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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Final 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Reconnaissance Survey



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1921 Tulsa Race Riot Reconnaissance Survey

Final

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INTRODUCTION

Summary Statement

The period between 1896, when the U.S. Supreme Court provided legal sanction to “Jim Crow” legislation in its historic *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, and the early 1920s witnessed one of the greatest periods of racial violence in American history as whites sought to reestablish an ironclad system of white supremacy following the African American surge toward equality during Reconstruction. Race riots, primarily an urban phenomena, occurred in both the North and the South, but were more characteristic of the North as increasing numbers of blacks migrated from the South to Northern cities to improve their living conditions and take advantage of the economic opportunities in the nation’s expanding industrial centers. The consequent displacement of some whites by blacks in jobs, housing, and other public facilities resulted in escalating interracial social tensions which were frequently exacerbated by racist white newspaper sensationalism that hyped African American crime and encouraged lynching of blacks.

Beginning with the first race riot to erupt after Reconstruction in Wilmington, North Carolina, in 1898, escalating racial violence continued into the 20th century. In response to the violence, a group of young African Americans organized and incorporated themselves as the Niagara Movement in 1905 for aggressive action to secure full citizenship for blacks. Despite these efforts, however, violence against blacks continued largely unabated as major race riots erupted in Springfield, Ohio, Brownsville, Texas, and Atlanta, Georgia, in 1906.

As the United States entered World War I, deadly race riots erupted in East St. Louis, Illinois, and Houston, Texas, in 1917. The postwar years ushered in the greatest period of interracial violence that the nation had wit-

nessed in its history. The summer of 1919 has become known as “The Red Summer” because of the bloodshed resulting from approximately 25 race riots — the most serious occurring in Chicago and Washington, D.C. — in which more than 100 blacks were killed and thousands were injured and left homeless. Amid the social dislocation and the rise of intensified racism, nativism, and isolationism of the postwar period, both Northern and Southern whites reacted to the demands of the “New Negro” for racial equality. Returning African American soldiers and black home front war workers, having willingly fought in the war or contributed to Allied victory by working in American industries, demonstrated rising racial consciousness and increasing unwillingness to slip quietly back into second class citizenship.

One of the most violent incidents in terms of bloodshed and property loss during the postwar years erupted in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on May 31-June 1, 1921, as rampaging white mobs invaded Greenwood, the city’s segregated African American community, during an 18-hour period. Lured by Tulsa’s oil-based boom economy, blacks had migrated to Greenwood in ever increasing numbers for more than a decade. By 1921 the African American community of nearly 11,000 residents featured a thriving commercial district that boasted some of the finest black-owned businesses in the southwestern United States. During the immediate postwar years, Tulsa — a city with a noteworthy reputation for lawlessness, lynching, and racial violence — became a tinderbox as a result of postwar social and economic dislocation. Rising racial tensions, fueled by white newspaper sensationalism and threats of an attempted lynching, resulted in an explosion of devastating violence that left some 35-40 square blocks of Greenwood’s residential area in smoking ruins, and nearly 9,000 African Americans homeless. Virtually every structure in the Greenwood

commercial district was destroyed, and property damage was estimated at nearly \$1.5 million. Although the exact number of riot-related casualties is difficult to determine, records indicate that more than 700 persons were injured and estimates of deaths ranged between 36 and 300.

The 1921 Tulsa race riot illustrates the key characteristics of race riots during the 1896-early 1920s era. During this period race riots were characterized by white mob assaults, often with the aid or tacit permission of white law enforcement officials, against African American communities in defense of segregation and to combat what whites perceived as growing African American aggressive attempts to alter the racial status quo. The white invasions of black neighborhoods resulted in the beating and killing of large numbers of African Americans and the destruction of considerable black residential and commercial property. Badly outnumbered, African Americans increasingly fought back to protect their families and property. Tulsa ranks as one of the most devastating incidents of racial violence in American history. Moreover, Tulsa serves as one of the most noteworthy examples of this type of interracial violence for understanding and interpreting the tragic chapter of America's race relations during this era.

As the last major race riot of the era, Tulsa represented the closing chapter to the racial violence that swept across America during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The number of major racial conflicts declined dramatically in the United States after Tulsa, although a few riots did occur in during the 1930s and 1940s, most notably in Harlem (1935 and 1943) and in Detroit (1943). Not until the 1960's would another era of major racial violence appear. However, this later period of violence, including riots in Watts, California, was of a completely different nature. In Watts and elsewhere in America these modern race riots were characterized by African Americans violently venting their frustrations with continuing discrimination and poverty against white policeman and the unfortunate white people who chanced to be within the neighborhood at the time.

Background and Purpose

Recognition, commemoration, preservation, and interpretation of the 1921 Tulsa race riot and its associated resources have been discussed for more than two decades. Pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 1035 (1997), the Oklahoma state legislature appointed an 11-member Oklahoma Commission to study the Tulsa race riot of 1921. The commission was directed to: (1) seek and locate survivors of the race riot; (2) "gather information, identify and interview witnesses . . . preserve testimony and records obtained . . . [and] examine and copy documents . . . having historical significance;" and (3) "develop a historical record of the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot." The commission was also provided with the opportunity to make "specific recommendations about whether or not reparations can or should be made" and the "appropriate methods" for making such reparations payments.

The commission's final report – *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* – was published on February 28, 2001. The report included an overview history prepared by Dr. John Hope Franklin, James B. Duke Professor Emeritus, Duke University, and Scott Ellsworth, author of *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, the standard documentary history of the race riot published in 1982, and a former historian at the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. The 2001 report also included a documented narrative history of the race riot by Ellsworth as well as riot-related topical studies — role of airplanes, confirmed deaths, investigation of potential mass grave locations, skeletal remains, property loss, and assessment of state and local legal culpability — prepared by expert consultants and scholars who worked under the commission's direction but were free to reach any conclusions they believed were justified. Also included with the report were chronological maps of the race riot that were prepared by the Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS). The final report and records of the commission, including correspondence, historic and legal documentary

materials, special studies and reports, and maps were microfilmed by the Oklahoma Historical Society and may be found in the society's Research Division Library in Oklahoma City (OHS Reels 201-207, 215).

Pursuant to publication of the commission's final report a 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Memorial of Reconciliation Design Committee was appointed to collaborate with the Oklahoma Historical Society to purchase property and direct the design and construction of a museum – Dr. John Hope Franklin Greenwood Reconciliation Museum – that would serve as a memorial for the 1921 race riot. In 2004 a 3-acre parcel of land was purchased in the Greenwood area on which the museum will be built.

Meanwhile in 2003, the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Memorial of Reconciliation Design Committee and the Oklahoma Historical Society requested that the National Park Service conduct a recon-

naissance survey of the 1921 Tulsa race riot. In accordance with the National Park Service planning process, a reconnaissance survey is a fact finding effort based on readily available information, and is used primarily to determine whether a site possesses national significance. A reconnaissance survey also identifies and evaluates whether sufficient historical resources have survived to tell this story to the American people. Finally, a reconnaissance study provides NPS management with basic information to determine whether a site merits further evaluation for possible affiliation with the National Park Service, such as a national historic landmark, national heritage area, or unit of the national park system. If the 1921 Tulsa race riot and its associated resources are determined to possess national significance, a more comprehensive and detailed study of management alternatives (special resource study), including affiliation with the National Park Service, may be conducted at the request of Congress.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

National Perspective

Plessy v. Ferguson – World War I: 1896-1917

With the end of the Reconstruction Era in the United States in 1877, white supremacist control was restored in the former states of the Confederacy and the U.S. government adopted a “laissez-faire” policy in regard to African Americans. Continuing fears of black power raised in white minds by Reconstruction, together with the U.S. Supreme Court emasculation of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1875 in 1883, prompted southern legislatures during the 1880s to systematically codify in law and state constitutional provisions the subordinate position of African Americans in society. The intent of these “Jim Crow” laws, which gave legal sanction to custom by initially separating or segregating the races in public spaces and conveyances but eventually came to embrace racial segregation in all areas of southern life from the cradle to the grave, was to solidify the color-caste system by impressing upon African Americans their permanent subordination as “second-class” citizens.¹

In its historic *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision in 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court provided legal sanction to “Jim Crow” legislation by upholding the validity of an 1890 Louisiana statute that required railroads operating in that state to provide “equal but separate accommodations for the white and colored races.” In every state of the former Confederacy, the system of legalized segregation and disfranchisement was fully in place by 1910, and for nearly 60 years after the *Plessy* decision the U.S. Supreme Court’s separate-but-equal doctrine enabled states to legislate racial segregation in almost all areas of public activity. This system of white supremacy, which deprived African Americans of their civil and human rights as well as social and econom-

ic privileges, not only reduced their status in American society to “second-class” citizenship but also reenforced a cult of “whiteness” that predated the Civil War. These developments resulted in an intensifying atmosphere of racial hatred, ignorance, and fear which bred lawless violence, murder, and lynching.²

From the Reconstruction Era through the early decades of the 20th century, segregation legislation was supported by brutal acts of ceremonial and ritualized mob violence (lynchings) that were used by whites to terrorize African Americans and maintain white supremacy. In the former Confederate and Border states a deep-seated and all-pervading hatred and fear of African Americans led white mobs to turn to “lynch law” — open public murders of individuals suspected of crime conceived and carried out more or less spontaneously by a mob — as a means of social control. Between 1889 and 1930 more than 3,700 men and women were reported lynched in the United States, the great majority of whom were southern blacks. Hundreds of other lynchings and acts of mob terror aimed at brutalizing African Americans throughout the South and some northern states, notably those in the Midwest, occurred throughout the era but went unreported in the press.³

While lynching was primarily a rural phenomenon, an epidemic of racial violence began to emerge in American cities and towns during the two decades prior to American involvement in World War I. In urban centers stretching from Chicago and New York to Atlanta and Houston, white mobs assaulted African American communities in defense of segregation and white supremacy and to combat what whites perceived as growing African American aggressiveness. These race riots, which occurred in both the North and South but were more characteristic of the North, were the product of white

society's desire to maintain its superiority over African Americans, vent its frustrations in times of economic and social distress, and attack those least able to defend themselves. These riots, in which white mobs invaded African American neighborhoods, beat and killed large numbers of blacks, and destroyed black property, aroused increasing anxiety and discomfort among African Americans. The dramatic nature of these racial conflicts emphasized the growing insecurity of blacks throughout the country. Badly outnumbered, African Americans fought back with increasing intensity, resulting in many casualties on both sides, although most of the dead and injured were black.⁴

The first major race riot since Reconstruction, which occurred in Wilmington, North Carolina, on November 10, 1898, was a harbinger of the racial violence that would engulf many urban centers in the United States during the pre-World War I period. The riot which was, in effect, an armed *coup d'état* by whites, terminated the participation of African Americans in the local government and resulted in the expulsion of black activist leaders from the city. By 1898 African Americans constituted a substantial (though not the dominant) share of officeholders in Wilmington and surrounding New Hanover County, and the city featured (1) a thriving black community (comprising more than one-half of Wilmington's population) with its own impressive cadre of enterprising businessmen and professions that cut into the business of their white counterparts, and (2) vigorous competition in the lower-class labor market as it became a mecca for ambitious black workers and craftsmen. Two days after an impassioned election campaign in which intimidation and fraud enabled white supremacist Democrats to win a decisive election in the city and county on November 9, white mobs, having drawn up plans before the election to coerce African American voters and workers and expel the editor of the black newspaper, swept through the African American community killing at least 30 blacks and causing many others to flee. Similar race riots, although on a smaller scale, would shortly occur in other Southern cities such as New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1900.⁵

The South was not the only section of America that was hostile to African Americans at the turn of the 20th century. Rioting in Northern cities, such as New York City and Akron, Ohio, in 1900 and Boston in 1903, was as vicious and almost as prevalent as it was in the South.⁶ The New York City riot on August 15, 1900, was particularly noteworthy. White mobs, determined to forcibly remove the most popular African American entertainers from the city, swept through the streets from one theater to another, forcing them to flee and hide. Unsatisfied, the mob of several thousand persons stormed through the city's streets, pulling blacks out of hacks and off streetcars and beating them. The city police offered no help for the blacks, but instead participated in the beatings as officers were out for revenge after one of their number had recently been allegedly stabbed to death by a black.⁷

In Springfield, Ohio, a railroad center of approximately 40,000 inhabitants, a riot erupted in 1904. After an altercation in which an African American shot and killed a white officer, a white mob broke into the jail where the black was held, murdered him, hung the corpse on a telegraph pole and riddled the corpse with bullets. The mob then attacked the black section of the city, burning eight buildings, beating many blacks, and causing others to flee.⁸

As riots continued to unfold in other states throughout the nation, including such cities as Statesboro, Georgia; Lebanon, Kentucky; Greensburg, Indiana; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; a group of young African Americans organized for determined and aggressive action to secure full citizenship for blacks. This group, under the leadership of W.E.B. Du Bois, met at Niagara Falls, Canada, in June 1905 and drew up a platform that demanded freedom of speech, legislation to enforce the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, investigations of lynchings, abolition of all distinctions based on race, recognition of the basic principles of human rights, and respect for the working person. Despite the open attack that was made on them for their "radicalism," this group incorporated themselves as the Niagara Movement.⁹

Despite the efforts of the movement, however, racial violence against African Americans continued largely unabated. In early March 1906 another major riot occurred in Springfield, Ohio. After a railroad employee was stabbed and murdered by two assailants, an angry mob of whites gathered to lynch the two African American suspects. When the sheriff took the men out of town, the surly mob wreaked vengeance on the African American community, attacking the black section of the city, setting fire to businesses and residences, and driving out the inhabitants. After 24 hours of rioting the governor called out the militia, and attempts by whites to repeat the outrages the next night ended in failure as the assailants were driven back, scattered, and arrested.¹⁰

President Theodore Roosevelt's handling of the riot in Brownsville, Texas, on August 13, 1906, convinced many African Americans that the federal government had little genuine interest in their plight. Three companies of the Twenty-Fifth Regiment, composed of African Americans who chafed at the discrimination they encountered, were involved in a riot in Brownsville during which one citizen was killed, another wounded, and the chief of police injured. On November 5, based on an inspector's report that the black soldiers had murdered and maimed citizens of Brownsville, Roosevelt dismissed the entire battalion, including 167 privates and noncommissioned officers, with dishonorable discharges and disqualified its members for service in either the military or civil service of the United States. African Americans, who had always taken pride in the service of their soldiers, were outraged. Although Congress established a court of inquiry to investigate the riot, most African Americans looked upon the Brownsville incident as one more example of the helplessness of blacks in a hostile country. Not until 1972 did Congress rescind the dishonorable discharges and restore the black members of the regiment, most of whom were dead, to good standing in the U.S. Army.¹¹

The South's most sensational riot of the early 20th century occurred in Atlanta, Georgia, during September 1906. For months the city had

been lashed into a fury of race hatred as a result of a vituperative campaign for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination by Hoke Smith, an avowed segregationist who received the nomination in September 1906. The contest centered on the question of Negro disfranchisement, and the campaign constituted a blatant emotional appeal to white prejudice. Additionally, the city's press published articles that intensified animosity against blacks by treating black crime, especially assault and rape, in inflammatory fashion. In September, 12 rapes of white women were reported in one week, giving the impression that there was an epidemic of black rape. On September 22, newspapers reported four successive alleged assaults on white women by blacks. In response, country people, in town for the day, joined with the urban element in creating an outraged, panic-stricken mob of some 10,000 whites who rampaged throughout the city attacking African Americans and destroying their property.

