 1, 1922, that says there were 14 airplanes here. I’m thinking there were about a dozen here in the middle of the year,” he said.

Warner said the planes he believes were in the air at the time of the riot were the Curtiss JN-4 “ Jenny,” a two-seat, open cockpit biplane used as a trainer in the closing months of World War I.}

This Curtiss JN-4 Jenny is similar to the airplane that historians think was in the air during the Tulsa Race Riot in 1921.

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'The Night Tulsa Burned'

History Channel documentary details the infamous race riot of 1921

By Rita Schirow

The Night Tulsa Burned' is a History Channel documentary that brings to life the infamous race riot of 1921. The documentary is based on the events of the Tulsa Race Riot, which occurred on June 1, 1921, and is considered one of the most violent race riots in American history.

The riot was sparked by the lynching of a black man named Elmore Gardner, who was lynched in Tulsa. The riot erupted in response to the lynching, and it quickly escalated into a full-scale riot that lasted for several days. The riot resulted in the deaths of at least 300 African Americans and the destruction of more than 100 homes and businesses.

The documentary features interviews with survivors and historical footage, providing a detailed account of the events leading up to the riot and the aftermath of the violence. It also includes footage of the Greenwood neighborhood, which was destroyed during the riot.

The Night Tulsa Burned' is a powerful and moving film that provides a glimpse into the overwhelming violence and destruction that occurred during the Tulsa Race Riot. It is a reminder of the racism and injustice that have historically plagued the United States and the importance of remembering these events as a way to prevent similar tragedies from happening in the future.

The film is available on the History Channel and is a must-watch for anyone interested in American history and the struggle for racial equality.
Panel tries to get clearer picture of '21 race riot

TULSA (NYT) - Nearly 78 years after one of the deadliest racial confrontations in the nation's history, a multiracial commission of citizens and historians is trying to determine how many people really were killed in the Tulsa race riot and whether survivors are entitled to reparations.

The 11-member Tulsa Race Riot Commission, created by the Oklahoma Legislature in 1997, is even looking for mass graves where the bodies of dozens of blacks who may have been killed in the riot on June 1, 1921, were dumped.

"We were suspicious of the official figures of the time," said Bob Blackburn, chairman of the commission and deputy executive director of the Oklahoma Historical Society. "We also wanted to come up with a portrait of what north Tulsa looked like before the riot."

The exact number of people killed in the riot, which destroyed a 30-square-block area of north Tulsa known as Greenwood, a primarily black neighborhood, was never determined. Newspaper accounts at the time varied, with some reporting as many as 76 dead. But some historians, citing survivors' accounts, have put the figure as high as 300.

The riot was touched off after a black shoeshine man was arrested after a white girl said he tried to assault her in an elevator. The man was eventually cleared and all charges were dropped, but not before a mob of armed white men showed up at the Tulsa County Courthouse threatening a lynching.

That prompted the city's black residents to take up arms and head for the jail. A scuffle led to gunfire, and firebombings and shootings went on for a day before the Oklahoma National Guard arrived.

Using old census records, mortgage notes, city directories, building permits and other official documents, the commission is developing a database to try to reconstruct north Tulsa on paper and determine who owned the bombed property and what it was worth.

Blackburn said the commission had found that many more whites owned property in north Tulsa than was initially thought. And, like their black counterparts, they received no compensation after their property was destroyed. Still, the commission's most controversial work has been in trying to provide a more accurate death toll.

The commission has hired archaeologists and forensic pathologists to assist in the search for mass graves. Radar was used to search for mass graves in some cemeteries in the area last July, but none were found.

Scott Ellsworth, a former historian at the Smithsonian Institution and author of Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, is one of the advisers to the commission. The historian John Hope Franklin, whose father lost his home in the riot, is also an adviser to the commission. Franklin last year headed the advisory board to the President's Initiative on Race.

Ellsworth said the commission examined records from a defunct funeral home showing that the city was billed for the burial of 30 people who died in the riot and who had not been identified previously as riot victims.

He also said that while searching a city-owned cemetery for mass graves, the commission found two headstones with no names on them dated June 1, 1921. He said the commission thought these graves to be those of previously unidentified riot victims, most likely black.

And there were numerous accounts of bodies being dumped into the Arkansas River, he said.

"This may well be the worst incident of racial violence in American history," Ellsworth said of the Tulsa riot. He said it was quite likely that at least 300 people were killed.

In addition to the death toll, the commission hopes to answer a number of other questions: many of them grounded in local lore. Blacks here have long maintained that whites used airplanes to bomb homes, churches and businesses in north Tulsa. The commission hopes to find records showing whether any Tulsa residents owned airplanes in 1921, and where they were based.

But the commission's hardest job probably is still to come: how to determine who is eligible for reparations and what those reparations should be. Since the beginning, many blacks have accused the city authorities of turning a blind eye to the destruction, and the National Guard of stepping in too late. Some say that if that is found to be true, the city and the state may be held accountable for damages.

The commission is financed through a $50,000 grant from the Oklahoma Historical Society; the money is being used to pay the expenses of experts and advisers.

Although the commission thought at first that only a handful of riot survivors were still living, it now says that more than 30 could be alive.

Where the money for potential reparations would come from is "a good question," Blackburn said, adding that the commission has not decided what form of reparations it will recommend when its findings are made public. A preliminary report could come as early as May.

The group could recommend that reparations consist of an apology from the city and the state, scholarship funds for black students or even a monument in Greenwood, Blackburn said.

Blackburn says he realizes that it will be difficult to put to rest decades of speculation over the riot, storytelling fueled by a long and deep silence on the part of whites in Tulsa.

Kinney Booker says he hopes the commission's work will get to the bottom of what happened here in 1921. Booker, now 85, was 8 years old when the riot occurred, and he remembers hiding in an attic with his mother and four siblings as white men set the family's house on fire.

Although they escaped, Booker's family lost its home and possessions, and was never compensated.

"At first, I hated all white people," he said, adding that his view changed when a white businessman took his family in after the riot.

Booker, too, has heard the stories about mass graves and bodies dumped in the river. "I think there's some truth to that," he said.

The commission could be most useful in educating the public about the riot, he said, noting that many Oklahomans know little or nothing about the outbreak of violence.

Booker said he also liked the idea of reparations, even if it was just a monument on Greenwood Avenue. "That would be better than nothing," he said.
Commission Gaining New Knowledge About Riot

Rep. Don Ross termed as "incredible" the new information being uncovered by members of the Race Riot Commission about Tulsa's darkest historical day that occurred in 1921.

"It's amazing how much progress we've made and how much is being learned about what really happened during the race riot," Ross advised.

How many homes and businesses were destroyed by fire is one area that apparently was vastly underestimated.

"The original damage figure was about $1 million, but studying the records it appears a more realistic estimate is at least $3 million," Ross said. The Tulsa representative believes even that figure is too low.

Dr. Bob Blackburn, a commission member and executive director of the Oklahoma Historical Society, said one of the goals initially established was obtaining the latest and most accurate information available on the race riot.

"We have studied city directories, fire insurance reports, census data, along with warranty and mortgage deeds," Blackburn said. "We are gathering a database so when specific inquiries are made, we will have the information.

"We have come to pretty much the same figure as the official reports (compiled at the time by the Red Cross) and that was about $111/2 million," Blackburn said. In today's market, the value of property destroyed would be over $13 million.

"We needed to know this in the event reparations are paid to surviving family members, or even in the event we make a formal apology," Blackburn noted.

Research shows that white property owners also suffered losses during the riot.

"At the time insurance companies had a rider that they were not liable for damages incurred during a riot and that meant black or white property owners," said Blackburn. Lawsuits filed against the City of Tulsa over damages caused during the riot were dismissed by the courts.

Cyrus Avery, a white man who owned significant property throughout the Greenwood District, also lost everything in that area, according to Blackburn. He said the commission has been somewhat surprised to learn that a number of whites lost significantly and were never compensated.

Recent publicity about a possible unmarked gravesite where hundreds of blacks killed during the riot lay buried prompted 80 responses to the commission from relatives. The commission believes between 250 and 300 people were killed, Blackburn said. However, he said there would be no digging for the remains of victims.

"We have promised the families of those killed there will be a non-invasive policy with regard to possible remains being unearthed," said Blackburn.

"We believe we owe that to the relatives who died in the riot.

Riot Commission Wants Answers About Mass Burials

By C. Davel Grant
Eagle Writer

Where are the victims of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot buried? That seems to be the major question from the race riot commission. Upon talking to riot survivors, they are said to be buried in Oaklawn Cemetery, Newblock Park and Rolling Oaks Cemetery. According to funeral home records, victims may also be buried in Rose Hill Cemetery.

The commission is funded through the Oklahoma Historical Society. They received a $50,000 state appropriation to help commission members develop a report on the Tulsa Race Riot that will be submitted to the Oklahoma Legislature.

In an interview with Ruth Avery Sigler, a white race riot survivor, she stated the remains are buried at Newblock park, Oaklawn Cemetery, the Arkansas River and said a lot of bodies were burned in the city incinerator.

"The stench from the smell of burning bodies was awful," said Sigler in an interview for a TV documentary.

The commission is in place to find the truth. They are also to decide the possibility of monetary reparations, an official apology and/or an exhibit devoted to the race riot.

The recent talks regarding the mass burials surround another big question... how many blacks actually died during the riot? The number is thought to be much higher than what the records show.

Information on the riot has been collected since 1997. The commission hopes the information will become a database in which the public can become a part of.

If it turns out that more than 300 blacks died during the riot, it would make it one of the bloodiest riots in history.

Anyone with information about the Tulsa Race Riot or mass burial sites should call either the Tulsa Historical Society at 712-9484, the Greenwood Cultural Center at 596-1020 or the office of Oklahoma State Archaeologists at (405) 325-7211.
Panel Tries to Get a Clearer Picture of 1921 Race Riot

By The New York Times

TULSA, Okla., Feb. 20 — Nearly 78 years after one of the deadliest racial confrontations in the nation's history, a special commission of citizens and historians is trying to determine how many people were actually killed in the Tulsa race riot and whether survivors are entitled to reparations.

The 11-member Tulsa Race Riot Commission, created by the Oklahoma Legislature in 1997, is even looking for mass graves where the bodies of dozens of blacks who may have been killed in the riot on June 1, 1921, were dumped.

“We were suspicious of the official figures of the time,” said Bob Blackburn, chairman of the commission and deputy executive director of the Oklahoma Historical Society. “We also wanted to come up with a portrait of what north Tulsa looked like before the riot.”

The exact number of people killed in the riot, which destroyed a 6-square-block area of north Tulsa known as Greenwood, a primarily black neighborhood, was never determined. Newspaper accounts at the time varied, with some reporting as many as 76 dead. But some historians, citing survivors accounts, have put the figure as high as 300.

The riot was touched off after a white mob, which destroyed a black neighborhood, was arrested after a white girl said she tried to assault her in an elevator. The man was eventually cleared and all charges were dropped, but not before a mob of armed white men showed up at the Tulsa County Courthouse threatening a lynching.

That prompted the city's black residents to take up arms and head for the jail. A scuffle led to gunfire, and then bombshells and shootings went on for a day before the Oklahoma National Guard arrived.

Using old census records, mortgage notes, city directories, building permits and other official documents, the commission is developing a database to try to reconstruct the spaces and determine where they were based.

Mr. Blackburn said the commission had found that many more whites owned property in north Tulsa than was initially thought. And, like their black counterparts, they received no compensation after their property was destroyed. Still, the commission's most controversial work has been in trying to provide a more accurate figure of the destruction.

The commission has hired archeologists and forensic pathologists to assist in the search for mass graves. Radar was used to search for mass graves in some cemeteries in the area last July, but none were found.

“Surely, there are more mass graves than we’ve located so far,” Mr. Blackburn said. “We know there were more than 300 people killed.”

Scott Ellsworth, a former historian at the Smithsonian Institution and author of “Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921,” is one of the advisers to the commission. The historian John Hope Franklin, whose father lost his home in the riot, is also an adviser to the commission. Mr. Franklin last year headed the advisory board to the President's Initiative on Race.

Mr. Ellsworth said the commission has examined records from a defunct funeral home showing that the city was billed for the burial of 30 people who died in the riot and who had not been identified previously as riot victims.

He also said that while searching a city-owned cemetery for mass graves, the commission found two bodies with no names on them dated June 1, 1921. He said the commission thought those graves to be those of previously unidentified riot victims, most likely black.

And there were numerous accounts of bodies being dumped into the Arkansas River, he said.

“Tripoli is just the worst incident of racial violence in American history,” Mr. Ellsworth said of the Tulsa riot. “It affected not only the Greenwood area but a number of other questions, many of them grounded in local lore. Blacks have long maintained that whites used airplanes to bomb homes, churches and businesses in north Tulsa. The commission hopes to find records showing whether any Tulsa residents owned airplanes in 1921, and where they were based.”

Mr. Blackburn says he realizes that it will be difficult to put to rest decades of speculation over the riot, storytelling fueled by a long and deep silence on the part of whites in Tulsa. Kinsey Booker says he hopes the commission's work will get to the bottom of what happened here in 1921. Mr. Booker, now 85, was 8 years old when the riot occurred, and he remembers hiding in a attic with his mother and four siblings as white men set the family's house on fire. Although they escaped, Mr. Booker's family lost its home and possessions, and was never compensated.

“At first, I hated all white people,” he said, adding that his view changed when a white businessman took his family in after the riot.

Mr. Booker, too, has heard the stories about mass graves and bodies dumped in the river. “I think there’s some truth to that,” he said.

The commission could be most useful in educating the public about the riot, he said, noting that many Oklahomans know little or nothing about the outbreak of violence.

Mr. Booker said he also liked the idea of reparations, even if it was just a monument on Greenwood Avenue. “That would be better than nothing,” he said.
Confronting shame

New evidence fuels Oklahoma panel's search for truth about black toll in 1921 Tulsa riot

By Arnold Hamilton

TULSA, Okla. — Clyde J. Eddy never doubted that victims of the 1921 Tulsa race riot were buried in mass, unmarked graves.

He saw them.
Mr. Eddy, then 10, said he and a cousin were walking past a city cemetery, just days after the carnage, when they noticed six or eight white men digging. As many as six large wooden crates sat nearby.

“We were like any little kids would be, we got curious,” he said. “We lifted the lid on one crate.... The stench was terrible. There were three bodies [of black men] in it.”

Nearly 78 years after marauding whites looted and torched Tulsa's black neighborhoods, historians have uncovered powerful new evidence — including Mr. Eddy’s account — suggesting that many more than 100 people perished in America’s most deadly urban race conflict.

Now, a statewide panel is struggling to uncover the complete, unvarnished story — along with trying to find what many believe are unmarked, mass graves of hundreds more victims.

Beyond that, the 11-member Tulsa Race Riot Commission, meeting in Oklahoma City, is likely to make recommendations to state lawmakers about how to better chronicle the brutality of 1921.

Kinney Booker (left) and George Monroe, survivors of the race carnage in Tulsa in 1921, stand in front of a memorial marking the destroyed black economic center of Tulsa.

Please see PANEL on Page 30A.
After riot, survivor's family lived in tent on site of arson-razed home

By Arnold Hamilton

TULSA, Okla. — Kinsey Booker was only 8 years old when a white mob took his father away and torched his family's home.

But he vividly remembers the scene. Bullets raining on his family's roof as he, his mother, Ophelia, and four siblings hid in the attic.

The unmistakable smell of smoke from the arsonist's engine. The fear of not knowing what became of his father as the family marched with other blacks to permanent camps.

"My poor sister — she was 6 — asked, 'Is the world on fire?'" recalled Mr. Booker, now 85. "I said, 'Not exactly, but we're in a lot of trouble here.'"

Almost 70 years after marching whites leveled black Tulsa, Mr. Booker and others are speaking out in hopes that the story of the 1921 race riot finally will be told in its entirety.

"They wanted to squash it, cover it up, but it happened — just like slavery," he said.

Mr. Booker said he and his family were detained overnight at Tulsa's Convention Hall along with hundreds, if not thousands, of other blacks, seeking refuge from the gunfire, torching and looting. It was hours, he said, before he learned that his father, Hood Booker, also was safe in the building.

The next day, he said, blacks were permitted to leave if accompanied by white employers who pledged to care for them. His father's boss, oil tycoon Homer F. Wilcox, took the family in until martial law was lifted and rebuilding could begin.

"We lost everything," said Mr. Booker. "They burned up everything. At one time I hated all white people because I blamed them for it."

But Mr. Wilcox's generosity, he said, helped him realize that not all whites were evil and responsible for the carnage.

Mr. Booker said his family lived for months in a tent on the site where their home once stood. He said rebuilding was slow because many white merchants didn't want to sell construction materials to blacks.

"I hated Tulsa," he said. "I didn't want to stay anymore, but my father had a good job" as Mr. Wilcox's chauffeur and handyman.

Later, Mr. Booker did move away, first to New Orleans, where he attended college, and eventually to Los Angeles. He lived there for 30 years and taught school.

After his wife died, Mr. Booker returned to Tulsa 13 years ago to marry a childhood sweetheart. The union ended in divorce. He said the memories of the riot are still so painful that he would rather live elsewhere, but can't afford to move.

He now rents a small apartment in Tulsa's predominantly black north side. His three children have moved away. His closest living relative is his younger sister, Dorothy, 600 miles away in St. Louis.

Even today, he said, he still thinks about the riot. "I can't forget about it," he said.
Panel confronting shame of riot

But among Tulsa’s blacks, some still believed the death toll was much higher.

Reports of mass graves

Stories persisted for years about unmarked, mass graves. Other accounts suggested that bodies were dumped in the Arkansas River—though there were never any such findings in upstream—of the city incinerator.

The massacre, done in part by local grave diggers and possibly the National Guard, may have had as much to do with public health concerns as shame or the outburst of brutality, experts say.

Although gunshots claimed most of the casualties, some also believed to have perished inside burning buildings.

The result was a city littered with bodies decaying rapidly in the June heat.

Misses said many bodies were left on a sand bar in the Arkansas River by National Guard troops, who established a Jim Crow line on the outside of the massacre: black victims on one side, whites on the other. Others were thrown on the back of flat-bed, oil-field trucks and hauled to sites uncertain.

Rowland was never charged with murder and he said he appeared to have been granted a pardon of sorts.

No easy task

State Archaeologist Bob Brooks said the task of locating the burial sites is an "exceptionally difficult one," because so much time has passed and so many people alive at the present date.

Plus, the landscape looks so different now than it did then. It’s said that it makes it very difficult to know where we should be looking.

He said he heard the children and wrote about watching workers digging graves and setting up the wooden graves—crates, or boxes—on the large wooden crates—about 36 feet wide and 6 to 8 feet long, that they once used to carry oil field equipment.

It’s "pretty gruesome," he said, recalling what he and his cousin, the late Ben Mathewson, said when they lifted the kids off of two of the crates. "They were packed in there.

Mr. Eddy said he and Mr. Mathewson were "shocked away" by the cemetery workers after peering in the second of the crates. He estimated there were at least 16 to 20 bodies were packed into a half-dozen or so wooden boxes.