After a day of quiet in Atlanta, rioting broke out again in a nearby suburb called Brownsville. The outnumbered African Americans had heard that blacks in Atlanta were being slaughtered en masse. Some sought asylum in two black educational institutions — Clark University and Gammon Theological Seminary — in the neighborhood, while others, determined to defend their community, collected arms. When law officers appeared, they began rounding up blacks and arresting them for being armed. One officer shot into a crowd of blacks, and when the fire was returned, one officer was killed and another wounded. Supported by the city police and white militia, white mobs rampaged through Brownsville murdering blacks and destroying and looting their homes and businesses. When the four days of rioting ended at least ten blacks and two whites were dead, hundreds were injured, and more than a thousand African Americans fled the city. Although a group of responsible black and white citizens organized the Atlanta Civic League to work for the improvement of social conditions and prevent future riots, nothing was done to punish the white rioters.¹²

The early 20th century northern riot that shook the entire country occurred during August 1908 in Springfield, Illinois, the state capital and home of Abraham Lincoln. Feeling against African Americans ran high in Illinois because of the increasing influx of southern blacks to urban centers in the state that threatened the jobs of whites as well as their majority at the ballot box. In mid-August 1908, after the murder of a white man by an African American vagrant from Birmingham, Alabama, and the arrest of another black for the alleged rape of a white woman, white mobs, inflamed by local newspaper sensationalism, gathered around the jail demanding that the blacks, who had been arrested and imprisoned, be lynched. When the sheriff transferred the accused blacks to a jail in a nearby town, the mob, oblivious to the appeals of state officials, raided secondhand stores, securing guns, axes, and other weapons, and began to destroy African American businesses, drag blacks from their homes and streetcars, and beat them. The violence culminated in the lynching of two African Americans — a barber and an 84-year-old cobbler. After three days of rioting, which resulted in the deaths of four whites and two blacks and more than 70 injuries, nearly 5,000 state militia troops restored order. More than 100 arrests were made, and approximately 50 indictments were returned, but the alleged leaders of the white mobs went unpunished. More than black 50 employees of the city and other African American state workers were fired, and more than a thousand blacks left the city to settle elsewhere.¹³

The race riot at Springfield shocked the sensibilities of white liberals throughout the country. Among them was William English Walling, a distinguished writer who went to the scene and gathered data for an article to be published in the *Independent*. Responding to the article which called for a “large and powerful body of citizens” to come to the aid of blacks, Mary White Ovington, a wealthy white New York social worker, took the matter up with Walling and Dr. Henry Moscowitz, a well-to-do member of the New York Jewish community. After deciding to call a conference at Springfield for February 12, 1909, the centennial of Lincoln’s

birthday, to respond to Walling’s challenge, a call was written by Oswald Garrison Villard, the grandson of the noted pre-Civil War abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, thereby linking the antebellum abolitionist spirit with the new protest movement. The young radicals of the Niagara Movement were invited to the conference, and most of them attended along with a distinguished gathering of white and black educators, professors, publicists, bishops, judges, and social workers. As a result of the conference the National Negro Committee was established in May 1909, and a permanent organization, known as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was established in New York City in May 1910 “to promote equality of rights and eradicate caste or race prejudice.” The new organization pledged to work for the abolition of all forced segregation and promote equal education for black and white children, complete enfranchisement of African Americans, and enforcement of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. In the first year of its existence the NAACP launched a program to widen industrial opportunities for African Americans, seek greater police protection for blacks in the South, and commence a crusade against lynching and lawlessness.¹⁴

World War I and Postwar Era: 1917 - Early 1920s

Although the number of reported lynchings in the United States decreased during the 1910s and 1920s, few periods in the long and often painful history of race relations in the United States were as turbulent as the years surrounding World War I, when the country exploded into an era of almost unprecedented racial strife.¹⁵ Large-scale interracial violence became almost epidemic during this period as the nation witnessed the greatest number of race riots in its history. During the years immediately preceding the war increasing numbers of African Americans began migrating from the social, economic, and political oppression of the South to the overcrowded industrial centers of the North in search of better lives and to take advantage of expanding employment opportu-

nities. More than 500,000 blacks fled from the South to Northern cities during the decade from 1910 to 1920, and despite southern efforts to halt the "Great Migration," the annual rate of African American northward migration reached 75,000 by the early 1920s.¹⁶

Interracial tensions flared as nascent African American ghettos were established in Northern cities and as whites were displaced by blacks in jobs, housing, and other public facilities. Although the establishment of black ghettos in northern cities brought in its train a new, upright pride in African American consciousness, grinding poverty, social dislocation, and emergent patterns of discrimination in the Northern cities tended to fix in them considerable emotions of shame and disgust in regard to ghetto life. Thus, the African American mood of ebullience waned as blacks belatedly realized that they had exchanged the hell of Southern life for the purgatory of the Northern ghetto.¹⁷

Several deadly race riots erupted on the home-front in 1917, the year in which the United States entered the war. In August three blacks and three whites died as a result of rioting in Chester, Pennsylvania, but the deadliest race riot that year occurred in East St. Louis, Illinois. The riot was touched off by the fear of white working men that African American economic, political, and social advances were threatening their status. When the white labor force of the Aluminum Ore Company went on strike in April, the company hired as strikebreakers black workers whom it had imported from the South to defeat organized labor — a precedent which inflamed intense white hatred and antagonism. Although the strike was crushed by a combination of state militia, court injunctions, and both black and white strikebreakers, the Union and its white strikers blamed the defeat on the blacks. A riot followed, sparked by rumors that an African American had killed a white man, during which mobs demolished buildings and blacks were attacked and beaten. Police did little more than take the injured to hospitals and disarm blacks, and in some cases they worked in collusion with the mobs. Although several companies of the Illinois National Guard brought an uneasy peace to the city, the police

force proved to be anti-black, and harassments and beatings of African Americans continued through June.

On July 1 whites in a Ford automobile drove through the main African American district of East St. Louis, shooting into homes. Blacks armed themselves for self defense, and when an unmarked police car, also a Ford, drove down the street to investigate, African Americans fired on it, killing two detectives. As reports of the shooting spread, a mob of some 3,000 white persons joined the police in rioting the next day. Streetcars were stopped, and blacks were dragged off, beaten or shot. Other rioters set fire to African American homes. State troops fraternized with the lawbreaking whites, and some were seen helping with murder and arson. By midnight the African American section of the city was in flames, and blacks were fleeing the city. While the official casualty figures for the riot were 9 whites and 39 blacks dead and hundreds wounded, the NAACP estimated that between 100 and 200 blacks were killed. More than 300 buildings were destroyed, and approximately 10,000 African Americans made their exodus from the East St. Louis ghetto. Prosecutors dropped all charges against the police in a deal whereby three officers agreed to plead guilty of rioting. They were fined a token \$50 each, paid for by the police department. Only four white rioters were indicted for the murder of African Americans, but 11 blacks were charged with homicide in the deaths of the two detectives.¹⁸

In August 1917, a month after the East St. Louis riot, racial bloodshed occurred in Houston, Texas. Although racial incidents occurred at or near virtually all military camps in the South where black troops were stationed during the war, the riot at Camp Logan in Houston was by far the worst. To guard the camp while it was under construction, the U.S. Army ordered the transfer of 645 African American soldiers in the Third Battalion of the Twenty-fourth U.S. Infantry regiment at Columbus, New Mexico, to Houston where they were immediately confronted with racial taunting, physical assaults, and discriminatory Jim Crow laws. Fearful that African American soldiers might retaliate

against Houston's whites, Army officials stripped them of their weapons, thus adding to the troops' sense of vulnerability and anger. On August 23, a black soldier argued with two white city policemen who had roughly arrested a black woman for directing abusive language toward them. After an African American military policeman inquired about the black soldier's arrest, a scuffle ensued, and one of the Houston policemen pistol-whipped the military policeman. After he and other black enlisted men with him ran amid shots from the white policemen's guns, the black military policeman was captured and taken to police headquarters.

Although soon released, a rumor started that he had been shot and killed whereupon a group of black soldiers decided to march to the police station. Almost simultaneously, a rumor started that a white mob was approaching the camp. After hearing this news, black soldiers rushed into arms and ammunition supply tents, grabbed rifles, and began firing wildly in the direction of the supposed mob. More than 100 armed soldiers marched toward the downtown area, while a "counter-mob" of off-duty police, National Guardsmen, and armed civilians hastily formed. Street battles flared throughout the night, and by the time that National Guard units were able to enforce martial law, at least a dozen whites, including four policemen, were dead, 14 were injured and at least four black soldiers were killed. A curfew was declared in Houston the next morning, and the entire Third Battalion was sent by train back to New Mexico. During 1917-18 the army held three separate courts marshal, indicting 118 enlisted men for mutiny and riot and finding 110 guilty. Although no white civilians were brought to trial, 13 soldiers were hanged, and 41 received life sentences in federal prison.¹⁹

The year 1918, though quieter than the previous year, also produced outbreaks of racial civil disorder. In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for example, three white men and one black man were killed in late July during rioting.²⁰

During the immediate postwar years whites in both the Northern and Southern states were concerned with the demands of returning

African American soldiers, who, having willingly fought in the war to "make the world safe for democracy," were unwilling to slip quietly back into second class citizenship. During the war, more than 2 million blacks had registered with the Selective Service, of whom 367,000 were called into military service and more than 140,000 served France. In addition, thousands of other blacks had served their country in wartime by working in meatpacking plants, steel mills, and other essential war production facilities. The talk of democracy during the war had raised hopes even among the most militant African Americans, and thus the war gave birth to what some scholars have referred to as the "New Negro," who had aspirations for a larger share of both the nation's political power and its wealth. With the armistice on November 11, 1918, black men and women, who were becoming increasingly aware of racial discrimination and more active in opposition to segregation, eagerly awaited reward for their contributions as soldiers and war workers to the Allied victory.²¹

The immediate post-World War I period was one of extreme anxiety throughout the United States. Large-scale unemployment, numbers of encamped servicemen awaiting discharge, dislocation of individuals and families, frenzied reactions to alleged radical political movements, and other factors turned cities into human tinderboxes as rising black aspirations met with a general determination to reinforce the prewar status of blacks on the bottom rung of the nation's political and economic ladder. Thousands of white and black war veterans who preferred not to return to the rural and sometimes isolated existence of their prewar homes joined the postwar influx to the cities. Returning white veterans in the North were angered to find the "New Negro" emerging and chafed at the shortage of available homes and jobs, blaming the large wartime migration of southern blacks to their cities and towns. In the South returning black veterans, who had been treated as equals by the British and French, resented established racial practices, increasingly refused to conform to "Uncle Tom" rules expected of them, and became more vocal in their pursuit of equal rights as American citi-

zens. Whites responded to their perception of African American insubordination, aggressiveness, and desire to alter the racial status quo by direct assaults upon the minority communities in their midst. As the climate of violence escalated blacks in both the North and South increasingly armed themselves and prepared to defend their communities from mob violence.²²

In the postwar racial strife the willingness of African Americans to fight and die in their own defense injected a new factor into America's race relations. Increasingly cynical about the ability and willingness of government at all levels to protect them, blacks came to view legally constituted authority, such as local police and sheriff's departments as well as the National Guard, as armed representatives of white racism and hostility. As a result, many African Americans, who had previously condemned nonviolence in the face of white aggression, began to arm themselves. Although black retaliatory violence was not unique, it had never been so widespread nor, on occasion, so fierce. The "Great Migration" and increasing urbanization of blacks, accompanied by such benefits as higher wages, the vote, and decent schools for their children, stimulated self-respect and racial cohesiveness, thus contributing to the resistance that they offered to their would-be oppressors. "If we must die," wrote the black poet Claude McKay in 1919, "let it not be like hogs. . . . If we must die - oh, let us nobly die. . . . Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack, pressed to the wall, dying but fighting back!" 'McKay's was not a solitary voice calling for African American self-assertion, manliness, and resolute self-defense during the post-World War I period.²³

Beyond the racial unrest, a climate of social and political upheaval, evident in the wave of anti-foreign and anti-radical sentiments that swept the country, prevailed during the immediate postwar years. Although the common enemy — the external threat posed by Germany — had been vanquished on the battlefields of Europe, American citizens, emotionally unsatisfied with the fruits of military victory, began searching for domestic "enemies." This outburst of angry mistrust, which historians have called the "Red

Scare," was an extension of the emotionalism, super-patriotism, and "scapegoating" associated with the war and manifested itself in vigilante beatings of foreign-born Americans, raids on the offices of left-wing organizations and newspapers, and mass arrests and deportations by the federal government of alleged radicals and enemies of the country. By midyear 1919 the void left by removal of the external German threat had been filled with indiscriminate hatred for the enemy from within — aliens, dissenters, nonconformists, alleged radicals, and, in many cases, African Americans.²⁴