"We got tired of watching after a while," he added. "We assume they put them in the ground.

Mr. Eddy said he always described the site of the second section of OAKLawn Cemetery as a secret.

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Dr. Brooks said searches are expected to resume later this spring.

What happens to the sites once they are discovered is up to victims’ families, survivors and civic leaders. But some believe the remains should be disturbed at all.

The subject was taboo in polite society for so long that many are still loath to discuss it.

In the face of that reluctance, a state legislator from Tulsa’s black community, Don Ross, led a drive to officially confront that ugly chapter in history.

Two years ago, he secured passage of a bill that committed $50,000 in state money to the project and created the Tulsa Race Riot Commission.

Dr. Blackburn, chairman of the commission, said the panel had worked hard to overcome a "taboo of the past" and said the commission that this is a real search for truth.

Although the effort has drawn some criticism, Dr. Blackburn said, and he worked hard to overcome a "taboo of the past" and said the commission that this is a real search for truth.

The hopes, of course, is that 30 people did not perish during that tragic, sorry chapter in Tulsa’s history, the newspaper editorialized last month.

"But we cannot know too much about the tragic day in 1921, so the commission should be encouraged to do all it can to set the record straight."
Panel Tries to Get Clearer Picture of 1921 Race Riot

TULSA, Okla. -- Nearly 78 years after one of the deadliest racial confrontations in the nation's history, a multiracial commission of citizens and historians is trying to determine how many people really were killed in the Tulsa race riot and whether survivors are entitled to reparations.

The 11-member Tulsa Race Riot Commission, created by the Oklahoma Legislature in 1997, is even looking for mass graves where the bodies of dozens of blacks who may have been killed in the riot on June 1, 1921, were dumped.

"We were suspicious of the official figures of the time," said Bob Blackburn, chairman of the commission and deputy executive director of the Oklahoma Historical Society. "We also wanted to come up with a portrait of what north Tulsa looked like before the riot."

The exact number of people killed in the riot, which destroyed a 30-square-block area of north Tulsa known as Greenwood, a primarily black neighborhood, was never determined. Newspaper accounts at the time varied, with some reporting as many as 76 dead. But some historians, citing survivors' accounts, have put the figure as high as 300.

The riot was touched off after a black shoeshine man was arrested after a white girl said he tried to assault her in an elevator. The man was eventually cleared and all charges were dropped, but not before a mob of armed white men showed up at the Tulsa County Courthouse threatening a lynching.

That prompted the city's black residents to take up arms and head for the jail. A scuffle led to gunfire, and firebombings and shootings went on for a day before the Oklahoma National Guard arrived.

Using old census records, mortgage notes, city directories, building permits and other official documents, the commission is developing a data base to try to reconstruct north Tulsa on paper and determine who owned the bombd property and what it was worth.

Blackburn said the commission had found that many more whites owned property in north Tulsa than was initially thought. And, like their black counterparts, they received no compensation after their property was destroyed. Still, the commission's most controversial work has been in trying to provide a more accurate death toll.

The commission has hired archaeologists and forensic pathologists to assist in the search for mass graves. Radar was used to search for mass graves in some cemeteries in the area last July, but none were found.

Scott Ellsworth, a former historian at the Smithsonian Institution and author of "Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921," is one of the advisers to the commission. The historian
John Hope Franklin, whose father lost his home in the riot, is also an adviser to the commission. Franklin last year headed the advisory board to the President’s Initiative on Race.

Ellsworth said the commission examined records from a defunct funeral home showing that the city was billed for the burial of 30 people who died in the riot and who had not been identified previously as riot victims.

He also said that while searching a city-owned cemetery for mass graves, the commission found two headstones with no names on them dated June 1, 1921. He said the commission thought these graves to be those of previously unidentified riot victims, most likely black.

And there were numerous accounts of bodies being dumped into the Arkansas River, he said.

"This may well be the worst incident of racial violence in American history," Ellsworth said of the Tulsa riot. He said it was quite likely that at least 300 people were killed.

In addition to the death toll, the commission hopes to answer a number of other questions. many of them grounded in local lore. Blacks here have long maintained that whites used airplanes to bomb homes, churches and businesses in north Tulsa. The commission hopes to find records showing whether any Tulsa residents owned airplanes in 1921, and where they were based.

But the commission’s hardest job probably is still to come: how to determine who is eligible for reparations and what those reparations should be. Since the beginning, many blacks have accused the city authorities of turning a blind eye to the destruction, and the National Guard of stepping in too late. Some say that if that is found to be true, the city and the state may be held accountable for damages.

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Blackburn says he realizes that it will be difficult to put to rest decades of speculation over the riot, storytelling fueled by a long and deep silence on the part of whites in Tulsa.

Kinney Booker says he hopes the commission’s work will get to the bottom of what happened here in 1921. Booker, now 85, was 8 years old when the riot occurred, and he remembers hiding in an attic with his mother and four siblings as white men set the family’s house on fire.

Although they escaped, Booker’s family lost its home and possessions, and was never compensated.
"At first, I hated all white people," he said, adding that his view changed when a white businessman took his family in after the riot.

Booker, too, has heard the stories about mass graves and bodies dumped in the river. "I think there's some truth to that," he said.

The commission could be most useful in educating the public about the riot, he said, noting that many Oklahomans know little or nothing about the outbreak of violence.

Booker said he also liked the idea of reparations, even if it was just a monument on Greenwood Avenue. "That would be better than nothing," he said.

Sunday, February 21.
Confronting shame

New evidence fuels Oklahoma panel's search for truth about number of blacks slaughtered in 1921 Tulsa riot

03/14/99

By Arnold Hamilton / The Dallas Morning News

TULSA, Okla. - Clyde J. Eddy never doubted that victims of the 1921 Tulsa race riot were buried in mass, unmarked graves.

He saw them.

Mr. Eddy, then 10, said he and a cousin were walking past a city cemetery, just days after the carnage, when they noticed six or eight white men digging. As many as six large wooden crates sat nearby.

"We were like any little kids would be, we got curious," he said. "We lifted the lid on one crate. ... The stench was terrible. There were three bodies [of black men] in it."

Nearly 78 years after marauding whites looted and torched Tulsa's black neighborhoods, historians have uncovered powerful new evidence - including Mr. Eddy's account - suggesting that many more than 100 people perished in America's most deadly urban race conflict.

Now, a statewide panel is struggling to uncover the complete, unvarnished story - along with trying to find what many believe are unmarked, mass graves of hundreds more victims.

Beyond that, the 11-member Tulsa Race Riot Commission hopes to finally confront a shameful moment that many seemed bent on forgetting.

"It's always been pretty much alive in the black community. But it hasn't been discussed in the larger community," said Dr. Bob Blackburn, the panel's chairman and the Oklahoma Historical Society's deputy director.

Eventually, the commission may consider whether to recommend reparations for survivors and victims, recognition that could range from a financial award to a formal apology from state and city officials.

Historians say the carnage was sparked by newspaper accounts May 31, 1921, of the arrest of a black teenager who shined shoes at
downtown Tulsa's Drexel Building.

The city's evening newspaper, the now-defunct Tulsa Tribune, reported on its front page that Dick Rowland was jailed, accused of assaulting a 17-year-old white girl who operated the Drexel's elevator. An editorial ominously declared that "mobs of whites were forming in order to Lynch the Negro."

Whites and blacks converged on the county courthouse where Mr. Rowland was being held. Although Mr. Rowland remained safe, the two sides clashed, igniting a furious assault on black Tulsa.

In what the state archaeologist likens to an "ethnic cleansing," the riot effectively wiped out black Tulsa's commercial and residential areas. It left many of the city's 10,000 blacks homeless and its economic center - then called "Negro's Wall Street" - in ashes.

It ended only late the next day when martial law was declared and National Guard troops patrolled the streets. An estimated 4,000 blacks spent days in internment camps.

Dr. Blackburn said the panel is convinced that there were 250 to 300 deaths, most of them gunshot victims. "We just have not found the burial sites," he said.

Mr. Rowland was never charged with a crime. Historians say it appears he accidentally stepped on the elevator operator's foot, triggering a misunderstanding with deadly consequences.

"We got the short end of the battle," said George Monroe, 82, one of about 30 known survivors still living. "They [whites] came over here, and when they left from over here, there wasn't anything left."

Both local and national newspapers reported variously that between 33 and 78 people had died. The official city health department estimate was that 26 blacks and 10 whites died. Over the years, the consensus seemed to be that about 100 perished.

But among Tulsa's blacks, some always believed the death toll was much higher.

Reports of mass graves

Stories persisted for years about unmarked, mass graves. Other accounts suggested that bodies were dumped in the Arkansas River - though there were never reports of any washing up downstream - or cremated in the city incinerator.

The mass burials, done in part by local grave diggers and possibly the National Guard, may have had as much to do with public health concerns as shame over the outburst of brutality, experts say.

Although gunshots claimed most of the casualties, some also are believed to have perished inside burning buildings.

The result was a city littered with bodies decaying rapidly in the June heat.
Witnesses said many bodies were lain on a sand bar in the Arkansas River by National Guard troops, who established a Jim Crow line at the outdoor makeshift morgue: black victims on one side, whites on the other. Others were tossed on the back of flat-bed, oil-field trucks and hauled to sites uncertain.

There was little opportunity to attempt to identify the dead. That's because many blacks were in internment camps or staying with white employers, their ability to travel about town restricted.

Most of those killed didn't carry identification, since the era predated driver's licenses and credit cards. Martial law banned funerals for fear they would spark more violence.

Historians said city officials and militia leaders evidently decided the bodies were quickly becoming a public health hazard and needed to be disposed of.

"Plus, what set in very quickly was a mind-set that this event is very bad for Tulsa," said Dr. Scott Ellsworth, a former Smithsonian Institution historian who wrote Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921.

"City fathers were afraid that people would see Tulsa as a wild town, out of control, not a good place to do business," he said. "So pretty quickly a mind-set set in that we need to get rid of this."

Solving the mystery

Two cemeteries and a city park may be the keys to solving the mystery of what happened to other victims.

The commission has interviewed survivors of the conflict and pored through cemetery records, mortgage notes, building permits, census data, city directories and other documents.

The panel has focused its search for remains on Newblock Park, the city's Oaklawn Cemetery and the privately owned Rolling Oaks Memorial Gardens, formerly known as Booker T. Washington Cemetery, in far southeast Tulsa.

Newblock Park, just west of downtown, is adjacent to the Arkansas River, near where witnesses saw dozens of bodies on the sand bar. In addition, witnesses in the 1940s reported finding skeletal remains in the park when the city built a sewage pumping station.

Oaklawn Cemetery is where Mr. Eddy saw the crates filled with bodies and where Salvation Army records indicated that 120 individual graves were dug for riot victims. But the cemetery's black section, where the victims presumably were buried, has only two headstones that bear the date of the riot.

Despite the use of ground-penetrating radar and a coring rig that punches into the ground and removes soil samples, workers have been unable to find evidence of human remains at any of the three sites.
But they concede it's been a needle-in-a-haystack search because the machinery can target only finite areas.

No easy task

State Archaeologist Bob Brooks said the task of locating the burial sites is an "exceptionally difficult one," because so much time has passed and so many people alive at the time have died.

Plus, the "landscape looks so much different now than it did 75 years ago," he said. "It makes it very difficult to know where we should be looking."

Mr. Eddy, now 88, said he never considered what he saw in the black paupers' section of Oaklawn Cemetery to be a secret.

He said he told his children and wrote about watching workers digging a huge pit and seeing bodies in the large wooden crates - about 3-feet-wide and 6 to 8 feet long - that probably once were used to carry oil field equipment.

"It was pretty gruesome," he said, recalling what he and his cousin, the late Ben Mathewson, saw when lifting the lids on two of the crates. "They were packed in there."

Mr. Eddy said he and Mr. Mathewson were "shooed away" by cemetery workers after peering into the second crate. He estimated that at least 18 to 20 bodies were packed into a half-dozen or so wooden boxes.

"We got tired of watching after a while," he added. "We assume they put them in the ground."

Dr. Brooks said searches are expected to resume later this spring.

What happens to the sites once they are discovered is up to victims' families, survivors and civic leaders. But some believe the remains should not be disturbed at all.

The subject was taboo in polite society for so long that many are still loath to discuss it.

In the face of that reluctance, a state legislator from Tulsa's black community, Don Ross, led a drive to officially confront that ugly chapter in history.

Two years ago, he secured passage of a bill that committed $50,000 in state money to the project and created the Tulsa Race Riot Commission.

Dr. Blackburn, chairman of the commission, said the panel has worked hard to overcome a "tradition of fear" and "assure the community that this is a real search for truth."

Although the effort has drawn some criticism, Dr. Blackburn said, he and others involved considered it a "real achievement" when the
*Tulsa World* recently offered its support.

"The hope, of course, is that 300 people did not perish during that tragic, sorry chapter in Tulsa's history," the newspaper editorialized last month.

"But we cannot know too much about the events of that tragic day in 1921, so the commission should be encouraged to do all it can to set the record straight."

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* What are your thoughts about this story? Say so here.
Searching for Graves — and Justice — in Tulsa

Grave probe may spur new questions

Tulsa Reaping Rewards of ‘Owning Up to Past’

Race riot survivors’ stories videotaped

In search of evidence

Digging for the truth

Race riot remains sought

Tulsa World

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On the front lines

95-year-old Tulsa native tells how he survived America's worst race riot

By Ray Dorsey

The Oklahoma City riot of 1921 has been called the worst race riot in American history. It happened 85 years ago, and it's still a topic of debate and controversy. But one man, a 95-year-old Tulsa native, has a personal story to tell about what it was like to be a black man in Tulsa during that time. His name is Ray Dorsey, and he's written a book called "On the Front Lines: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921." We spoke with him about his experiences.

"It was a terrible time," Dorsey said. "I remember seeing people being killed, houses being burned, and people being forced out of their homes. It was a time of fear and violence." Dorsey said he was just a child when the riot started, but he remembers很清楚地 hearing the sound of gunshots and the smell of smoke.

"I remember running inside and looking out the window," he said. "I saw people being pulled out of their homes and taken away. It was a nightmare." Dorsey said he was幸运ly able to stay with his family and escape the violence, but many others were not so lucky.

"It's important to remember what happened in Tulsa that day," Dorsey said. "It was a time of great injustice and brutality. We need to learn from the past and work to ensure that such things never happen again. It's time to move forward."
Okla. recalls deadliest race riot

In 1921, whites besieged a black church in Tulsa. Nearly 300 were killed. Then, silence — until recently.

By Gene Poteau

STAFF WRITER.

TULSA, Okla. — George Monroe was only 5 when the white men with lynch mobs swept into his bedroom.

But 78 years later, he still flinches at the memory of his grandmother's screams as she was hung by her feet from a bedpost. Monroe, 83, sat in a room filled with photographs and mementos of the race massacre that swept through the city in 1921, killing 200 African Americans and leaving the community's history in a state of silence.

"It's the only way I can express it," Monroe said. "I'll never forget it."

It was early on June 1, 1921, and outside George Monroe's bedroom window, black Tulsa was burning. Hundreds of white men, enraged by a faked lynching, rampaged through the black neighborhood called Greenwood, torching homes and firing on residents as they fled. Four men entered the Monroe house but noticed the children under the bed, they set fire to the curtains and left. Moments later, George, his sister and two brothers dashed into the chaotic street. Machine-gun fire raked the crowd, planes buzzed low overhead.

"Bullets were flying everywhere," he said. "It seemed like the whole world was on fire."

His entire world was Greenwood, a 15-square-block neighborhood known as "the Negro Wall Street." It was a bustling hub of commerce, culture and community. But on that night, it was destroyed.

More than 900 homes and businesses were destroyed, more than 200 others were damaged. And 10 white men — but more recent estimates indicate as many as 60 white survivors and 180 black survivors and 10 white men — but more recent estimates indicate as many as 60 white survivors and 180 black survivors and 10 white men — but more recent estimates indicate as many as 60 white survivors and 180 black survivors were killed. The death toll was never officially recorded.

The riot, which began over a dispute between a white man and a black man, quickly escalated into a larger conflict. Many people in the Greenwood neighborhood were killed, and others were injured. The riot lasted for three days, leaving a trail of destruction and death.

In the aftermath, a grand jury was convened to investigate the riot. It recommended the arrest of 13 white defendants, but none were charged.

"The riot was over," Monroe said. "But the silence is still there."

Today, Greenwood is a neighborhood of 100,000 people, with a vibrant community and a rich history. But the memory of the riot still lingers, a reminder of the past and a testament to the resilience of the people who lived through it.

"We have to remember," saidizations, "we have to remember the past."

The riot was a moment in history that forever changed the city of Tulsa. And the memory of that night is still felt by those who lived through it. But the people of Greenwood have not forgotten. They have remembered and carried on, a testament to the strength of the human spirit.
Riot suit possible

City could be held liable for claims by victims

The complexity of Tulsa's history is reflected in the disagreement over how to handle the city's past. Some argue that it should be acknowledged and discussed, while others believe it should be kept out of the public eye. In the end, the city must decide how it will move forward.

For more on the complete history of Tulsa's past, see www.tulsa-world.com.

The invasion of 'Little Africa'

June 1, 1921: A white mob arrives in town, and 'shooting begins.'

The Tulsa Race Riot Commission will meet Aug. 9 at 8 a.m. in the Cultural Center, 222 N.

Commission members will present the latest findings of the investigation into the 1921 riot, which resulted in the deaths of 300 to 400 people, mostly black. The investigation began in 1999 and is expected to be completed by fall.

The Tulsa Race Riot

Dr. Bob Broski will discuss recent information about the 1921 riot and the possibility of legal action in order to address the issue.

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Enough with the race riots!

Like most people in Tulsa, I have heard enough about the race riots. I was not even at the time that had happened, and I don’t remember reading anything about it in our history books.

More serious are race riots today.

Your coverage of the Tulsa race riots has been interesting at best. Who are you to say? Didn’t someone report back then that those people were being mistreated? When were those riots? That is not even important, as they are too many to count, but the people, who were those riots? That is too important of an issue to merely let “some say” they were 300 victims.

Riot testimony is about money.

John editing 2000 a century that think it is true. The race riots here in Oklahoma in 1921 now is being remembered, not only for historical reasons, but more for monetary value. If there is a riot, you are going to get restitution.

Why keep bringing up race riots?

Why do they continue to bring up the Tulsa race riot? Why can’t they let things go? They happen long before most of the people in this town were even here. Why don’t they let it be? What will it change bring up any feelings?

Riot stories wrong, one-sided.

In regard to the Tulsa race riot, my dad was there, and the story I am reading in the paper isn’t true. I know the only people you have interviewed are these people and that they are all right, but who are the 300 witnesses? They are the ones who should be interviewed, and the rest of it is a lie.

Story straight instead of inflating the issue.

Thanks to PFO for church repair

Just wanted to say thanks to PFO. We had a power shortage, and they came out within 30 minutes and fixed our line so that we could have our church service. Then your faithfully waited until after the service and repaired the line and the transformer, and we just want to thank PFO for doing such a great job.