Responsibility for fanning the flames of racial warfare in the aforementioned towns and cities during the post-World War I years could be traced in part to a resurgence of nativist and racial hate organizations, the most prominent of which was the Ku Klux Klan. Reflecting America's isolationist and reactionary sentiments during and following the war, the KKK had been reestablished in 1915 to oppose, in part, new black demands for equality. The growth of the KKK had been slow until the end of the war, at which time the organization announced a broad program of "One Hundred Per Cent Americanism" by "uniting native-born Christians for concerted action in the preservation of American institutions and the supremacy of the white race." Its targets, in addition to African Americans, included minority groups, such as Catholics, Jews, and foreigners, as well as labor leaders, atheists, Communists/Bolsheviks, and others who promoted certain tendencies in modern thought (e.g., birth control, pacifism, internationalism, Darwinism, and the repeal of Prohibition) opposed by the Klan. At its peak strength in the mid-1920s, the Klan reportedly had some 5 million members in the North, South, and Midwest and wielded considerable political power in several states, including Oklahoma (where it perhaps had as many as 100,000 members at its peak), Texas, and Indiana. Torture, murder, and mob violence by the KKK grew so arrogant and brutal that national revulsion finally set in after exposes of its activities appeared in 1923, thus leading to a precipitous decline in its membership and influence by 1926.²⁵

The summer of 1919 ushered in the greatest period of interracial violence the nation had witnessed in its history and has become known as "The Red Summer" because of the resulting bloodshed. From June to the end of the year there were approximately 25 race riots. Some were major conflagrations, such as those in Chicago, Illinois; Washington, D.C.; Elaine, Arkansas; Charleston, South Carolina; Knoxville, Tennessee; Longview, Texas; Chester, Pennsylvania; and Omaha, Nebraska. Smaller scale, although no less violent, race riots occurred throughout the summer in Berkeley, Millen, Dublin, and Ocmulgee, Georgia; New London, Connecticut; Bisbee, Arizona; Chester, Coatesville, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Port Arthur, Texas; Nashville, Tennessee; Norfolk, Virginia; New Orleans, Bogalusa, Louisiana; Syracuse, New York; Baltimore, Maryland; and Wilmington, Delaware. More than 100 African Americans were killed in these riots, and thousands were injured and left homeless as blacks faced the specter of white mobs invading their neighborhoods and setting their homes and businesses on fire.²⁶

The race riot in the nation's capital during July 1919 was the first of the Red Summer's riots to attract nationwide attention. Washington, D.C., had been inundated during the war by thousands of African Americans seeking federal employment. Blacks in federal service were angered because they were segregated at work (where they had never been segregated before) by the southern-oriented Woodrow Wilson administration. These racial tensions were exacerbated by the anger of white civilians, who were influenced by their perception of black aggressiveness and desire to alter the status quo of white domination, and returning white servicemen, who resented the "independent" attitudes of the previously subservient blacks. These conflicts were brought to a boil by sensationalism in the press during the summer as city newspapers carried stories of six attacks by blacks on white women in mid-July. After one report, mobs of white civilians led by gangs of sailors, soldiers, and marines, many of whom were awaiting discharge from the military, began halting streetcars and beating blacks. Failure of the police to check the rioters and an

attitude on their part of seeming indifference filled the mob with contempt for authority and set the stage for several subsequent nights of rioting as mobs surged through the principal business streets of downtown Washington as well as the city's segregated black district. On the third day blacks retaliated when whites sought to invade and burn their section of the city. Order was finally restored when some 2,000 federal troops were called out to patrol the streets, and officials silenced the city's newspapers. As a result of the four-day riot that ended on July 23, it was estimated that as many as 15 persons, five of whom were black, had been killed, and more than 100 were injured.²⁷

Perhaps, the most notorious postwar race riot took place in Chicago in late July 1919, about a week after the Washington riot. Chicago had become "the top of the world" to southern African Americans, and thousands had migrated there during and after the war in search of employment and freedom. African American migration to the city more than doubled between 1910 and 1920, when the census showed approximately 109,000 blacks living there. This influx resulted in increasing racial tensions as the new arrivals confronted whites over jobs, housing, political power, as well as educational, transportation, and recreational facilities. As blacks moved into Caucasian districts during 1917-19, more than two dozen African American homes were bombed. On July 27, 1919, in the midst of a heat wave, a young African American "encroached" upon a swimming area in Lake Michigan that whites had marked off for themselves. Rioting began after the black youth was stoned and drowned. The city police lacked sufficient force for handling the riot; furthermore, they were hampered by the blacks' distrust. By the end of 13 days of sporadic rioting by mobs, primarily led by tough young whites from politically-sponsored athletic clubs and servicemen, thousands of both races had been involved in a series of confrontations, 15 whites and 23 African Americans were dead, 537 persons were injured, and more than 1,000 buildings burned. Three regiments of state militia finally restored order, but more than 1,000 families, mostly African American, were left homeless.²⁸

Race riots also erupted in cities, towns, and rural areas of the South during 1919. A bloody conflagration erupted in Elaine, a rural hamlet in eastern Arkansas, on September 30, 1919, after African American tenant farmers and sharecroppers organized a union — the Progressive Farmers and Household Union of America — to gain an honest accounting from whites who weighed their cotton and owned their debt at commissary stores. Failing that, they wanted the right to sell their own crops on the open market. To local whites, this was tantamount to insurrection, and the local white press declared that the union's real goal was "social equality" and that blacks were planning "a general slaughter of white people in the locality." During an early October union organizational meeting at a black church in Elaine, whites fired their weapons into the church, killing a number of those inside. The few blacks in the church who were armed returned the fire, killing one deputy and wounding another. When the sheriff, under orders by the outraged white planters, deputized a mob of vigilantes and raided Elaine, a gun battle blazed in which seven blacks and two whites were killed. "Emergency posses" of whites rampaged through surrounding black communities and farms, apparently trying to kill every African American in sight. Although the death toll is difficult to determine, as many as 200 African Americans and at least five whites may have been killed during the violence. The posses arrested 92 blacks, and in the trials, which lasted less than one hour, 12 black farmers were sentenced to death and 67 others were given long prison terms extending from 20 years to life. After four years of litigation, the NAACP managed an appeal of the convictions to the U.S. Supreme Court where all were overturned, thus freeing all of the defendants on the grounds that the State of Arkansas had sought to deprive them of life and liberty without due process of law.²⁹

In 1919 a riot erupted in Longview, an East Texas town of some 5,000 inhabitants of whom 30% were African American. The riot lasted for several days after white mobs beat a black schoolteacher for reporting in the *Defender*, a Chicago African American magazine, that an earlier lynching had been based on trumped up

charges of rape. Tensions had also been aroused by the organization of a Negro Business Men's League to obtain higher prices for African American cotton growers by sending the cotton directly to buyers at Galveston, thus eliminating the profit generally taken by local white middlemen. The *Defender* had been at the forefront of efforts urging blacks to move north, and many Southern whites objected to the upsetting effect such exhortations had on the East Texas supply of cheap black labor. Thus, to whites in Longview, economic pressure from the Negro Business Men's League appeared to be connected to the *Defender's* incitements. Not content with beating the black schoolteacher, however, white mobs invaded the African American section of town, and blacks fired on the invaders, wounding four individuals. Finding the black area deserted the whites set fire to the schoolteacher's house, several other homes and businesses, and an office used as a lodge hall by the Negro Business Men's League. Four persons were killed during the violence, and property damage was estimated at \$60,000. National Guardsmen and Texas Rangers restored order by disarming both sides, imposing a curfew on all townspeople, and arresting 23 whites and 20 blacks, the latter being removed to Austin to avoid further mob violence. All whites were released on bail, and a short time later the blacks were also released, although some were forbidden to return to Longview.³⁰

On August 30, 1919, an African American man was accused of approaching a white lady in her Knoxville, Tennessee, home. While running away from her alleged assailant she died. This incident was conveyed to the public as an assault by a black man upon a white woman, and when a black suspected of the alleged offense was jailed, a white mob attempted to break into the jail and lynch him. State militia, sent to check the mob, instead liberated all of the jail's white prisoners. Thereafter, the militia, hearing a false report that blacks had killed two white men, rushed into the black section of the city with a machine gun and began firing. As a result of two days of rioting, seven deaths were reported (although the real number was likely much higher with estimates ranging from 25 to more than 100), including the commander of

the soldiers. In addition, numerous injuries were sustained, and some \$50,000 worth of property was destroyed. Although 22 whites were placed on trial in criminal court for breaking into the county jail, all were acquitted except for five whose cases were ultimately terminated in mistrials.³¹

Racial violence erupted in Charleston, South Carolina, on May 10, 1919, after a fight between an African American male and two white sailors from a nearby naval training base on Saturday night liberty. When the black man was shot and killed, other African Americans attacked the sailors who, in turn, were reenforced by other naval personnel. Both sides battled with clubs and guns, and although the original two sailors were arrested, the fighting spread until hundreds of navy men marched toward the black district. During their rampage, they invaded shooting galleries and stole rifles and ammunition, beat up and shot blacks they encountered, and broke into and looted black-owned shops and stores. Marines were called to clear the streets and quell the disturbances that resulted in the deaths of two African Americans and the wounding of 17. Seven sailors and one white policeman were also injured. Six sailors, ordered to be held for general courts-martial on charges of "conduct to the prejudice of good order and discipline" and "manslaughter," were convicted.³²

During 1919 riots also occurred in areas of the nation that had seen little prior interracial violence. In September a young African American man accused of raping a white girl was removed from his Omaha, Nebraska, jail cell by a white mob within hours after his arrest. The black youth's body was burned, mutilated, and hung from a trolley pole at a major downtown intersection. Thereafter, the mob attempted to hang Omaha's white mayor because of his attempts to thwart the lynching. Thereafter, the mob burned the county court house, and flames in the lower floors of the building endangered the lives of more than 100 prisoners in the county jail on the upper floor for several hours. One man, said to be an ex-soldier, was shot and killed, and perhaps 40 others were injured before federal troops arrived to restore peace.³³

Although the number of race riots nationwide plummeted in 1920, racial violence continued to erupt in cities such as Chicago and Lexington, Kentucky.³⁴ However, the most notorious racial conflicts that year occurred in Florida towns, such as Ocoee, Orlando, Palmetto, Jacksonville, Quincy, Greenville, and Live Oak, when African Americans conducted a campaign to register and vote in the November elections. In Ocoee, the site of the most violent outbreak, a white mob surrounded the black residential area, doused buildings with kerosene, and burned 18 houses, two churches, a schoolhouse, and a lodge hall. Although the total number of fatalities was never determined, it was believed that between 30 and 60 African Americans were murdered.³⁵ Racial violence would continue to plague Florida during the early 1920s, one of the most flagrant riots occurring in January 1923 when a white mob attacked the small all-black community of Rosewood, killing between eight and seventeen black people and the town's livestock and burning 25 homes, three churches, and a Masonic lodge building.³⁶

Tulsa Race Riot

Background

In Tulsa the struggle for African American status, psychological liberation, and civil rights during the late 19th and early 20th centuries took a different form than in some other parts of the United States. Tulsa's black leaders seemed less committed to the civil rights agenda advocated by the NAACP than they did to the black capitalism promoted by Booker T. Washington and his National Negro Business League. Reflecting conditions throughout the southern United States, entrenched racial segregation in Tulsa was rigid, and white businesses refused to serve black customers. Thus, when the "Great Migration," coupled with Tulsa's oil boom following discovery of the nearby Glenn pool in 1905 – reputed to be the "richest small oil field in the world," encouraged African Americans to seek their fortunes in Tulsa, they settled in the growing black community of Greenwood.

In July 1906 O.W. Gurley, a wealthy African American landowner and entrepreneur from Arkansas, moved to the developing town of Tulsa and purchased 40 acres "to be sold to Coloreds only." His first business was a rooming house on a dusty trail near the tracks of the St. Louis & San Francisco Railway (Frisco Railway). He named the trail Greenwood Avenue after a town in Arkansas, and the segregated African American community that soon developed took the name of Greenwood.

Thus, the historical roots of Greenwood can be traced to the "All-Black" towns that had originated in the Indian Territory after the Civil War when the former slaves of the Five Civilized Tribes settled together for mutual protection and economic security. All-Black towns in Oklahoma represent a unique chapter in American history. Nowhere else in America did so many African American men and women create, occupy, and govern their own communities. From 1865 to 1920 African Americans established more than 50 identifiable towns and settlements in what is now the state of Oklahoma.

When the U.S. Government forced the tribes to accept individual land allotments, most Indian "freedmen" chose land in close proximity to other African Americans. They established cohesive prosperous farming communities that eventually resulted in the formation of towns featuring a variety of businesses, schools, and churches. Among other endeavors, entrepreneurs in these communities established newspapers and advertised throughout the South for settlers. In response African Americans began migrating to Oklahoma, considering it a land of hope or "promised land" compared with the harsher realities of segregation found in the racially-mixed communities of the former states of the Confederacy.

When the Land Run of 1889 opened yet more "free" land to non-Indian settlement, African Americans from the South rushed to the newly-established Oklahoma Territory. While some African American leaders hoped to create a black political power block in the territory, others had visions of an "All-Black" state. Although the dream of an All-Black state was never real-

ized, all-black communities with strong entrepreneurial traditions sprouted and flourished in the new territory, and after 1907, the new state.

In 1920 Tulsa, which had become an incorporated municipality on January 18, 1898, was a boom city of some 72,000 inhabitants. The city had almost quintupled its population since 1910 as many persons, both blacks and whites, had flocked there primarily from rural areas and small towns in Oklahoma and other parts of the South. Some of the nearly 11,000 blacks who lived in Greenwood had ties to the region that stretched back for generations, including descendants of African American slaves who had accompanied the Five Civilized Tribes on the Trail of Tears, children and grandchildren of runaway slaves who had fled to the Indian nations prior to and during the Civil War, and a few elderly persons who had been born into slavery. However, most of Greenwood's African American residents had come from southern states during the boom years just before and after statehood. While some of the new settlers came directly to Tulsa (particularly after the oil boom), many others had first lived in smaller Oklahoma communities, including All-Black towns with their strong entrepreneurial traditions.

Thus, by 1921 an affluent class of African American entrepreneurs, reflecting the essence of the All-Black town heritage, was growing in Greenwood. The community's African American residents took pride in the dynamism of black community life. However, while Tulsans of all races prospered as a result of the city's oil-fueled economy, pockets of deep-seated poverty remained in Greenwood, and many African Americans were struggling to get by. A study by the American Association of Social Workers of living conditions in black Tulsa shortly before the riot found that some "95 percent 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."

Located north of Tulsa's downtown commercial district, Greenwood was bordered by the Frisco

railroad yards 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 community, but as Tulsa had grown, so had Greenwood. By 1921, new all-black housing developments reached past Pine and into the open countryside north of the city.