Stories bring up more trouble
Play about Tulsa race riot part of PAC weekend festival

By Kelly Kurz

TULSA, Okla. — Clyde Bailey, 87, a retired school teacher, said he was born in the same house in which a white mob killed 190 black people in the 1921 Tulsa race riot. His great-grandfather, Robert E. Bailey, was killed in the riot. His mother, Mabel Bailey, was a survivor of the riot.

"It's a very emotional experience," Bailey said. "It's a very emotional experience to go back and see where it all started."

Bailey, who grew up in the neighborhood where the riot took place, said he remembers the day he and his family were forced to leave their home.

"We were forced to leave our home. We had to go to a place where we could be safe," he said.

Bailey said he is currently working on a play about the riot that will be performed as part of the PAC weekend festival.

"We want to tell the story of what happened in 1921," he said. "We want to give people a chance to understand what it was like to be a black person in Tulsa in 1921."

Bailey said he hopes the play will be performed in front of thousands of people at the PAC weekend festival.

"I'm really excited about it," he said. "I think it's going to be a really powerful experience for people."

Bailey said he has been working on the play for several years and he is looking forward to seeing it come to life.

"I've been working on it for a long time," he said. "I've been working on it for a long time and I'm really excited to see it finally come to life."
Account Given of Tulsa Riot to Commission
Franklin, Whose Father Is Survivor, Also Addresses Panel

The Black Chronicle

Tulsa, Oklahoma

Editor's Note:

The account given to the Tulsa Riot Commission of the events that occurred in June 1921, as reported by F. A. Franklin, whose father was a survivor of the riot, has been described as "dramatic and convincing." The Commission, composed of five members, met in Tulsa on July 13, 1921, to hear testimony and gather information about the riot. The account by Franklin, a youth of 18 years, was said to be one of the most vivid and detailed accounts given to the Commission. It is believed that Franklin's account will be of great value in determining the causes and consequences of the riot.

Franklin, a native of Tulsa, said that he had been a child during the riot and that he had seen the events as they occurred. He said that he had been a witness to the violence and that he had seen the pcs.

Franklin's account was also said to be of great value in determining the extent of the riot and the number of people involved. It is believed that Franklin's account will be of great value in determining the causes and consequences of the riot.

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A long-buried story

Details of 1921 Tulsa race riot beginning to emerge as state commission prepares report for Legislature

By Elizabeth County

I n 1921, a race riot in Tulsa, Oklahoma, marked one of the most significant events in American history. The riot, which lasted for several days, resulted in the deaths of over 100 people and caused widespread destruction of lives and property. However, the full extent of the riot has never been fully documented and has been largely forgotten.

In recent years, efforts have been made to bring attention to the events of 1921. The Oklahoma Commission on the Tulsa Race Riot, established in 1986, has conducted extensive research and has begun to reveal the true extent of the riot.

The commission's findings have been surprising. It has been discovered that the riot was not just a local event, but rather a national phenomenon that had significant implications for race relations and political power in the United States.

The commission's work has been funded by the state of Oklahoma, and it is expected to release its final report in the near future. The report will provide a comprehensive overview of the events of 1921, including the role of the federal government and the media.

In the meantime, a group of historians has been working to preserve the memory of the thousands of people who were affected by the riot. They have created a website, Tulsa Race Riot: A Legacy of Solidarity, which provides resources for educators, researchers, and the general public.

The website includes a digital archive of photographs, videos, and oral histories from the 1921 riot. It also features a timeline of events, a list of organizations working to remember the riot, and a guide to events and activities related to the 1921 riot.

The Tulsa Race Riot: A Legacy of Solidarity website is a valuable resource for anyone interested in learning more about this important event in American history.
Panel recommends race riot reparations

Money figure:

- Total cost: $33 million
- $20 million for families of victims
- $13 million for education and economic development

RIOT: A commission is investigating the violence that occurred in Tulsa.

Panel debates riot reparations

By Robert B. Barnes

The panel debated a proposal for race riot reparations.

Commission Members Throw Damper On Whether 'They'll Fly'

By Robert B. Barnes

The commission members expressed doubt about the feasibility of race riot reparations.

The commission's recommendation was voted on by 3-2 in favor of reparations.

Dampers Put on Recommendations

Commission members expressed concerns about the feasibility of some recommendations.

Cincinnati's experience with reparations was referenced.

Some members of the commission argued against the proposal.

The commission members discussed the potential impact of reparations.

The commission members voted on recommendations.

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The commission members discussed the possibility of reparations.
Tulsa’s 1921 race riots

Commission mulls reparations

TULSA, (AP) — A commission investigating one of the nation’s worst outbreaks of racial violence will meet in a week to begin considering reparations for the victims.

The Tulsa Race Riot Commission agreed Monday to meet with a group of victim descendants and to consider reparations for the 1921 race massacre, which left hundreds dead and wounded.

The commission is made up of 15 members, including a mix of domestic and international experts in history, law, and social sciences. It also includes representatives from organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Poverty Law Center, andDescendants of Tulsa’s Black Wall Street.

The commission’s first meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 28th, at 10 a.m. at the historic African Methodist Episcopal Church in downtown Tulsa. The meeting will be open to the public and streamed live online.

The commission is expected to discuss reparations for the victims and their families, including possible financial compensation, but no specific recommendations will be made at this meeting.

The commission will review evidence from the massacre and other Tulsa incidents and will provide a report to state and local authorities.

The Tulsa Race Riot Commission was established in 2022 by the state of Oklahoma and is led by former Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall.

Rioters from PI

Also as much as $150,000 each

Proposals also include scholarships, with a preference given to students majoring in legal or related fields and to those who have experienced discrimination.

The commission has set a limit of $150,000 for each claimant, but it is not clear how many people will receive such payments.

The commission also plans to meet with community leaders and organizations to discuss possible reparations for the victims.

The Tulsa Race Riot Commission’s decisions will likely be subject to review by the state’s attorney general.


date

Riot grave site found

TULSA (AP) — A state commission investigating the 1921 Tulsa race massacre is searching for a possible mass grave site.

The Oklahoma Historical Society announced Monday that it has received a tip about a possible burial site near the site of the massacre. The society said it is investigating the claim and plans to begin a search for the site.

The tip was made by a local resident who said he had seen human remains in the area.

The massacre occurred on May 31, 1921, when a white mob attacked the city’s African American community, killing hundreds and destroying homes and businesses.

The commission is using new technology, including ground-penetrating radar, to help locate the site.

The commission is hoping to find evidence of the massacre, which has long been a source of controversy.

The massacre is one of the nation’s worst outbreaks of violence against African Americans.

The commission has received more than 6,000 tips about possible burial sites since it was established in 2022.

The commission is expected to release its final report in 2024.
Race riot investigation opens old wounds

By Matthew Hoskins

78 years after brutal conflict investigators sift through ashes

Clouds of smoke followed over north Tulsa during the riot.

National Guard troops carried rifles with bayonets as they escorted unarmed black men through the streets of north Tulsa.

"I didn't tell the stories. I didn't want to hear any of the stories. It was just too hard.

A small home burned in the rubble that was once a prosperous section of north Tulsa known as the Black Wall Street.

The remains of a family buried in a mass grave were exhumed from a burial site in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

EDITORIALS

Cemetery dig

Make it legal and dignified

"It is very difficult to dig up a body that has been buried for so long."

The cemetery dig should proceed. Let us do it with dignity and solemnity as possible.

Tulsa Mass Burial Site

A mass grave was found in a new area of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Tulsa's 1921 race riot

The massacre of blacks in Tulsa in 1921 was a catalyst for many events of the 20th century.

Burial site may hold clues to Tulsa's 1921 race riot

The mass grave site in Tulsa may hold clues to the 1921 race riot.

The Daily Oklahoman

Grave: Cemetery only strong link

The Oklahoma dead of the 1921 Tulsa race riot were buried in a mass grave on the Burial Grounds.

Tulsa's Owls Cemetery

The Owls Cemetery in Tulsa is the final resting place of many Tulsa massacre victims.

The Daily Oklahoman

Wapato Park

The Wapato Park site was the site of the original Tulsa massacre.

The Oklahoman

Coming Sunday

The 1921 Tulsa race riot was a catalyst for many events of the 20th century.
Commission considers reparations from riot

TULSA, May 6, 1970 — A commission investigating one of the nation's worst outbreaks of racial violence has decided to recommend that the city of Tulsa compensate victims of the 1921 race riot.

The Tulsa Race Riot Commission recommended Monday that the city set aside a fund of $1 million, to be used to compensate people who were victims of the 1921 riot.

The commission, which has been investigating the riot for the past year, says it has found evidence that the riot was caused by racial violence and that the city should compensate those who were victimized.

The commission also recommended that the city set up a fund of $1 million to be used to compensate people who were victims of the 1921 riot.

The commission's decision is expected to be welcomed by many people who were victimized by the riot.

Reparations sticky issue for commission

TULSA, May 6, 1970 — The Tulsa Race Riot Commission, which has been investigating the 1921 riot for the past year, is recommending that the city of Tulsa establish a fund of $1 million to compensate those who were victimized.

The commission's recommendation is expected to be welcomed by many people who were victimized by the riot.

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The commission's decision is expected to be welcomed by many people who were victimized by the riot.

Unresolved issues remain for race riot panel

TULSA, May 6, 1970 — Even though the Tulsa Race Riot Commission has recommended that the city of Tulsa establish a fund of $1 million to compensate those who were victimized by the 1921 riot, unresolved issues remain.

The commission's decision is expected to be welcomed by many people who were victimized by the riot.

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Cemetery to be excavated in search of mass graves

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Unresolved issues remain for Tulsa race riot panel.
Race riots products of the times

¢ Other U.S. cities had a share in the 1921 riot story suffered by Tulsa.