The hub or backbone of the community, however, was the southern end of Greenwood Avenue, which formed the heart of Greenwood's commercial district and would come to earn the appellation of "The Negro Wall Street." Running north for more than a mile – from Archer Street and the Frisco rail yards past Pine – Greenwood Avenue – was not only black Tulsa's primary thoroughfare, but also possessed considerable symbolic meaning for the African American community as well. Nicknamed "Deep Greenwood," this several block stretch of the avenue, along with its adjacent side streets, was characterized by one, two, and three-story red brick buildings housing dozens of black-owned and/or operated businesses, organizations, and institutions. These

included hotels and rooming houses, women's clubs, a local business league office, fraternal orders, grocery stores, meat markets, clothing and dry goods stores, billiard halls, night clubs, beauty parlors, barber shops, drug stores, jewelry stores, upholstery shops, photography studios, cleaners, restaurants and cafes, two theaters, two newspapers, more than a dozen churches, an all-black branch library, a Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) branch, a U.S. Post Office substation, a hospital, an office of the Tulsa public health services, and professional offices for lawyers, realtors, doctors, dentists, and other professionals. In its prime the Greenwood commercial district rivaled the finest African American business districts in the United States, holding its own with Chicago's State Street and Memphis' Beale Street.

Although isolated by the Frisco railroad tracks that served as a line of demarcation between their community and white Tulsa, African Americans felt safe from the bitter sting of racism, Jim Crow legislation, and exclusion in the insular world of Greenwood. Yet, despite its handsome business district and the rags-to-riches careers of some of its leading citizens, neither Greenwood's present, nor its future,



Intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Archer Street — the focal point of Greenwood — in 1920. Courtesy of the Greenwood Cultural Center.

was by any means secure. By the spring of 1921, trouble had been brewing in Tulsa for some years. When it came to racial issues, Tulsa as well as the state of Oklahoma mirrored the national turbulence and trends of the years surrounding World War I when the country exploded into an era of unprecedented racial strife.

Like their counterparts throughout the United States, African American Oklahomans had rallied behind the war effort. More than a few African American men from Oklahoma, including a large number of Tulsans, had enlisted in the army, and some had fought in France. But when Oklahoma's black World War I veterans returned to civilian life, they reentered a state where anti-black sentiments were alive and well. Blacks had been systematically disfranchised in Oklahoma via constitutional amendment in 1901 and through state statute in 1901. The state constitution segregated Oklahoma's public schools and its public transportation facilities, and Oklahoma neighborhoods in Tulsa and elsewhere were segregated as a result of municipal ordinances.

Racial violence, directed against black Oklahomans, was a grim reality throughout the years surrounding World War I. In large part owing to conditions of frontier lawlessness, Oklahoma had long been plagued by lynching and mob violence. In Oklahoma, from statehood in 1907 to the time of the Tulsa race riot in 1921, there were 33 lynchings, 27 of whom were blacks. Twenty-three blacks, including two women, were lynched in more than a dozen Oklahoma towns during the decade leading to 1921. During the pre-riot years, Oklahoma witnessed numerous instances of racial violence, including the burning of black districts in the towns of Okmulgee, Lexington, Sapulpa, Norman, Shawnee, Lawton, Claremore, Perry, Waurika, and Marshall. In several cases, prisoners were taken from city or county jails, beaten, tarred, and feathered, or hung with little or no resistance from, and sometimes with the assistance of, civil authorities. These events increasingly led blacks throughout Oklahoma to believe that they would have to defend their

own families, property, and communities to prevent such occurrences.

Racial hate groups perpetuated despicable acts of mob violence in Tulsa during World War I. After the United States entered the war in 1917, a secret society calling itself the Knights of Liberty unleashed a local campaign of terror and intimidation against suspect slackers, Mennonites, and other pacifists, as well as political radicals such as the International Workers of the World (IWW). The IWW became a target in part because of its Socialist Party leanings and its philosophical message of racial equality that did not square with the Knights' racist ideology. Furthermore, many whites believed that agitators, particularly IWW and "Bolshevik" organizers, and African American protest groups, such as the NAACP, were contributing to growing disaffection and unrest in the black community. After a perfunctory trial of all-white IWW members on trumped-up vagrancy charges in Tulsa during November 1917, a band of black-robed, black-hooded ruffians from the Knights of Liberty, with the encouragement of the white press and apparent cooperation of local authorities, ambushed and seized more than a dozen of the convicted Unionists en route to the county jail. Helpless, and without assistance from their armed police escorts, the IWW members were tied to trees and whipped, tarred, and feathered before being forced out of town at gunpoint.

During the post-World War I years, latent racial tensions in Tulsa were aggravated by economic competition between whites and African Americans as the city experienced postwar dislocation in part because of the city's declining oil industry and the state's agricultural recession. In addition, blacks in the area suffered from charges of peonage (i.e., a system of forced servitude to pay off indebtedness that left many African American farmers in the surrounding area in abject poverty). Simultaneously, the expectations of Tulsa's African American community rose, its citizens buoyed by the spirit of patriotism and emboldened by the American dream of better lives that emanated from the war's rhetoric. Thus, African

Americans in Greenwood, as elsewhere in the United States, gained a heightened sense of race consciousness and became more vigilant in principle and assertive in action even as economic forces intensified racial tensions.

Amidst the rising racial tensions, Ku Klux Klan activity mushroomed in Tulsa and throughout Oklahoma during the postwar years. Although some original Klansmen had lived in the area since as early as 1870, organizers of the resurgent Klan reentered a receptive Oklahoma in 1920. Soon the notorious activities of the Klan in Oklahoma in general, and in Tulsa in particular, would pose an imminent threat to social stability. Less easy to document, however, is whether the Klan was organized in Tulsa prior to the 1921 race riot. Although there were Klan members in Tulsa before the riot and some local law enforcement officers were known to be Klansmen or Klan sympathizers, documentary evidence is scanty 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. Although the Klan cannot be credited alone with instigating the riot, its presence in the city, even if unorganized, undoubtedly contributed to sowing the seeds of racial discord that made the riot possible.

Law enforcement was becoming conspicuous by its absence from the daily lives of Tulsans, both white and black, resulting in a growing lack of confidence in the local police and city administration. A vice ring tightened its already considerable grip on the city, and by design or default, the city turned a blind eye on graft, crime, corruption, and lawlessness. In 1915, the mayor, police commissioner, and police chief had been ousted. Bootlegging, gambling, illegal drugs, and prostitution were widespread, thus giving Tulsa a reputation as a wild and wanton southwestern town. When the Oklahoma legislature added two new district judges to the existing two in Tulsa County in 1921, some 6,000 criminal cases awaited trial (meaning that about 6 out of every 100 Tulsans fell under some sort of criminal indictment), hopelessly clogging the justice system. A police strike in 1919 and the resignations of several police offi-

cers in 1920 contributed to the general state of lawlessness and permissiveness in the city.

Although racial segregation appeared to be gaining ground throughout Oklahoma in 1921, more than a few white Tulsans feared the opposite was true during the months preceding the race riot. Many were especially incensed when black Tulsans disregarded, or challenged, Jim Crow laws and practices. Others were both enraged at, and jealous of, the material success of some of Greenwood's leading citizens — feelings that were undoubtedly exacerbated by the sharp drop in the price of crude oil and the subsequent layoffs in the oil fields. Adding to these fears was the reality that, at the time, the vast majority of white Tulsans possessed virtually no direct knowledge of the African American community, thus making whites 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 city's white newspapers.³⁷

The Race Riot

Like many outbreaks of racial violence, the spark that ignited the Tulsa race riot was an alleged assault on Sarah Page, a white teenaged girl, by Dick Rowland, a 19-year-old African American who worked in a downtown shoe shine parlor, on Monday morning, May 30, 1921. The next afternoon's (May 31) *Tulsa Tribune* ran an inflammatory front-page article claiming that Rowland had attempted to rape Page. More ominously, in a now-lost editorial, the newspaper may have claimed that Rowland, who had been taken into police custody that morning, would be lynched by whites that evening.

Before sunset on May 31 whites began to gather downtown outside the Tulsa County Courthouse, where Rowland was incarcerated in the jail on the top floor of the building. The crowd soon grew into the hundreds, and sometime after 8 PM three white men entered the courthouse and demanded that the authorities hand over Rowland, only to be turned away.



Greenwood ablaze during the riot. Courtesy of Oklahoma Historical Society.

Meanwhile, along Greenwood Avenue, word of the impending lynching spread. Black Tulsans, mindful of a lynching just nine months before, had every reason to believe that Rowland would be lynched, and they had cause to believe that his personal safety, like the defense of themselves and their community, depended on them alone. At 9 PM a group of 25 armed black men traveled by automobiles to the courthouse, offering assistance to authorities should the white mob attack the courthouse. Assured that Rowland was safe, they returned to Greenwood.

The arrival of the African American men at the courthouse electrified the white mob, which had grown to more than a thousand. Whites without guns went home to retrieve them, and one group of whites attempted to break into the city's National Guard Armory to gain access to additional weapons. A small contingent of armed national guardsmen threatened to open fire, thus turning the angry whites away.

By 9:30 PM the white mob outside the courthouse had swelled to nearly 2,000 persons, many of whom were armed. Although the new county sheriff took measures to protect Rowland, the Tulsa police chief failed to take actions to diffuse or contain the situation. At no time during the evening did he order a substan-

tial number of his approximately 75-man police force to appear, fully armed, in front of the courthouse, and by 10 PM he had left the scene and returned to his office at police headquarters a few blocks to the north.

Meanwhile, tensions continued to mount in the city's African American neighborhoods over the deteriorating situation at the courthouse. While a large group of men and women gathered outside the offices of the *Tulsa Star*, the city's leading black newspaper, smaller groups of armed black men began making brief forays downtown by car, both to determine what was happening at the courthouse as well as to demonstrate their determination to whites that Rowland would not be lynched.

Soon after 10 PM, after a rumor circulated that the white mob was storming the courthouse, a second contingent of approximately 75 armed African American men set out for downtown by automobile. Parking their vehicles a block from the courthouse, they marched single file to the building, again offering their services to the authorities to help protect Rowland. After this offer was refused, the blacks headed back to their automobiles. As they were leaving, a white man attempted to forcibly disarm an African American World War I veteran. A struggle ensued, and a shot rang out.

Almost immediately, members of the white mob — and possibly some law enforcement officers — opened fire on the African American men, who returned the volleys. Although the firing lasted only a few seconds, more than 20 people, both blacks and whites, lay dead or wounded.

Outnumbered more than 20-to-1, the African American men quickly began retreating from the downtown area northward toward Greenwood with the armed whites in close pursuit. Heavy gunfire ensued, and a second skirmish broke out before the blacks, their numbers seriously reduced, were able to cross the railroad tracks into Greenwood.

Meanwhile at the courthouse, the sudden and unexpected turn of events inflamed the crowd and groups of marauding whites took to the streets and sidewalks of downtown. At police headquarters, nearly 500 white men and boys, many of whom had been members of the “lynch mob” at the courthouse, were sworn in as “special deputies.” Shortly thereafter, groups of whites, aided by uniformed Tulsa policemen, began breaking into pawnshops and hardware stores, stealing guns and ammunition. Using

their newly acquired weapons, white bands started gunning down African Americans who happened to be downtown.

Although darkness impeded the pace of the riot, sporadic fighting took place throughout the predawn hours of June 1, the most intense activity occurring along the Frisco railroad tracks that formed the southern boundary of Greenwood. From midnight until 1:30 AM, scores — perhaps hundreds — of whites and blacks exchanged gunfire across the tracks. Carloads of whites also began driving through black neighborhoods, firing indiscriminately into African American residences, breaking into homes, and terrorizing or murdering hapless victims.

By 1 AM whites had also set the first fires in black neighborhoods. African American homes and businesses along Archer Street on the southernmost edge of Greenwood were the first targets, and when a Tulsa Fire Department crew prepared to douse the flames, rioters waved the firemen off at gunpoint. By 4 AM more than two dozen homes and businesses had been torched. While many blacks began taking steps to protect their families, homes,



Greenwood ablaze during the riot. Courtesy of Oklahoma Historical Society.

and businesses, some began leaving town amid a hail of bullets while others huddled in fear, apparently hoping that daybreak would bring an end to the violence.

While the Tulsa police scattered to guard roads leading into the city, Tulsa's national guard units stirred into action during the predawn hours. While as many as 50 guardsmen had gathered at the armory by 11 PM, it was not until after midnight that the local commander received authorization to assist local civil authorities. Initially, the local guardsmen — all of whom were white — were deployed downtown. One small detachment blocked off the street in front of police headquarters, another was dispatched to guard the City Water Works and the Public Service Company's power plant, and others led groups of armed whites on "patrols" of the business district. City police officials also presented the guardsmen with a machine gun, which, although semi-defective, was mounted on the back of a truck. About 30 guardsmen positioned themselves and the machine gun on Standpipe Hill on the west side of Greenwood where they set up a "skirmish line" facing the African American residential district. The guardsmen briefly exchanged gunfire with black defenders to the east, and soon began rounding up black civilians, handing over their "prisoners" to the local police. About 3 AM, reports reached guard officers that white residences on Sunset Hill (to the north of Standpipe Hill) were being fired upon, and that a white woman had been killed. Guardsmen, with the machine gun, were then deployed along the crest of Sunset Hill until dawn.

White neighborhoods in Tulsa also continued to be scenes of feverish activity during the predawn hours as word of what whites began calling the "negro uprising" spread. Crowds of armed whites, numbering perhaps 10,000, gathered at three principal hastily arranged meeting places along the fringes of the downtown area that separated it from Greenwood, and plans were laid to invade the African American community at dawn. One group of whites hauled a machine gun to the top floor of the Middle States Milling Company grain elevator, posi-

tioning the gun to fire north along Greenwood Avenue.

Shortly after 5 AM eyewitnesses reported hearing an unusual whistle or siren — perhaps a signal for the armed invasion to begin. While the machine gun in the granary opened fire, white rioters poured northward across the Frisco tracks. At the Katy depot, the stream of whites on foot was joined by dozens of others in cars heading eastward into Greenwood. A deadly pattern soon took shape. With the aid of Tulsa police officers and white men clad in World War I army uniforms — probably members of a loosely organized group of white veterans known as the "Home Guard" — whites broke into African American homes and businesses, forcing occupants into the streets, where, at gunpoint, they were marched off to Convention Hall. Resisters and black men in homes where firearms were discovered were shot. Next the whites looted the homes, pocketing small valuables and hauling away larger items on foot. Finally, the rioters set the homes on fire, using torches and oil soaked rags. House by house, block by block, the wall of destruction moved northward. As the whites moved north, they set fire to virtually every building in the African American community. Fierce fighting erupted near Standpipe Hill on the western edge of Greenwood, where some 40 national guard soldiers traded fire with African American riflemen. On Sunset Hill, the white guardsmen opened fire on black neighborhoods to the east, using both their standard issue 30-caliber 1906 Springfield rifles as well as the machine gun given them by the Tulsa Police Department.

While African Americans fought to protect the black commercial district, the sheer numerical advantage of the whites soon proved overwhelming. Black riflemen positioned themselves in the belfry of the recently completed Mount Zion Baptist Church, whose commanding view of the area below Standpipe Hill allowed them to temporarily stem the tide of the white invasion. But when whites set up a machine gun — perhaps the same weapon used at the mill — and riddled the church tower with its devastating fire, the black defenders were



Mount Zion Baptist Church ablaze during the riot. Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa.

forced to retreat. Deadly firefights erupted at the site of an old clay pit off of Standpipe Hill and along the northern edge of Sunset Hill. As the mobs poured into the southern end of the African American district, as many as six airplanes, manned by whites, appeared overhead, firing on fleeing blacks and perhaps, in some cases, dropping explosives.

Black attempts to defend their homes and businesses were undercut by the actions of both the Tulsa police and the local national guard units, who, rather than disarming and arresting the white rioters, instead began imprisoning black citizens. Guardsmen on Standpipe Hill made at least one eastward march after dawn on June 1, rounding up African American civilians before being fired upon near Greenwood Avenue. The guardsmen returned to Sunset Hill, where they turned the blacks over to police officers. White civilians also began taking black “prisoners,” sometimes with murderous results, as in the case of Dr. A.C. Jackson, a nationally renowned African American surgeon who surrendered to a group of young white males only to be shot and killed before he stepped off his front lawn.

After the firefight with African American gunmen to the north, the National Guard troops on Sunset Hill joined in the invasion of Greenwood after 8 AM, one detachment head-

ing north, the other to the northeast. Initially the guardsmen met with little armed resistance, but about halfway across the residential area they exchanged fire with blacks defending their homes. Elsewhere a skirmish erupted as guardsmen joined with white rioters in assaulting a group of African Americans holed up in a concrete store. Meanwhile, in the well-to-do white neighborhoods along Tulsa’s southern edge carloads of white vigilantes started going from house to house, rounding up African American maids and butlers at gunpoint, and hauling them to internment centers.

A special train from Oklahoma City carrying Adj. Gen. Charles F. Barrett and 109 white soldiers of the Oklahoma City-based national guard — generally referred to by Tulsa residents as the state troops — arrived at the bullet-scarred Frisco passenger station at 9:15 AM on June 1. By this time much of the African American community had been put to the torch, scores of blacks and whites had been killed, and the city’s four remaining hospitals — Frissell Memorial Hospital, which was black, had been burned — were filled with the wounded. Although the majority of black Tulsans had either fled to the countryside or were being held against their will at one of a handful of internment centers, pockets of black armed resistance to the white invasion



Greenwood ablaze during the riot. Courtesy of Oklahoma Historical Society.



National guardsmen armed with machine gun during the riot. Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa.

remained along the northern edge of the African American district. Perhaps, one-third of black Tulsa's homes and businesses remained intact, including some of the finest African American homes on Detroit Avenue at the southwest edge of Greenwood just northeast of Standpipe Hill that belonged to the city's most prominent black citizens.

The state troops did not, however, immediately proceed to where the fighting was still raging.

Led by Barrett, one detachment marched to the county courthouse in an unsuccessful attempt to contact the sheriff. After the failed visit, he went to City Hall, and, after conferring with officials, requested that Governor James B.A. Robertson grant him authority to proclaim martial law. Other contingents began taking over custody of the "imprisoned" blacks from the white vigilantes. While the state troops were occupied downtown, four white Tulsa police officers arrived at the aforementioned homes of



*African American men being marched to the Convention Hall at gunpoint during the riot.
Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa.*



*Scene at Convention Hall as African Americans are being incarcerated on June, 1, 1921.
Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa.*



*African Americans in "protective custody" being marched to internment centers.
Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.*



*National guardsmen marching African Americans to McNulty Baseball Park.
Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa.*

Greenwood's prominent citizens, setting them on fire, and by the time that state troops finally arrived the houses had been destroyed.

Martial law was declared at 11:30 AM on June 1, but by then the race riot had nearly run its course, although scattered bands of whites continued to loot and burn African American homes. A final skirmish occurred around 12:30 PM, when remnants of a white mob converged on a two-story building near the Santa Fe railroad tracks at the northeast corner of the Greenwood area. After holding off the invading whites for some time, the blacks were overwhelmed when a new group of whites — armed

with high-powered rifles — arrived. The building and a nearby store were then set on fire.

Following the martial law declaration, the state troops finally headed toward what remained of Tulsa's African American neighborhoods, disarming whites and sending them away from the district. As the violence subsided, black Tulsans faced new problems. Thousands had fled to the countryside, hiding in the woods or nearby communities, while hundreds more had gathered near Golden Gate Park. Homeless, penniless, and often unsure of the fate of their friends and families, those who began venturing back to town soon found themselves placed under



*African Americans placed in "protective custody" at McNulty Baseball Park.
Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.*

armed guard amid the cheers of white crowds. Convention Hall having been filled to capacity, blacks were taken to the Tulsa Fairgrounds and McNulty Baseball Park, while a few blacks found refuge at the First Presbyterian Church and other white churches downtown.

Additional detachments of national guard units from other Oklahoma towns arrived in Tulsa throughout the day, and with their help, the streets were finally cleared and order restored. All businesses were ordered to close by 6 PM, and after 7 PM only members of the military and civil authorities, physicians, and relief workers were allowed on the city's streets.

Virtually the entire African American district, some 35-40 square blocks stretching northward for more than a mile from Archer Street, had been reduced to a wasteland of burned out buildings, empty lots, and blackened trees. The American Red Cross reported that 1,256 houses were burned, 215 houses were looted but not burned, and the total number of buildings not burned but looted and robbed were 314. Nearly 9,000 persons were left homeless. In addition, virtually every structure in the Greenwood commercial district was destroyed. The Tulsa Real Estate Exchange estimated nearly \$1.5 mil-

lion worth of damages and one-third of that in the black business district. The Exchange claimed personal property loss at \$750,000. Between June 14, 1921, and June 6, 1922, some \$1.8 million of claims were filed against the city of Tulsa, most of which were disallowed by the city commission. Insurance companies refused payment on losses, citing riot exclusion in policies. By July 30, 1921, more than 1,400 lawsuits for losses upward of \$4 million had been filed.

The white riot dead appear to have all been given proper burials. Little effort was made by the civil authorities to identify the bodies of black victims with the result that many unidentified African American riot casualties were hurriedly buried in unmarked graves. On June 1-2, the Salvation Army fed 37 blacks who were employed as gravediggers, and on June 3-4, 20 blacks were so employed. During the first two days these men dug 120 graves in each of which a dead black was buried. No coffins were used, the bodies simply being placed in the holes and covered with dirt. Documentary evidence, including funeral home records, later confirmed that African American riot victims were buried in unmarked graves at Oaklawn Cemetery. Oral sources, however, also pointed to several additional unmarked burial sites for riot victims in

Tulsa County, including Newblock Park, along the Sand Springs Road, and the historic Booker T. Washington Cemetery, some 12 miles southeast of the city.

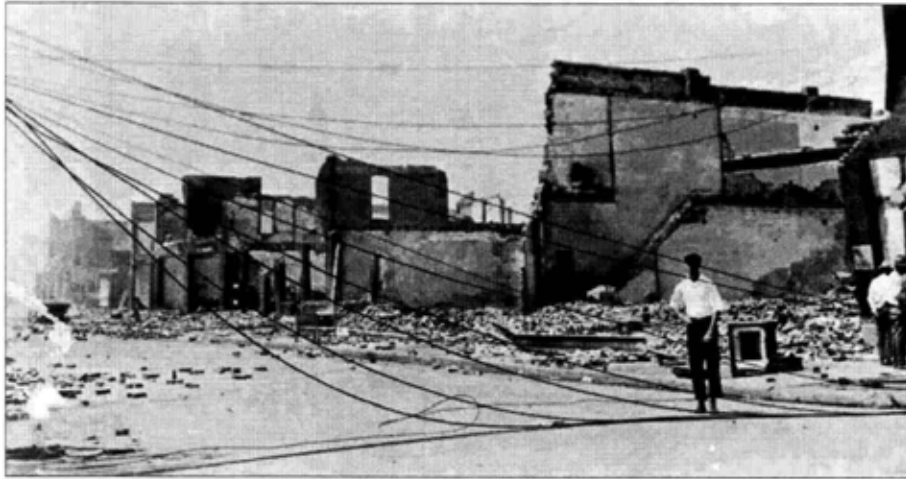
As a result of the way in which the bodies of riot victims were buried, the number of deaths resulting from the violence is difficult to determine with accuracy. Although the Department of Health's Bureau of Vital Statistics reported in 1921 that the death toll was 26 blacks and 10 whites, research findings in the 2001 report of Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 indicate that the number of confirmed fatalities was 26 blacks and 13 whites. In their aforementioned overview history of the race riot, which was printed as part of the 2001 report, historians John Hope Franklin and Scott Ellsworth concluded that considerable evidence exists to suggest that at least 75 to 100 people, both black and white, were killed during the riot. However, just after the riot the NAACP estimated that 50 whites and between 150 and 200 blacks were killed, while Maurice Willows, who directed the relief operations of the American Red Cross in Tulsa following the violence, stated in his official report that the total number of riot fatalities may have been as high as 300.

The number of riot injuries is also difficult to determine. American Red Cross records include the names of 48 whites who passed through hospitals after the riot, although the organization's officials believed the number to be higher. It has been suggested that many whites would not give their names when they were treated for wounds for fear of later being subjected to legal action. Red Cross records also indicate that 183 blacks were given surgical treatment within 24 hours after the riot, with more than 70 % of these people being hospitalized. The organization gave first aid treatment to 531 persons, and during the first week after the riot, about 20 doctors (11 of whom were black) performed 163 operations, 82 of them classified as "major."

When it occurred the Tulsa race riot was front page news across America. On June 2, 1921, the *New York Times*, for example, ran the headline "85 WHITES AND NEGROES DIE IN TULSA RIOTS" and described the riot as "one of the most disastrous race wars ever visited upon an American city." Dozens of other newspapers across the country published lead stories about the riot, and even *The Times of London* declared "FIERCE OUTBREAK IN OKLAHOMA."



*National guardsmen taking African Americans into "protective custody".
Courtesy of the Greenwood Cultural Center.*



*Greenwood business district ruins in aftermath of riot.
Courtesy of the Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma Library.*



*Greenwood ruins in aftermath of riot.
Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa.*



*Greenwood ruins in aftermath of riot.
Courtesy of the Department of Special Collections, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa.*

Although many of Tulsa's whites, and particularly its white business and political leaders, soon concluded that the riot was something best forgotten and swept beneath history's carpet, during the days and weeks that followed the violence, editorial writers for both big-city dailies and small town newspapers throughout the United States unleashed a torrent of condemnation on what had taken place in the city. According to the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, the "bloody scenes at Tulsa, Oklahoma . . . are hardly conceivable as happening in American civilization of the present day." The *Kentucky State Journal* termed the riot "An Oklahoma Disgrace," while the *Kansas City Journal* called it the "Tulsa Horror." *The Christian Recorder* went so far as to declare that "Tulsa has become a name of shame upon America."⁴³

As Tulsa's once thriving African American community lay in ruins, leveled and charred beyond recognition, the hopes and dreams of Greenwood's citizens lay quashed beneath the smoldering ashes. The *Tulsa Tribune* trumpeted the destruction: "Acres of ashes lie smoldering in what but yesterday was 'Niggertown.'" Subsequent *Tulsa Tribune* headlines were equally insulting and inflammatory, and the Tulsa Ministerial Alliance boldly decreed that "the fair name of the city of Tulsa has been tarnished and blackened by a crime that ranks with the dastardly deeds of the Germans during the Great War, provoked by the bad element of the negroes, arming themselves and marching through streets of the city." One prominent local white minister publicly implied that W.E.B. Du Bois' visit to Tulsa several months before the riot "may have had a bearing upon the trouble of the past week," described *Crisis*, the NAACP's magazine edited by Du Bois, as "dangerous," and characterized Du Bois "as the most vicious negro man in the country."³⁹

In the immediate aftermath of the race riot, African Americans on the national scene reacted to the carnage at Tulsa. In a *Crisis* article written soon after the riot Du Bois cited black/white economic competition as the underlying cause of the violence:

I have never seen a colored community so highly organized as that of Tulsa. There is

complete separation of the races, so that a colored town is within the white town. I noticed a block of stores build by white men for negro business. They had long been empty, boycotted by the negroes. The colored people of Tulsa have accumulated property, have established stores and business organizations and have also made money in oil. They feel their independent position and have boasted that in their community there have been no cases of lynching. With such a state of affairs, it took only a spark to start a dangerous fire.⁴⁰

Walter F. White, a national NAACP official, visited Tulsa during the week after the riot, making arrangements for the organization's contribution of \$3,500 for relief of the black victims. Shocked by what had taken place, he observed in the *New York Call* on June 10, 1921, that "I am able to state that the Tulsa riot, in sheer brutality and willful destruction of life and property, stands without parallel in America."⁴¹ White also penned an article about the riot for the Wall Street edition of the *New York Evening Post* on June 11 in which he analyzed its root causes:

The contributory and underlying causes of the riot conflict at Tulsa, which cost this city irreparable damage to its name, the lives of between 150 and 200 citizens, and a property loss of \$1,500,000, are not so important in themselves were they not so typical of conditions in many towns and cities of America, north and south. Corrupt and inefficient rule in municipal affairs, the total lack of understanding between white and colored citizens, and the growth of race prejudice, festered and nurtured for economic gain — all these exist to a greater or less degree in many American cities. Because Tulsa failed to realize how serious a situation was being bred by these causes, she had had to pay the penalty.⁴²

Aftermath

The first problem faced by the riot's black Tulsan survivors was the question of obtaining their freedom. Roughly one-half of the city's black population was forcibly interned under



*In the aftermath of the riot many African Americans were forced to live in tents.
Courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society.*

armed guard at the Convention Hall, in public buildings downtown, and at McNulty Baseball Park and the Tulsa Fairgrounds. On June 2, the remaining internees, still numbering more than 4,000, were moved to the fairgrounds. By June 7, the number had dwindled to 450, and eight days later, the fairgrounds were empty. At first, black Tulsans were allowed to leave these centers only if a white person would come and vouch for them, a system designed to allow only those blacks who were employed by whites to be released immediately.