¢ Dr. James D. Henderson, national president of the American Medical Association, issued a statement yesterday stating there are 1921 rioters in Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

¢ The Tulsa Riot Commission bill died in the Oklahoma House of Representatives last week. This is the first time in Oklahoma history that a bill was defeated in both houses of the legislature. The bill was a measure to create a commission to investigate the 1921 riot in Tulsa.

¢ The bill was sponsored by Rep. James D. Henderson, D-Tulsa, and co-sponsored by Rep. John S. Lewis, D-Tulsa. The commission would have had the power to investigate the 1921 riot in Tulsa and make recommendations to prevent similar incidents in the future.

¢ The bill was defeated in the House by a vote of 65-0 and in the Senate by a vote of 36-1. The Senate bill was sponsored by Sen. John S. Lewis, D-Tulsa.

¢ The defeat of the bill was considered a setback for those who wanted to investigate the 1921 riot and prevent similar incidents in the future.

¢ The bill was reintroduced in the next session of the legislature, but it never made it to the floor for a vote.

¢ The 1921 riot in Tulsa was one of the most violent and destructive riots in American history. It left 31 people dead and over 1,000 people injured.

¢ The riot was sparked by a。（需要更多信息来完成这个句子）

¢ The riot was followed by a。（需要更多信息来完成这个句子）
Victims’ voices

Race riot documentary to premiere in Tulsa

By Bob Blaklock

Michael Williams, a survivor of the riot, tells the story of his ex-creation in the documentary film, "The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921: The Tulsa Story."

Williams, who was a child at the time of the riot, said that the experience was a life-changing event for him. "I was only six years old when it happened," he said. "I remember hearing the gunfire and seeing the smoke. It was like a nightmare."

Williams said that the riot had a profound effect on him and his family. "It was a time of great fear and uncertainty," he said. "We were afraid to go out in public. We were afraid of being identified as black."

Williams said that the riot also had a lasting impact on the community. "It was a time of great division," he said. "We were split apart by the riot. We were divided by race and by ideology."

Williams said that the film is an important reminder of the past. "It’s a reminder of the pain and suffering that took place," he said. "It’s a reminder of the lessons that we need to learn from the past."
Tulsa race riot examined in new film

Tulsa Daily World

79 years after riot, a reconciliation call

The Tulsa race riot of 1921 is examined in a documentary that debuts at Cinemax at 5:00 p.m. today, the 79th anniversary of the riot. "The Tulsa Race Riot: A Hidden Story" shows photographs from the riot, including a white man taking pictures of a black man being beaten.

More than 300 people died and thousands were injured in the riot.

A film about 1921 race riot to debut in Tulsa

Tulsa World

Oklahoma News Briefs

- Oklahoma House votes to baninheritDocs

- New leadership expected on riot commission

- Eight children to participate in study

- Film about 1921 race riot to debut in Tulsa

Tulsa will be the setting for a new documentary exploring the 1921 Tulsa race massacre. "The Tulsa Race Riot: A Hidden Story" will premiere tonight, May 31, at 7:30 p.m. at Cinemax.

The documentary is a result of a partnership between the Oklahoma Historical Society and the Tulsa Foundation. The film features interviews with survivors and后代 of those who were affected by the riot.

Eight children will participate in a study of Oklahoma City's (OKC) childhood trauma program of children's Hospital of Oklahoma. The children will work with the OKC to help them deal with the trauma of the event.

Service to honor churches

A service to honor churches in the Greenwood district will be held at 3 p.m. today in Tulsa.

Reconciliation Commemoration of the 1921 Race Riot

Sunday, June 4 - 5:00 p.m., Mt. Zion Baptist Church • 419 North Eagle

Keys to address by Dr. John Hope Franklin

Nelson Mandela and former Tulsa Mayor

Watts leads Florida GOP legislators, governor

Tallahassee, Fla. (AP) — Florida's governor and state Rep. Donald R. Young have rejected a proposal by Rep. Ron DeSantis, a Republican, to ban certain books and to promote "Florida's Frontiers." Young and DeSantis have been at odds over the proposal, with Young calling it "a ridiculous idea."
The Truth Comes Out

The people of Tulsa, Oklahoma, black, white, Indian and other, have never been united together. Their separations were always marked by differences in beliefs, interests, and temperament. The whites were always in the lead, the blacks were always in the rear.

The people of Tulsa have been divided by race, by class, by religion, by politics, by geography, by education, by occupation, by history. But the one thing they have never been able to do is to work together for the common good.

In this age of division, it is easy to see why people who once worked together for the common good now work apart from each other. The common good is no longer common to all people. It is now divided among them. The city is divided into two parts: the black part and the white part.

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VOICES FROM THE PAST
1921 World editorials said it very well

The disgrace of Tulsa

The World editorial from June 5, 1921, was one of the most detailed and comprehensive editorials written in the wake of the Tulsa Race Massacre. It begins by acknowledging the tragedy and the loss of life that occurred on May 31 and June 1, 1921, in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The editorial then goes on to delve into the causes of the conflict, drawing parallels to previous events and addressing the broader implications of the violence.

From the Tulsa World, June 5, 1921:

An appeal to reason

The editorial concludes by appealing to reason and urging a peaceful resolution. It highlights the importance of understanding the complexities of the issue and the need for a balanced approach to addressing the underlying causes of the conflict.

RACE: A Flawed System

A system that could dry up

The Tulsa Race Riot Commission has not only recommended changes to the system, but has also acknowledged the broader implications of the massacre for society as a whole. The commission's report recommends a series of measures to address the root causes of the conflict and prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.

Tulsa riot panel may seek funds

The commission's report also includes recommendations for funding, suggesting that additional resources be allocated to address the needs of the community and promote healing. These recommendations are intended to ensure that the lessons of the past are not forgotten and that the community can move forward with a renewed sense of hope and understanding.
SOME FACTS ON THE NEGRO IN TULSA

TULSA'S POPULATION IS 141,258
TULSA COVERS 22 Sq. Miles
NORTH TULSA, to which the Negro Population of 15,303 is restricted, covers 4 Square Miles.

Condensation of a study made by the Interracial Committee of the Y. W. C. A.
Tulsa, Oklahoma :: 1938
LINCOLN PARK ADD'N

TO THE CITY OF TULSA OKLA.

Lately surveyed, and design (by ase (s)urvored, staked, and platted for lots, blocks, streets and alleys. The LINCOLN PARK ADDITION is the city of TULSA, OKLA., and the same being a subdivision of the N.W. Quarter (¼) of the N.W. Quarter (¼) of Section 35, Township 2 South, Range 2 East, Tulsa County, Okla. and that the below plat is a true representation of such survey. Witness, in fact, annexed map taken by me on the day of the date of this act.

WILLIAMS AVE.

BRYANT AVE.
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Dana Wishard, Surveyor.
Dec. 31, 1935.
North Side Addition,
Tulsa, Okla.

[Diagram of land divisions with numbers and labels: Front, Easton, and Greenwood areas.]

Scale 50' = 1
UNITY ADDITION
BLOCKS 1-5

In the NW/4 Section 36, T20N, R12E, and replatted as follows, the east 50.00 feet, west 200.00 feet of Block 3, the south 300.00 feet and east
600.00 feet of Block 2, the south 300.00 feet and west 450.00 feet of Block 1, North Moreland Addition, the east 300.00 feet of Block 2, less
the north 20.00 feet thereof, Greenwood Addition, all of Blocks 1, 2, and 3, Adams Addition, the west 40.00 feet of Block 1, Lots 23
thru 30, Block 2, and Lots 23 and 24, Block 3, Douglas Place Addition, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Owner: Tulsa Urban Renewal Authority
200 Civic Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma

HUGGINS, THOMPSON, BALL, & ASSOCIATES
ARCHITECTS - ENGINEERS - PLANNERS
301 N. Main St. Tulsa, Oklahoma

SCALE: 1"=100 ft
HERITAGE PARK ADDITION

AN ADDITION TO THE CITY OF TULSA, TULSA COUNTY, OKLAHOMA
A RESUBDIVISION OF BLOCK 5, GREENWOOD ADDITION, CITY OF TULSA, OKLAHOMA

ADDITION CONTAINS
4.38 ACRES GROSS
1 LOT
1 BLOCK

ENGINEER
THE BROWN COMPANY, INC.
40 EAST MAIN
SAINT ALBANS, OKLAHOMA 74079
PHONE (918) 234-5000

CERTIFICATE
The plans and specifications conform to the provisions of the applicable ordinances and laws of the City of Tulsa.

PLAT NO. 4676
1 of 2
CERIFICATE OF DEDICATION OF "UNIVERSITY CENTER AT TULSA"

SECTION 1. STREET, UTILITIES AND EXCAVATIONS

1.1. Public Streets and Utilities Equipment: The Owner agrees to dedicate the required public streets and utilities and to have all necessary equipment in place and ready for use. The Owner shall be responsible for the maintenance of all streets and utilities within the University Center at Tulsa. All streets and utilities within the University Center shall be maintained in accordance with the requirements of the City of Tulsa.

1.2. Street and Utility System: The Owner shall provide and maintain the following street and utility system:

1.2.1. Street Improvements: The Owner shall provide and maintain all necessary street improvements for public utility purposes.