In addition to the internment centers, black Tulsans faced other restrictions. They were required to wear or carry green cards — paid for by the City Commission and the Chamber of Commerce — with the words “Police Protection” printed on one side and personal identification information on the other. Blacks found on the streets without a green card were to be arrested after June 7 and taken to the fairgrounds to help black riot victims. The green card edict was lifted on July 7, but then only for so-called “bona fide” Tulsa blacks, not out-of-towners. Additionally, blacks were not allowed to purchase or possess firearms for a period of several weeks after the riot, and on June 6 an order was issued prohibiting the use of servants’ quarters in white districts by blacks

“other than those employed regularly on the premises” prior to the riot.

On June 2 Adj. Gen. Barrett issued Field Order No. 4 directing “all able bodied negro men remaining in detention camp at the Fairground and other places in the City of Tulsa” to “be required to render such service and perform such labor as is required by the military commission and the Red Cross in making proper sanitary provisions for the care of refugees.” The men received a wage of 25 cents per hours and were paid at the close of each day.

Martial law was revoked at 3 PM on June 3, but Tulsa units of the National Guard remained on active duty until the morning of June 4. Although Battery “B” of the Tulsa-based 2d Field Artillery remained in the city to cooperate with city and county authorities if needed, the unit was directed not to conduct operations unless ordered to do so by the governor. To replace the departed guardsmen, American Legion members were sworn in as police officers, and “a force of 100 emergency minute men,” better known as the Business Men’s Protective League, was organized in conjunction with the sheriff’s office and the Chamber of Commerce to help “police” the city.

While Tulsa's white leaders assured the rest of the nation that the city would rebuild the destroyed black district, they charted an opposite course on the local scene. The city's official "relief" activities were carried out by the Executive Welfare Committee and its successor, the Reconstruction Committee, both organizations consisting of Tulsa's white business and political leaders. After deciding to reject offers of outside aid to reconstruct the black district, the two organizations undertook actions designed to make reconstruction of Greenwood difficult if not impossible.

On June 7, the Executive Welfare Committee informed the public that, under its direction, "the Real Estate Exchange was organized to list and appraise the value of properties in the burned area and to work out a plan of possible purchase and the conversion of the burned area into an industrial and wholesale district." While this plan received the support of certain white civic organizations, businessmen, and political elements, the Tulsa City Commission that same day passed Fire Ordinance No. 2156, expanding the official fire limits of the city of Tulsa to include portions of the burned black district for the stated purpose of extending the area around the railroad yards for construction of a new train station and expanded industrial zone. Any structure within the city's official fire limits was required to be constructed of fireproof materials, such as concrete, brick, or steel, and be at least two stories in height. Despite the announced purpose of the fire ordinance, it was primarily designed to further separate the white and African American sections of the city and prevent most black Tulsans, who had lived in frame structures prior to the riot, from rebuilding their burned homes by making reconstruction costs prohibitively expensive.

Greenwood residents, however, challenged the ordinance in the courts on technical legal grounds and as a violation of their property rights. The litigants first won a temporary restraining order on legal grounds that insufficient public notice had been given before the ordinance was passed. Then, following repromulgation of the ordinance, they obtained a permanent injunction on the grounds that it would deprive Greenwood property owners of

their property rights if they were not permitted to rebuild. The fire ordinance was finally declared unconstitutional by the Oklahoma Supreme Court on September 1.

Because of the general lack of sympathy in white Tulsa for the conditions faced by the African American community, blacks in Tulsa were thus left largely to their own devices to rebuild their homes and businesses without direct assistance from the city or their insurance companies. Relief work was undertaken, primarily through the American Red Cross and secondarily through the "Colored Citizens Relief Committee and East End Welfare Board," a loose-knit consortium of groups that organized and coordinated post-riot relief activities and strategies for the reconstruction of Greenwood. Despite the Herculean efforts of the Red Cross and the "East End Welfare Board" to aid reconstruction efforts, however, more than 1,000 Greenwood blacks were forced to spend the winter of 1921-22 living in tents. Despite these obstacles, new brick buildings began to line Greenwood Avenue during 1921-22, and by the summer of 1922, all African Americans in Greenwood were said to be living in "wooden buildings."

While the reconstruction of Greenwood was underway the exodus of African Americans from the city which had begun during the riot continued, some blacks simply having had enough of the discrimination and violence. For some, staying was not an option, because they feared for their future in Tulsa amid accusations that the African American community was responsible for the race riot. Although some white leaders initially voiced contrition and urged the city to help blacks rebuild Greenwood, this view was soon replaced by a consensus that blamed the riot on the blacks and shifted the responsibility for restoring Greenwood to the victims. Thus, it quickly became clear, both in the grand jury impaneled to investigate the riot and in various other legal actions in the courts, that African Americans would be blamed for causing the riot. Nowhere, perhaps, was this stated more forcefully than in the June 25 final report of the grand jury. Although the report condemned "exaggerated and untrue reports of the press" regarding the

cause and results of the riot, it clearly blamed the African Americans for instigating the violence:

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 County 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. There was no mob spirit among the whites, no talk of lynching and no arms. The assembly was quiet until the arrival of the armed negroes, which precipitated and was the direct cause of the entire affair.

Indirect causes of the riot, according to the grand jury, included "agitation among the negroes of social equality, and the laxity of law enforcement on the part of the officers of the city and county." According to the report, outside agitation from African American leaders, such as W.E.B. Du Bois who gave a speech in Tulsa in March 1921, had stirred racial animosity in Greenwood. While the report exonerated "the great majority of colored people who neither had knowledge of nor part in . . . the accumulation of arms and ammunition," it claimed that "certain propaganda and more or less agitation had been going on among the colored population for some time," and that this had 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."

During its 12-day session, the grand jury initiated some 27 cases, which indicted more than 85 persons, most of whom were black. Although the 27 cases ended for the most part in inaction,

a handful of blacks were charged with riot-related offenses. Tulsa Police Chief John A. Gustafson was suspended from office and later found guilty on two counts in a district court trial for "failure to take proper precautions for the protection of life and property during the riot and conspiracy to free automobile thieves and collect rewards." One black Tulsan may have been sentenced to 30 days in county jail for allegedly carrying a concealed weapon, but no white Tulsans were ever sent to prison for killing, burning, or looting during the race riot. As a postscript to the riot, Sarah Page refused to prosecute, and Dick Rowland was exonerated in late September.⁴³

Social, Political, and Economic Impacts/Ramifications

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 Greenwood where the scars of the riot can still be observed. One writer has observed: "Beyond its monumental physical devastation in terms of casualties and property lost, the riot also took a psychological toll too heavy to measure even with the grandest of scales. So much was lost so quickly, so senselessly, the pride of a tight-knit community savagely wrenched away."⁴⁴

Mary Elizabeth Jones Parrish, a youthful YMCA typing instructor in Greenwood, witnessed the riot first hand and recorded her observations and those of her contemporaries in a volume entitled *Events of the Tulsa Disaster* (1921). Parrish painted a vivid, distressing picture of the human devastation left in the wake of the riot:

. . . . Our hearts felt burdened and heavy, as one feels after returning from the last rites over a loved one. . . . I can never erase the sights of my first visit to the hospital. There were men wounded in every conceivable way, like soldiers after a big battle. Some with amputated limbs, burned faces, others minus an eye or with heads bandaged. There were women who were nervous

wrecks, and some confinement cases. Was I in a hospital in France? No, in Tulsa.

Parrish went on to describe what she felt the lessons of the riot were for African Americans in Greenwood:

The Tulsa disaster has taught great lessons to all of us, has dissipated some of our false creeds, and has revealed to us verities of which we were oblivious. The most significant lesson it has taught me is that the love of race is the deepest feeling rooted in our being and no race can rise higher than its lowest member.

Some of our group who have been blest with educational or financial advantages are oftentimes inclined to forget ourselves to the extent that they feel their superiority over those less fortunate, but when a supreme test, like the Tulsa disaster comes, it serves to remind us that we are all of one race; that human fiends, like those who had full sway on June 1st, have no respect of person. Every Negro was accorded the same treatment, regardless of his education or other advantages. A Negro was a Negro on that day and forced to march with his hands up for blocks. What does this teach? It should teach us to "Look Up, Lift Up and Lend a Helping," and remember that we cannot rise higher than our weakest brother.⁴⁵

Although Parrish was calling in essence for black nationalism, the intimidation that her muted tone revealed alludes to an even greater problem faced by black Tulsans after the riot: how to survive. The actions of the city government, police, and elite business and commercial groups during the summer and winter of 1921-22 confirmed for blacks that the struggle would, if anything, be as hard as before. Thus, as African Americans have done throughout their history, black Tulsans turned to themselves. For the first decade after the riot, it appears that the local churches, community groups, and local networks of friendship and work place association of African Americans in Greenwood were the primary organizational means for coping with survival issues. Although a branch of the

NAACP was established in Greenwood in 1922, the organization was largely dormant by 1926, and a new branch was not organized until 1930.⁴⁶

While the memory of the riot proved to be hardly an ennobling challenge for many African Americans in Greenwood, the riot, and particularly the rebuilding of their community, became an issue of pride. In 1971 W.D. Williams, a 16-year-old black in Greenwood at the time of the riot, had a message for young black Tulsans: "They must remember that it was pride that started the riot, it was pride that fought the riot, it was pride that rebuilt after the riot . . ." Thus, one writer has noted that black Tulsans employed their own resources in the aftermath of the riot, and in doing so, they have endured,⁴⁷ while another has observed that the "resurgence of Greenwood after the race riot is a tribute to the resiliency of those black pioneers of long ago."⁴⁸

While African Americans in Tulsa drew lessons from the riot, blacks on the national scene also began to analyze the significance of the racial violence that had wracked the city. On June 29, 1921, in an article that he wrote for *The Nation*, Walter White referred to the Tulsa race riot as a "pogrom" and noted:

What is America going to do after such a horrible carnage — one that for sheer brutality and murderous anarchy cannot be surpassed by any of the crimes now being charged to the Bolsheviki in Russia? How much longer will America allow these pogroms to continue unchecked? There is a lesson in the Tulsa affair for every American who fatuously believes that Negroes will always be the meek and submissive creatures that circumstances have forced them to be during the past three hundred years. Dick Rowland was only an ordinary bootblack with no standing in the community. But when his life was threatened by a mob of whites, every one of the fifteen thousand [11,000] Negroes of Tulsa, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, was willing to die to protect Dick Rowland. Perhaps America is waiting for a nationwide Tulsa to wake her. Who knows?⁴⁹

Aside from the deaths, human suffering, and destruction, the riot had other effects in Tulsa and the state of Oklahoma. For one thing, it appears that there was never another attempt at lynching a black person in Tulsa County. Despite escalating KKK violence in Tulsa and Oklahoma during 1921-24, lynchings ceased. At a terrible price, black Tulsans had shown white Tulsans that they were not going to let it happen there.⁵⁰

Although Klan members had contributed to the racial climate that resulted in the riot, the organization had little to do with the tragedy. However, the Klan's post-riot propaganda capitalized on Tulsa's vigilante tradition of law enforcement and post-riot racial climate to conduct a highly-successful recruiting program. 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 10, more than 2,000 people attended a lecture at Convention Hall by a Klan spokesman from Atlanta who declared that "the riot was the best thing that ever happened to Tulsa."

Other Klan spokesmen preyed upon the heightened emotional state of the white community after the riot, and by December 1921 the Tulsa Klan had an estimated membership of some 3,200, thus becoming one of the nation's largest and most powerful chapters. By the mid-1920s perhaps as many as 6,000 white Tulsans had become members of the Klan. During this period, Tulsa was one of the few cities in the country with an active chapter of the organization's official youth affiliate, the Junior Ku Klux Klan, and it also had a thriving chapter of the Women of the Ku Klux Klan.

Taking full advantage of the "goodwill" generated for it by the riot, the Klan purchased the Centenary Methodist Church building and constructed a brick auditorium – Beno Hall – one of Klan's largest meeting halls in the southwestern United States. William Shelley Rogers, who made a practice of parading on horseback through the city's streets, was the Tulsa Klan's "Chief Cyclops," and his membership roster

read like a "Who's Who" of prominent Tulsans. It was said at the time that in Tulsa all district judges, the court clerk, the county sheriff, and all jury commissioners were members of the Klan. In 1923, three of the five members of the Oklahoma House of Representatives from Tulsa County were admitted Klansmen.

First appearing as a reformer, the Klan, having told the Tulsa County sheriff to get rid of roadhouses, bootleggers, and obnoxious resorts, proceeded to lend him a hand. Within a short time the membership of the Klan and police force was "fairly well integrated," with relatively devastating results for organized gangs and vice in Tulsa. This growing record for the enforced reform of wrongdoers brought the Klan initial general public approval.

Within several years, however, the Klan's violent reputation led to its demise. Documented Klan violence in Tulsa exceeded that of any other city in Oklahoma during the early 1920s, including whippings, kidnappings, night riding, and assaults. In one four-month period during 1922, for example, 12 persons were whipped by masked bands in Tulsa County, and in May of that year a black deputy had one of his ears cut off by a group of masked whites. In 1923 the president of Tulsa's Chamber of Commerce spoke of Tulsa's shame and disgrace because "our courthouse and our city hall are practically filled with members of the Klan elected to office with Klan support." The Klan's increasing level of lawlessness and mob rule spurred Governor John Calloway "Jack" Walton to place Tulsa County under martial law in 1923, and military authorities charged 31 admitted Klansmen with night riding and assault. By 1926, the Klan was in demise in Tulsa as well as in the State of Oklahoma, and its place as a powerful force in the life of the city and state greatly diminished as people tired of the violence.⁵¹

ENDNOTES

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- ³ Richard Maxwell Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 214-18; John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans* (7th ed., New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994), pp. 312-13; Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York, London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1944), pp. 560-66; and Gibson, "The Negro Holocaust," pp. 2-5.
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- ¹⁵ State of Oklahoma, *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, February 28, 2001, "The Tulsa Race Riot," by Scott Ellsworth, p. 43. [Hereinafter, this document referred to as Tulsa Race Riot Commission Report].
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- ¹⁷ Brown, *Stain of Violence*, p. 226.
- ¹⁸ Elliott Rudwick, *Race Riot at East St. Louis: July 2, 1917* (2d ed., Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Hofstadter and Wallace, *American Violence*, pp. 241-45; Demaris, *America The Violent*, pp. 130-33; Boskin, *Urban Racial Violence*, pp. 42-45; and Jules Archer, *Riot!: A History of Mob Action in the United States* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1974), pp. 101-02.

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- ²⁷ Tulsa Race Riot Commission Report, "The Tulsa Race Riot," by Scott Ellsworth, p. 44; Boskin, *Urban Racial Violence*, pp. 45-47; Sloan, *Our Violent Past*, pp. 41-45; Waskow, *From Race Riot to Sit-In*, pp. 21-37; Demaris, *America the Violent*, pp. 136-40; Robert T. Kerlin, *The Voice of the Negro 1919* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1920), pp. 76-79.
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- ³¹ Kerlin, *Voice of the Negro*, pp. 83-85.
- ³² Demaris, *America the Violent*, p. 135, and Waskow, *From Race Riot to Sit-In*, pp. 12-16.
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³⁸ Material for the historical evolution of the riot was gathered from the following sources: Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land*, pp. 45-70, and Tulsa Race Riot Commission Report ("Final Report of the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921," compiled by Danney Goble, pp. 11-12; "History Knows No Fences: An Overview," by John Hope Franklin and Scott Ellsworth, pp. 22-25; "The Tulsa Race Riot," by Scott Ellsworth, pp. 52, 56-88; "Airplanes and the Riot," by Richard S. Warner, pp. 103-08; "Confirmed Deaths: A Preliminary Report," by Clyde Collins Shaw, pp. 109-32; "The Investigation of Potential Mass Grave Locations for the Tulsa Race Riot," by Robert L. Brooks and Alan H. Witten, pp. 133-51; "Riot Property Loss," by Larry O'Dell, pp. 153-60 and accompanying database; "Assessing State and City Culpability: The Riot and the Law," by Alfred L. Brophy, p. 164; and "Chronological Maps of the Tulsa Race Riot" [at back of Commission Report]).

Other works which provide a wealth of information on the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 include: Mary E. Jones Parrish, *Race Riot 1921: Events of the Tulsa Disaster* (Rev. ed., Tulsa: Out on a Limb Publishing, 1998); Eddie Faye Gates, *They Came Searching: How Blacks Sought the Promised Land in Tulsa* (Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 1997); James S. Hirsch, *Riot and Remembrance: The Tulsa Race War and Its Legacy* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002); Tim Madigan, *The Burning: Massacre, Destruction, and the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001); Alfred L. Brophy, *Reconstructing the Dreamland: The Tulsa Riot of 1921* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); [Don Ross], *A Century of African-American Experience, Greenwood: Ruins, Resilience and Renaissance* (No imprint, 2003); and Bob Hower, comp., *1921 Tulsa Race Riot and the American Red Cross: "Angels of Mercy"* (Tulsa: Homestead Press, 1993).

³⁹ Johnson, *Black Wall Street*, pp. 50-51.

⁴⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁴¹ Quoted in Tulsa Race Riot Commission Report, "History Knows No Fences: An Overview," by John Hope Franklin and Scott Ellsworth, p. 24.

⁴² Quoted in Johnson, *Black Wall Street*, p. 71.

⁴³ Material for the aftermath of the riot was gathered from the following sources: Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land*, pp. 71-97; and Tulsa Race Riot Commission Report ("History Knows No Fences: An Overview," by John Hope Franklin and Scott Ellsworth, pp. 21-36; "The Tulsa Race Riot," by Scott Ellsworth, pp. 88-89; "Confirmed Deaths: A Preliminary Report," by Clyde Collins Snow, pp. 109-32; and "Assessing State and City Culpability: The Riot and the Law," by Alfred L. Brophy, pp. 163-64, 176-78).

⁴⁴ Johnson, *Black Wall Street*, p. 30.

⁴⁵ Parrish, *Race Riot 1921: Events of the Tulsa Disaster*, pp. 25, 29, 33.

⁴⁶ Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land*, pp. 103-04.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-07.

⁴⁸ Gates, *They Came Searching*, p. 273.

⁴⁹ Walter F. White, "The Eruption of Tulsa," *Nation*, June 29, 1921, pp. 909-10, reprinted in Boskin, *Urban Racial Violence*, pp. 34-38.

⁵⁰ Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land*, pp. 102-03.

⁵¹ Material for post-riot KKK activities in Tulsa and the State of Oklahoma was gathered from: Tulsa Race Riot Commission Report, "The Tulsa Race Riot," by Scott Ellsworth, pp. 46-49; Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land*, p. 102; Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, p. 298; David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Chicago: Quadrangle Paperbacks/Quadrangle Books, 1965), pp. 49-55; and Jackson, *Ku Klux Klan in the City*, pp. 84-86.

INVENTORY

Survey Area

(See “The Tulsa Race Riot” Maps, page 43)

Historic Greenwood Area

The study area for the 1921 Tulsa race riot reconnaissance survey includes the period’s African American residential/business section of Tulsa, Oklahoma — historically known as Greenwood — located just north-northeast of the Downtown Tulsa Civic Center. According to the U.S. Census Bureau Tulsa’s population in 1920 was 72,075. By 1921 the city’s African American population had grown to almost 11,000. The African American community included two schools (Paul Lawrence Dunbar and Booker T. Washington), one hospital, two newspapers, two theaters, a public library, 23 churches, and three fraternal lodges. Building from its meager beginnings, the vastly expanded Greenwood community of 1921 rivaled the finest African American business districts in America. The Greenwood Chamber of Commerce’s Negro City Directory, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1941, described the growth and early development of the Greenwood community:

From about 1910 to the close of the World War [I] period, Tulsa experienced its greatest era of prosperity when thousands of Negroes streamed in from every state in the Union. With this influx of colored Americans, came the Negro business man, educator, oil prospector, laborer, and domestic. With each bent in a determined effort toward economic betterment, it gave rise in Tulsa to the No. 1 boom venture of the times. In mushroom-like manner homes, schools, churches, organizations, and businesses sprang up over night, it seemed, to gradually envelop the north half of Tulsa. Meanwhile, a vast network of shops, hotels, rooming houses, and stores began to spread along three principal thoroughfares — Cincinnati, Archer, and

Greenwood. Jobs were plentiful, wages were good, there was work for every employable, and the golden face of prosperity smiled in every home.¹

At the time of the 1921 Tulsa race riot the general boundaries of the African American Greenwood community were:

- North** – Midland Valley Railroad Tracks north to Pine Street
- South** – Frisco Railroad Tracks, First Street just off of Archer Street
- East** – Lansing Street
- West** – Cincinnati Avenue beginning at Archer Street and extending to Elgin Avenue

The Frisco Railroad tracks separated Greenwood from the Downtown Tulsa Civic Center and white residential neighborhoods to the south.²

The focal point of the Greenwood community was the intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Archer Street. This geographical location, which would have something of a symbolic life of its own in Tulsa for most of the 20th century, was the key spot of delineation between the city’s black and white worlds. Prior to the race riot the first two blocks of Greenwood Avenue north of Archer, sometimes referred to as “Deep Greenwood,” the “Negro’s Wall Street,” or the “Negro Wall Street of America,” comprised the hub of Tulsa’s black business community. Two- and three-story commercial buildings dotted the thoroughfare, housing Tulsa’s unusually large number of African American entrepreneurs and professionals.³

In 1921 the Greenwood section of Tulsa contained 108 black-owned businesses, including 41 grocers/meat markets, 30 restaurants, 11 boarding and rooming houses, 9 billiard halls,

and 5 hotels. Greenwood also had 33 black professionals, including 15 physicians/surgeons, 6 real estate, loan, and insurance agents, 4 pharmacists, 3 lawyers, and 2 dentists. Twenty-four skilled crafts persons in the community included 10 tailors, 5 building contractors/carpenters/house and sign painters, and 4 shoemakers/shoe repairers. The community's 26 service workers included 12 barbers, 6 shoe shiners, and 5 cleaners/hatters/dyers/pressers.⁴

Some 35 blocks of the Greenwood area, including more than 70% of the residential section and virtually the entire business district, were destroyed by fire during the 1921 Tulsa race riot. In a report on its social and medical relief activities as of December 31, 1921, the American Red Cross reported that approximately 1,256 buildings (1,115 residences and the remainder business properties) were burned and approximately 314 residences were looted and robbed but not burned. The Tulsa Real Estate Exchange estimated \$1.5 million worth of damages and one-third of that in the African American business district. The exchange claimed personal property loss at \$750,000. The Tulsa City Commission meeting minutes from June 14, 1921, to June 6, 1922, reveal that in excess of \$1.8 million in claims were filed against the city, but there is evidence that by July 30, 1921, more than 1,400 law suits for losses upward of \$4 million had been filed.⁵

Two African American residential neighborhoods which largely escaped the conflagration included a small area generally north of Pine Street on the northeast periphery of Greenwood and a small area on the eastern periphery of Greenwood consisting of a few blocks east of the Midland Valley and Santa Fe Railroad tracks generally between King Place on the north and East Davenport on the south.

Area Outside of Historic Greenwood

As part of the reconnaissance survey areas of metropolitan Tulsa outside the general perimeter of Greenwood were studied to determine whether or not historic structures, buildings, and sites that were associated with significant race riot events, or persons significantly associated with those events, remain extant and retain integrity. Areas examined included the Downtown Tulsa Civic Center, white residential areas on the fringes of Greenwood where race riot-related activities occurred, sites that served as processing/collection centers for African Americans during and after the race riot, and locations that have been identified as potential mass grave locations for race riot victims. (See Appendix - "Inventory of Extant Cultural Resources Associated With 1921 Tulsa Race Riot That Are Located Outside Of Historic Greenwood Area.")

ENDNOTES

¹ Appendix D, "Excerpts From the Negro City Directory, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1941," in Hannibal B. Johnson, *Black Wall Street: From Riot to Renaissance in Tulsa's Historic Greenwood District* (Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 1998), p. 243.

² Appendix 3, "Places - Locations of Key Tulsa Buildings and Riot Sites," in Eddie Faye Gates, *They Came Searching: How Blacks Sought the Promised Land in Tulsa* (Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 1997), p. 303.

³ Johnson, *Black Wall Street*, pp. 25-26.

⁴ Appendix 2, "Black Business Establishments and Business Persons in Tulsa as Listed in Tulsa City Directories, 1907, 1909-1914, and 1916-1923," in Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), pp. 115-17.

⁵ Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land*, pp. 69-70, and Robert N. Hower, comp., *1921 Tulsa Race Riot and the American Red Cross: "Angels of Mercy"* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Homestead Press, 1993), p. 171-72, 187.

The Tulsa Race Riot Maps

The “Tulsa Race Riot Maps” were produced by the Oklahoma Historical Society and published in the aforementioned report – State of Oklahoma, *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, February 28, 2001.

To prepare the maps Oklahoma Historical Society examined riot period Tulsa fire insurance/street maps produced by the Sanborn Map Company of Pelham, New York, and applied business and residential names/addresses from a database that had been compiled based on research in: Tulsa city directories (1920-23); the 1920 census; Mary E. Jones Parrish, *Race Riot 1921: Events of the Tulsa Disaster* (Rev. ed.; Tulsa, Oklahoma: Out on a Limb Publishing, 1998); and various other city building and property records and references. Scott Ellsworth, author of *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, (1982), provided historical information and consultation services for the mapping effort.

A brief overview of the database was published in the commission’s aforementioned report of February 28, 2001. However, the entire database — titled “North Tulsa Database” — may be found on microfilm Reel OHS-202 in the Oklahoma Historical Society’s Research Division Library.

The Oklahoma Historical Society mapping effort focused primarily on the Greenwood business area and the most prosperous African American residential areas. The database, however, covered the entire Greenwood area. In the “conclusion section” for the database, its compilers described some of the problems associated with the database research and mapping effort:

Finding the legal ownership for every house or business destroyed in the disaster would be extremely expensive, time-consuming, and probably still inaccurate. The legal addresses are hard to substitute with street addresses of the period. Many of the streets that were there then have either changed names or just do not exist

anymore. The University Center and other projects have eradicated entire neighborhoods and made sifting through the records back to 1921 nearly impossible. The County Courthouse has no way of finding old street addresses for the lots that do not exist anymore. It is possible to obtain a firm handle of certain individual property losses or certain areas of specific interest to the committee or to the public. Assigning value to property that is on the insurance map is not impossible, but much of the property was outside the map and there is no firm evidence of the structures located on those properties. The use of Warrantee Deed Transactions, Building Permits, lists of losses from the period, and Sanborn Insurance Maps can give a good survey of the loss in this area but specifics would be arbitrary.