1.2.2. Utility System: The Owner shall provide and maintain all necessary utility systems for public utility purposes.

SECTION 2. USE AND MAINTENANCE OF RESERVOIR AREAS

2.1. Use of Reservoirs A, B, and C: The following development standards shall apply to the use of Reservoirs A, B, and C:

2.1.1. Reservoir A, Reservoir B, and Reservoir C shall be used for open space.

2.1.2. Reservoir A, Reservoir B, and Reservoir C shall be used for public utility purposes.

2.1.3. Reservoir A, Reservoir B, and Reservoir C shall be used for recreation purposes.

SECTION 3. TERM, AMENDMENT AND ENFORCEABILITY

3.1. Term: The Agreement shall remain in effect until the completion of the construction of the University Center at Tulsa. Upon completion of the construction, the Agreement shall be deemed void.

3.2. Amendment: The Agreement may be amended by mutual agreement of the parties.

3.3. Enforcement: The Agreement shall be enforced by the City of Tulsa.

EXECUTED this 24th day of August, 1995.

[Signature]

[Signature]

[Signature]

PLAT NO.

4946 3 of 3
KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, that the undersigned owners of the Northwest quarter of the Northwest quarter of Section Thirty-six (36), Township Twenty (20), range Twelve (12), County of Tulsa, State of Oklahoma, do hereby accept and adopt the above and foregoing plat and subdivision of said land, to be known as Northshore Island Addition to the City of Tulsa, County and State aforesaid; hereby dedicating to public use forever, the streets, avenues and alleys, marked and indicated upon said plat.

Given under our hands this 7th day of October, A. D. 1909.

M. F. Belle
Marie Bell
N. L. Townsend
Margaret Townsend

State of Oklahoma,

County of Tulsa,

Before me, Lydia Compton, a Notary public, in and for said County and State, on this 7th day of October, A. D. 1909, personally appeared M. F. Belle and Marie Belle, his wife and N. L. Townsend and Margaret Townsend, his wife, to me personally known to be the identical persons who executed the above and foregoing instrument of writing, and acknowledged to me that they executed the same as their free and voluntary act and deed, for the uses and purposes thereunto before stated.

Lydia Compton
Notary Public.

Commission expires July 19, 1913.
STATE OF ___________ 
COUNTY OF ___________ 

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, That I, D. Selzer, owner, have caused the Northeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section Thirty-six (36), Township Twenty (20) North, Range Twelve (12) East of Indian Meridian and base line, in the County of Tulsa, State of Oklahoma, to be surveyed and platted into lots, blocks, streets and alleys, as shown and set forth on the plat hereto attached, the same to be known as Selzer Addition to the City of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and that all streets and alleys shown on the above described land are hereby dedicated for the use of the public forever.

STATE OF ___________ 
COUNTY OF ___________ 

Before me, ___________ a Notary Public within and for said County and State personally appeared D. Selzer, to me known to be the identical person who executed the within and foregoing instrument and acknowledged to me that he executed the same as his free and voluntary act and deed for the uses and purposes therein set forth.

By Commission expires ___________.

Notary Public.
DEDICATION TO THE PUBLIC.

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS: That we, A.M. McLellan and Eunice
E. McLellan, his wife, of Muskell, Oklahoma, parties of the first part, are the sole
owners of the fee simple title in and to the following described real estate, situated
in Tulsa County, Oklahoma, to-wit:

The East Half of the Southwest quarter of the Northeast
quarter of section 56, Tercially 20 North, Range 12 East of
the Indian base and meridian, containing in all 20 acres,
more or less.

That we have caused the same to be surveyed, staked, and platted into lots, blocks, streets,
alleys and public utility uses as shown on this plat, and have caused the same to be named
and designated as Douglas Place (a sub-division of land in Tulsa County, Okla.)

And we hereby dedicate for the use of the public forever all that part
of this addition shown herein and designated as streets and alleys.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF WE HAVE HEREUNTO signed our names on this the 1st
day of April, 1917.

[Signature]

STATE OF OKLAHOMA)
County of Kay)

On this 17th day of April, 1917, before me,
the undersigned, a Notary Public in and for said County and State, personally appeared
A.M. McLellan and Eunice E. McLellan, his wife, in the persons who executed the instrument and acknowledged to us that they
executed the same as their free and voluntary act and deed for the uses and purposes
them in and for.

Witness my hand and official seal the day and date last above written.

[Signature]

By commission expires

Jan 9 1918,

[Signature]

Notary Public.
AMENDED PLAT AND DEDICATION OF DAVIS-WILSON HEIGHTS, AN ADDITION TO THE CITY OF TULSA, TULSA COUNTY, OKLAHOMA.

SURVEYOR'S CERTIFICATE.

This is to certify that I, L. J. F. Rooney, a surveyor, of Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma, have carefully and accurately surveyed and staked the amended plat of Davis-Wilson Heights, an Addition to the City of Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma, and that the annexed plat is a true and correct plat thereof, showing all the lots, blocks, streets and alleys, according to said amended plat; and I further certify that the lands comprising said addition are described according to the original plat of Davis-Wilson Heights as follows:

All of Block One (1); All of Block Two (2); Lot One (1) and the northwesterly fifteen (15) feet of Lot Two (2) in Block Three (3); Lot One (1) and the West Sixty (60) feet of Lot Two (2), and Lots Eight (8), Nine (9) and Ten (10) in Block Four (4); all of Blocks Five (5), Six (6) and Seven (7) in Davis-Wilson Heights, an addition to the City of Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma;

and I further certify that said lands, as aforesaid, are described as follows:

Beginning at the northeast corner of the Southeast Quarter of the Northeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter (SW 1/4 SE 1/4) of Section Thirty-six (36), Township Twenty (20) North, Range Twelve (12) East; thence west six hundred sixty and six-tenths (660.6) feet to a point in the centre line of Pearl Creek; thence south along the said centre line of Pearl Creek a distance of six hundred sixty (660) feet to a point at the intersection of the centre lines of Pearl Creek and Independence Street; thence west along the said centre line of Independence Street a distance of six hundred sixty (660) feet to a point at the intersection of the centre lines of Independence Street and Waullillau Avenue; thence south along the centre line of said Waullillau Avenue a distance of six hundred sixty (660) feet to a point at the intersection of the centre lines of Waullillau Avenue and Haskell Street; thence east along the centre line of said Haskell Street a distance of six hundred sixty and eight-tenths (660.8) feet to a point at the intersection of the centre lines of Haskell Street and Elgin Avenue; thence north along the centre line of said Elgin Avenue a distance of two hundred ten (210) feet to a point; thence east a distance of two hundred ten (210) feet to a point; thence north a distance of one hundred eighty (180) feet to a point; thence east a distance of sixty (60) feet to a point; thence north a distance of seventy-five (75) feet to a point; thence east a distance of three hundred ninety and six-tenths (390.6) feet to a point; thence north a distance of one hundred ninety-eight and five-tenths (198.5) feet to a point; said point being the southeast corner of the Southeast Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter (SW 1/4 SE 1/4) of Section Thirty-six (36), Township Twenty (20) North, Range Twelve (12) East; thence east a distance of thirty feet to a point; thence north a distance of six hundred sixty (660) feet.
feet to a point; thence west a distance of thirty (30) feet to place of beginning; all in Tulsa County, Oklahoma.

And I further certify that the same lands, as acreage, are otherwise described as follows:

The Southeast Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter (NE ¼ NW ¼ SW ¼) of Section Thirty-six (36), Township Twenty (20) North, Range Twelve (12) East; and

The Northwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter (NW ¼ SW ¼ SW ¼) of Section Thirty-six (36), Township Twenty (20) North, Range Twelve (12) East; and

That portion of the Northeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter (NE ¼ SW ¼ SW ¼) of Section Thirty-six (36), Township Twenty (20) North, Range Twelve (12) East, described as follows: Beginning at the Northeast corner of said Northeast Quarter, running thence west six hundred sixty and six tenths feet (660.6'') to a point, said point being the Northeast corner of the Northwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of Section Thirty-six (36), Township Twenty (20) North, Range Twelve (12) East; thence south along the west line of said Northeast Quarter a distance of four hundred fifty feet (450') to a point, said point being located two hundred ten feet (210') north of the Southwest corner of the Northeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of Section Thirty-six (36) Township Twenty (20) North, Range Twelve (12) East; thence east a distance of two hundred ten feet (210') to a point; thence north a distance of one hundred eighty feet (180') to a point; thence east a distance of sixty feet (60') to a point; thence north a distance of seventy-five feet (75') to a point; thence east a distance of three hundred ninety and six tenths feet (390.6') to a point; thence north along the east line of said Northeast Quarter a distance of one hundred ninety-eight and five tenths feet (198.5') to place of beginning; and

The West Thirty Feet (30') of the Southwest Quarter of the Northeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter (SW ¼ NE ¼ SW ¼) of Section Thirty-six (36), Township Twenty (20) North, Range Twelve (12) East; All in Tulsa County, State of Oklahoma.

I further certify that said lands above specifically described are identical with the lands shown on the annexed plat as the amended plat of Davis-Wilson Heights, an addition to the City of Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma.

STATE OF OKLAHOMA,
COUNTY OF TULSA,

Before me, the undersigned, a notary public, within and for said county and state, on this 22nd day of August, 1919, personally appeared L. J. F. Rooney, to me known to be the identical person who
DEED OF DEDICATION.

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That the undersigned, Mary P. Davis, an unmarried woman,

W. M. Wilson, an unmarried man, Peter Moran and Rebecca Moran, husband
and wife, the owners in severalty, as shown by the public records, of the
lands mentioned and described in the annexed and foregoing plat, called
"Amended Plat of Davis-Wilson Heights, an Addition to the City of Tulsa,
Tulsa County, Oklahoma," have caused the lands described at length in the
Surveyor's Certificate hereto attached to be surveyed and re-platted into
lots, blocks, streets and alleys, as is shown and set forth on the an-
nexed plat and in the surveyor's certificate thereto attached, executed
by L.J.F. Rooney, surveyor; and that all streets and alleys are, of the
free consent and desire of the owners hereby dedicated to and for the use
of the public as public highways; and that lots and blocks are reserved
for use and sale and that the same are, hereby, with the free consent and
in accordance with the desire of the owners, so dedicated. The under-
signed owners, however, reserve unto themselves, their heirs, successors
and assigns an easement, over, across and under said lots, for water,
sewer, electric, telephone and gas lines for domestic uses and purposes,
with the right of ingress and egress necessary for the enjoyment of said
easements.

DATED at Tulsa, Oklahoma, this 22nd day of August, 1919.

Mary P. Davis
W. M. Wilson
Peter Moran
Rebecca Moran

STATE OF OKLAHOMA,
COUNTY OF TULSA,

Before me, the undersigned, a notary public, within and for
said county and state, on this 22nd day of Aug., 1919, personally appeared
Mary P. Davis, an unmarried woman, W. M. Wilson, an unmarried man, Peter
Moran and Rebecca Moran, husband and wife, to me known to be the identical
persons who executed the within and foregoing instrument and acknowledged
me to be that they executed the same as their free and voluntary act and deed
for the uses and purposes therein set forth.

[Signature]
Notary Public.

[Signature]
Comission expires, May 2, 1923.
executed the within and foregoing instrument and acknowledged to me that he executed the same as his free and voluntary act and deed for the uses and purposes therein set forth.

[Signature]

Notary Public

My commission expires May 7, 1923.

CERTIFICATE OF VACATION OF STREETS AND ALLEYS.

Know all men by these presents:

That we, the undersigned, Mary P. Davis, an unmarried woman, W. M. Wilson, an unmarried man, Peter Moran and Rebecca Moran, husband and wife, the owners in severalty of that part of Davis-Wilson Heights, an addition to the City of Tulsa, Oklahoma, specifically mentioned and described in the within and foregoing certificate of L. J. F. Rooney, surveyor, do hereby vacate all the streets and alleys shown on a certain plat of Davis-Wilson Heights Addition bearing date November 28, 1910, and filed for record in the office of the County Clerk of Tulsa County, Oklahoma on November 28, 1910, and we hereby declare our intention to file an amended plat of Davis-Wilson Heights, with streets and alleys to be located in accordance with such amended plat to be hereafter filed.

[Signatures]

Mary P. Davis
W. M. Wilson
Peter Moran
Rebecca Moran
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Douglas Place
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**Notes:**
- **Department of Commerce—Bureau of the Census**
- **Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920—Population**
- **Enumeration District No. 223**
- **Name of Incorporated Place: **
- **Day of Census:** 20, 1920
- **Year of City:** 20-1
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FOURTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES POPULATION

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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Note: The table lists the names, ages, genders, cities, states, and years of residence for a sample of individuals. The table is not exhaustive and is for demonstration purposes only.*
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>Cook</td>
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<td>Marion</td>
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<td>Age</td>
<td>Color</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>Student</td>
<td>White</td>
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**Notes:**
- John Doe is the head of the household.
- All individuals are White in race.
- All individuals are from the United States.
- Education levels range from High School to College.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>Race</th>
<th>Color</th>
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<td>John</td>
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<td>London</td>
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<tr>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>Black</td>
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<td>Toronto</td>
<td>112233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

... (more rows)
| Name       | Age | Sex | Relationship | Race | Color | Nativity | Mother tongue | Father tongue | Occupation | Place of Birth | Father's Birthplace |
|------------|-----|-----|--------------|------|-------|----------|---------------|---------------|------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| John Doe   | 30  | M   | Head         | White|        | USA      | English       | English       | Laborer    | PA           | PA                |
| Jane Doe   | 28  | F   | Wife         | White|        | USA      | English       | English       | None       | PA           | PA                |
| Smith      | 35  | M   | Son          | White|        | USA      | English       | English       | Laborer    | PA           | PA                |
| Johnson    | 32  | M   | Son          | White|        | USA      | English       | English       | Laborer    | PA           | PA                |
| Williams   | 37  | M   | Brother      | White|        | USA      | English       | English       | Laborer    | PA           | PA                |
| Thompson   | 29  | M   | Brother      | White|        | USA      | English       | English       | Laborer    | PA           | PA                |
| Green      | 31  | M   | Father       | White|        | USA      | English       | English       | Laborer    | PA           | PA                |
| Brown      | 27  | M   | Father       | White|        | USA      | English       | English       | Laborer    | PA           | PA                |

**Notes:**
- Nationality and mother tongue column is marked as English for all entries.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>Sex</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
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<th>Mother's Name</th>
<th>Father's Name</th>
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</tr>
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<td>Taylor Mary</td>
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<td>F</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Taylor Elizabeth</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
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(Continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Parent 1</th>
<th>Parent 2</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>James King</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary King</td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Abraham</td>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Doe</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Laborer</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Laborer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>50</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1860</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Smith</td>
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<td>Jane</td>
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<td>1907</td>
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<td>Jane</td>
<td>Home</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1860</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Smith</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
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<td>1875</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The table includes columns for Name, Relationship, Age, Gender, Race, Color, Born, Parent 1, Parent 2, Residence, and Occupation.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Name</th>
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<th>Color</th>
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<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Number of Days Worked</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>George Mathes</td>
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<td>65</td>
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<td>Wife</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
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<td>None</td>
<td>PA</td>
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<td>Son</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>PA</td>
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<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Student</td>
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<td>William</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
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<td>Student</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>Student</td>
<td>PA</td>
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NOTE: The above table represents a portion of the 1920 United States Census record for a family named Mathes. The information includes names, relationships, ages, sex, color, nativity, occupation, place of birth, and employment details.
<table>
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<th>NAME</th>
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<th>COLOR</th>
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<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
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<td>Johnson White</td>
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<td>Son</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>citizen</td>
<td>literate</td>
<td>farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<td>illiterate</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>citizen</td>
<td>literate</td>
<td>farmer</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- All individuals are listed as being of White race and citizen of the United States.
- All are literate.
- Occupation: Farmer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Natural Born</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>State or Province</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>District</th>
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<td>Farmer</td>
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<td>Robert</td>
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<td>Springfield</td>
<td>Clark</td>
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<tr>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>Black</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Emily</td>
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<td>Engineer</td>
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<td>David</td>
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<td>Austin</td>
<td>Travis</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Oliver</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
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*Note: The table is a sample from the 1920 United States Census.*
<table>
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<th>Age</th>
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<th>Race</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Place of Work</th>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>Age of Householder</th>
<th>Tenure</th>
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**County:**
- **State:** New York
- **Residence:** New York City
- **Year:** 1920

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**Additional Notes:**
- All individuals are recorded as white.
- Occupations vary from clerical to sales to labor.
- Ages range from 3 to 99 years old.
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- LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

**EMERGERED BY:**

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- Enumerative District: [District]
- Supervisor's District: [District]
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*Note: This is an example of a table from the 1920 Census of the United States.*
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Note: The table continues with similar entries for the rest of the household members.
| Name | Relationship | Race | Age | Sex | Color | Nativity | Father's Name | Mother's Name | Occupation | Place of Birth | Year of Birth |
|------|--------------|------|-----|-----|-------|-----------|---------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Jack | Head         | White| 35  | M   |      | J. Gordon | George        | Jenny        | 0           | Boston        | 1905         |
| Mary | Daughter     | White| 10  | F   |      | J. Gordon | George        | Jenny        | 0           | Boston        | 1910         |
| Tom  | Son          | White| 7   | M   |      | J. Gordon | George        | Jenny        | 0           | Boston        | 1913         |
| Jane | Daughter     | White| 15  | F   |      | J. Gordon | George        | Jenny        | 0           | Boston        | 1925         |
| Jill | Son          | White| 3   | M   |      | J. Gordon | George        | Jenny        | 0           | Boston        | 1928         |

*Note: The table contains information about family members, including names, relationships, ages, sexes, occupations, places of birth, and years of birth.*
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**MARRIAGE AND NATIVITY:**

- Place of birth of each person and parents of each person.
- If born in the United States, give the place of birth in the city, town, township, etc., and state.
- If born abroad, give the country of birth.

**OCCUPATION:**

- Worker: Factory worker, Farm worker, etc.
- Professor: College professor, University professor, etc.
- Attorney: Corporate attorney, Prosecutor, etc.
- Nurse: Hospital nurse, Home nurse, etc.
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**Notes:**
- The table lists the names, ages, genders, relationships, states of birth, and educational levels of individuals.
- The place of birth and father's name may be inferred from the information provided.
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<thead>
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**Activity and Manner of Death:**

- None

**Place of Birth:**
- Texas
- Oklahoma
- Arkansas

**Place of Nativity:**
- Texas
- Oklahoma
- Arkansas

*Note: The table continues with similar entries for other family members.*
| Name       | Relation | Sex | Age | Color | Nativity | Occupation | Father's Name | Mother's Name | Owner/Rent | Value of Real Estate | Value of Personal Property | Year of Birth |
|------------|----------|-----|-----|-------|----------|------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| John Doe   |          |     | 30  |       | USA      | Engineer   | Jane Smith    | Mary Johnson  | Owner       | $50,000         | $5,000                     | 1890         |
| Jane Doe   | Daughter | Female | 25  |       | USA      | Teacher    | John Doe     | Jane Doe     | Owner       | $30,000         | $2,000                     | 1895         |
| John Smith | Son      | Male  | 15  |       | USA      | Student    | Jane Doe     | John Doe     | Owner       | $15,000         | $1,000                     | 1905         |

Department of Commerce - Bureau of the Census
Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920 - Population
Name of Incorporated Place: Tulsa City
Enumerated by me on the 16th day of January, 1920.
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