Survey Area Historic Resources

(See “Photograph Inventory of Historic Greenwood Area Resources”)

An understanding of Greenwood’s post-race riot redevelopment history provides the context for surveying the present-day community’s extant historic resources that are associated with the 1921 Tulsa race riot. Almost immediately after the riot Greenwood’s survivors began rebuilding their community’s business district and residential neighborhoods. On December 30, 1921, approximately seven months after the riot, the American Red Cross reported that the following reconstruction efforts had been completed by Greenwood residents:

- 180 – one-room frame shacks
- 272 – two-room frame shacks
- 312 – three rooms or more, frame
 - 1 – large brick church
 - 2 – basement brick churches
 - 4 – frame churches, one room
- 24 – one story brick or cement buildings
- 24 – two story brick or cement buildings
- 3 – three story brick or cement buildings
- 1 – large theater
- 1 – corrugated iron garage
- 2 – filling stations

The Red Cross assisted in the erection of 13 homes with the use of funds from the "National Association for the Improvement of Colored People." Using its own funds, the Red Cross "transformed" 152 tent homes "into more or less permanent wooden houses." Forty-nine temporary tent covered houses still required conversion "into all wooden ones," and eight churches continued to be housed in Red Cross tents.¹

Thus, within one year of the race riot the majority of the destroyed buildings in Greenwood were reconstructed. Most of the rebuilt structures were sited within the footprints of the buildings that had been destroyed and most closely resembled the pre-riot vernacular architectural characteristics of the Greenwood area. One measure of the amount of reconstruction in Greenwood can be seen by comparing the statistics for black-owned businesses, professionals, skilled craft persons, and service workers in the Greenwood area in the 1920, 1921, and 1922 *Tulsa City Directories*:

	1920	1921	1922
Business Establishments	72	108	83
Professionals	30	33	25
Skilled Crafts Persons	14	24	24
Service Workers	19	26	24

The 1920 *Tulsa City Directory* listed 1,126 residences in the African American section, and the 1921 *Directory* listed 1,149 residences in the area, many of them occupied by more than one person or one family. Initial surveys by the Red Cross found that 1,765 families with a total of 5,366 (a statistic later revised upward to 9,000) persons had been "more or less seriously affected by the race riot and that 563 families were crowded into small quarters with other families." One year later, the 1922 *Tulsa City Directory* listed 1,134 residences in the area.²

Thus, Greenwood once again became a thriving business and entertainment community, and by 1941-42 the area had nearly 20,000 African American residents. In 1942 the revitalized Greenwood commercial district, centered at the

intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Archer Street, was home to 242 black-owned and operated businesses, including 38 grocers, 34 cafes, 28 beauty salons, 16 hotels, 15 tailors and cleaning shops, 12 chili parlors, and 11 barber shops. The Greenwood community was also served by 183 professionals, including 98 teachers, 38 ministers, 12 nurses, 9 physicians, 8 pharmacists, and 8 social workers.³

With glowing pride and civic "boosterism" the 1941 *Negro City Directory* - Tulsa, Oklahoma described the "Tulsa Spirit" of the reconstructed and revitalized Greenwood African American community as being its "greatest single asset" with "no parallel anywhere else in America." The Tulsa Spirit had an "almost uncanny and super-human effect upon its people" and had "the peculiar power of so overwhelming one that he registers a fighting determination to carry on in the face of staggering odds." The *Directory* continued:

Perhaps nowhere else in America is there a single thoroughfare which registers such significance to local Negroes as North Greenwood Avenue in Tulsa. Today . . . Greenwood is something more than an avenue - it is an institution. The people of Tulsa have come to regard it as a symbol of racial prominence and progress - not only for the restricted area of the street itself, but for the Negro section of Tulsa as a whole. . . .

Beginning at East Archer and the M-K-T tracks, this famous thoroughfare runs north to Pine Street, flanked on either side by two miles of teeming business structures. Massed along both sides of Greenwood from Archer to Pine, is unquestionably the greatest assembly of Negro shops and stores to be found anywhere in America. Like the avenue itself, merchantmen have spread their wares from one end of this two-mile long stretch to the other, in unbroken array. Into Greenwood Avenue has come the banker, the baker and the candle stick maker - all intent upon a single purpose - to make things better for himself and his community.

In this age of streamlining, neon signs and fluorescent lighting, Greenwood now presents an almost solid front of gay shops, theatres, night clubs, taverns, bars, etc., which resemble a fairyland at night. It offers business opportunity in every field. . . .

As a business opportunity, Tulsa is considered one of the nation's most favored spots. Unlike most cities of comparable size and location, Tulsa offers business advancement in more than the usual five fields – grocery, café, barbershop, cleaners and undertaking. On the contrary, Tulsa Negroes are very active in the fields of oil brokerage, real estate brokerage, furniture sales and service, jewelry and goldsmiths, electrical appliance sales and service, building contractors, auto tire and supply and general transportation.⁴

The business district remained as the central focus of the African American community until the late 1950s when the economic results of integration and the effects of school desegregation in older neighborhoods diminished and eventually destroyed the vitality of Greenwood as a commercial center. Increasingly, outlying shopping centers attracted Greenwood customers to suburban locations, and thus many of

the businesses along Greenwood Avenue were abandoned during the 1960s and 1970s and the area fell into decline.

By 1978, Tulsa's Neighborhood Regeneration Project described the Greenwood district as an area "that is left today [with] generally abandoned and underutilized buildings, sitting in a sparse population of poor and elderly black[s] awaiting the relocation counselors of the Urban Renewal program."⁵

Beginning in the 1970s urban renewal clearance programs and subsequent Tulsa Redevelopment Authority activities, including construction of new public and private housing, churches, businesses, parks, and water catchment basins, resulted in demolition of extensive sections of the historic Greenwood commercial and residential areas. During this period Interstate 244, a cross-town expressway that intersects Greenwood and isolates its historic business district centered at Greenwood and Archer from the black residential areas to the north, and U.S. 75 (Cherokee Expressway) on the east side of Greenwood, were constructed, thus further fragmenting the historic community.

Beginning in 1982, construction and development of the Oklahoma State University, Tulsa,



Urban renewal bulldozers demolishing Black Wall Street businesses during the 1960s - 1970s. Courtesy of the Greenwood Cultural Center.

campus, in the heart of the historic Greenwood residential community resulted in further demolition of Greenwood's historic residential and business sections. While some areas of historic Greenwood that were cleared during urban renewal have been rebuilt with new construction, entire blocks remain vacant in some areas.

Thus, it is estimated that perhaps only one-third of the street grid in the southern portion of the present-day Greenwood area retains its historic (i.e., 1921) integrity, while perhaps two-thirds of the street grid in the northern part of the area retains its historic integrity.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Bob Hower, comp., *1921 Tulsa Race Riot and the American Red Cross: "Angels of Mercy"* (Tulsa: Homestead Press, 1993), pp. 186-87.
- ² *Tulsa City Directories, 1920-22*, cited in "The African American Section, 1921, Tulsa, Oklahoma," State of Oklahoma, *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, February 28, 2001, "The Tulsa Race Riot Maps;" and Hower, comp., *1921 Tulsa Race Riot and the American Red Cross*, pp. 171-72.
- ³ Appendix F, Table D-2, "Enterprises (Service and Professional) of the Rebuilt Greenwood District as of 1942," in Hannibal B. Johnson, *Black Wall Street: From Riot to Renaissance in Tulsa's Historic Greenwood District* (Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 1998), p. 253.
- ⁴ Appendix D, in Johnson, *Black Wall Street*, pp. 243-46.
- ⁵ Johnson, *Black Wall Street*, pp. 113-16.

MAPS

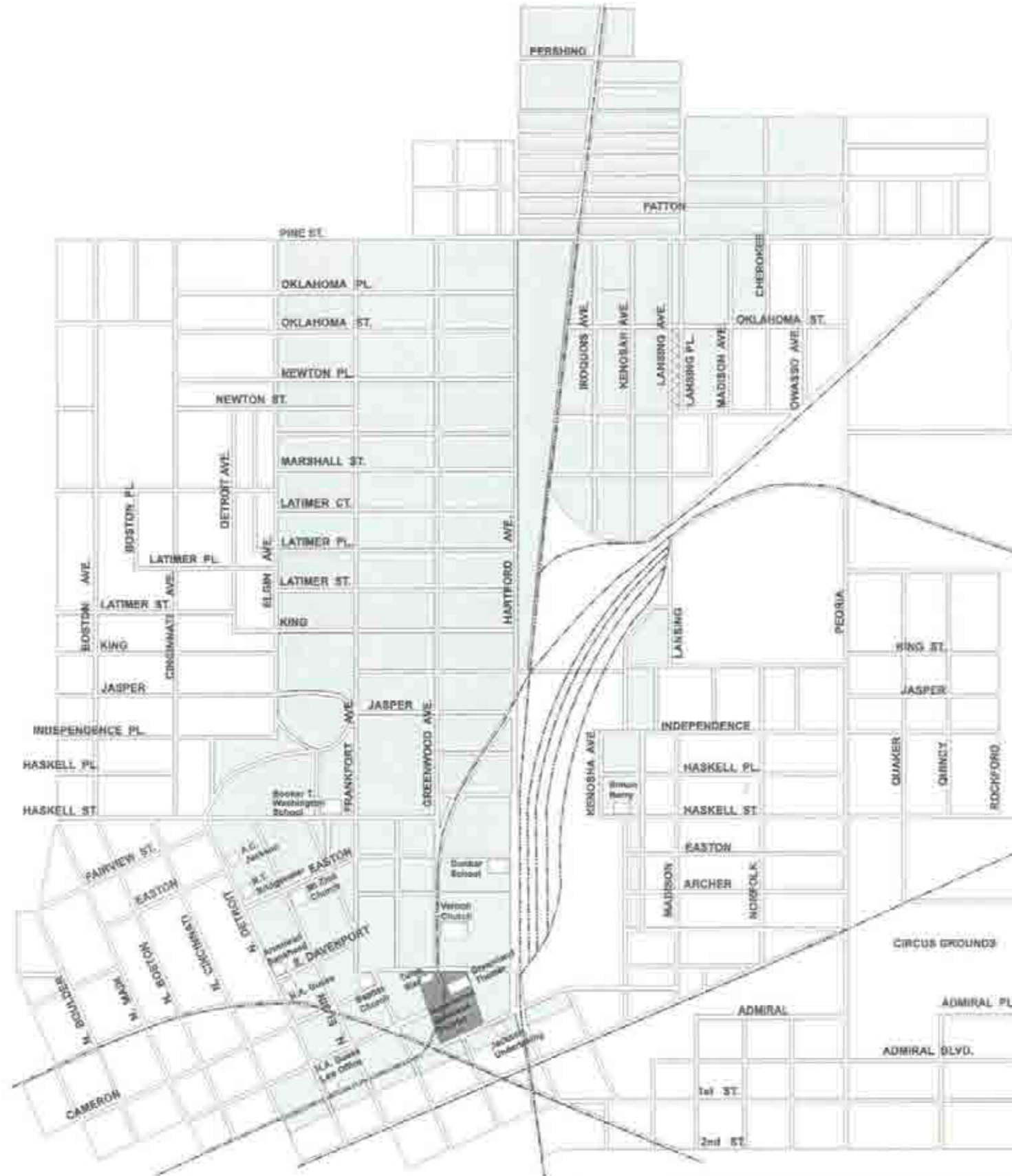
The following maps were produced by the Oklahoma Historical Society and published in the report:
State of Oklahoma, *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*,
February 28, 2001.

The Tulsa Race Riot--Map Legend

	Whites; white mob or crowd		Machine gun -- in hands of Tulsa National Guard
	Advancing or attacking whites		Machine gun -- in hands of white rioters
	White defensive or offensive lines		State troops: out of town National Guard units
	Blacks; black crowd		Buildings or homes on fire
	Retreating or advancing blacks		City blocks which have been burned
	Black defensive line		Airplanes (all flown by whites)
	Black neighborhoods		"Battle" or gunfight
	Tulsa units of the National Guard		
	Tulsa National Guard -- skirmish line		

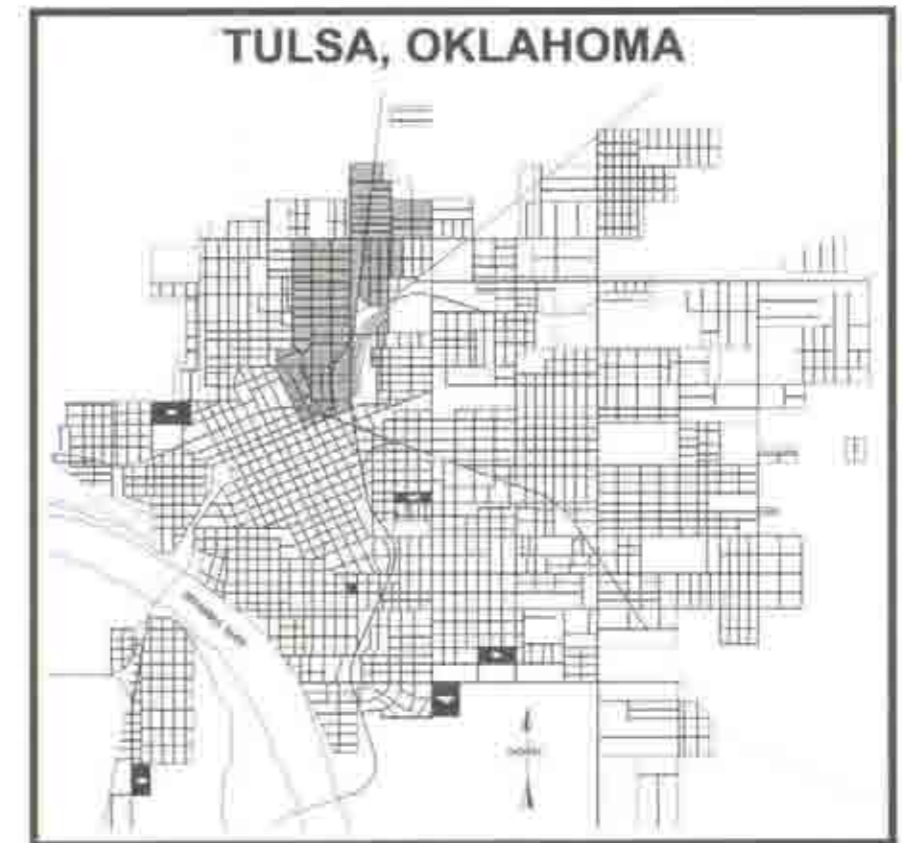
The African American Section, 1921

Tulsa, Oklahoma



The African American section of Tulsa contained 191 businesses prior to the race riot of 1921, which included 15 doctors, a chiropractor, 2 dentists, and 3 lawyers. The residents also had access to a library, 2 schools, a hospital, and a Tulsa Public Health Service. The *Polk City Directory* listed 159 businesses in 1920 and after the riot, in 1922, there were 120 businesses in the directory. In the *City Directory* of 1921, there were 1,149 residences and most of them were occupied by more than one person - or even one family; the 1920 directory reported 1,126 residences. After the riot, the 1922 directory listed 1,134 residences.

The Red Cross reported that 1,256 houses were burned, 215 houses were looted but not burned, and the total number of buildings not burned but looted and robbed were 314. The Tulsa Real Estate Exchange estimated \$1.5 million worth of damages and one-third of that in the black business district. The Exchange claimed personal property loss at \$750,000. Between June 14, 1921, and June 6, 1922, \$1.8 Million of claims were filed against the city of Tulsa and disallowed.



The Seeds of Catastrophe

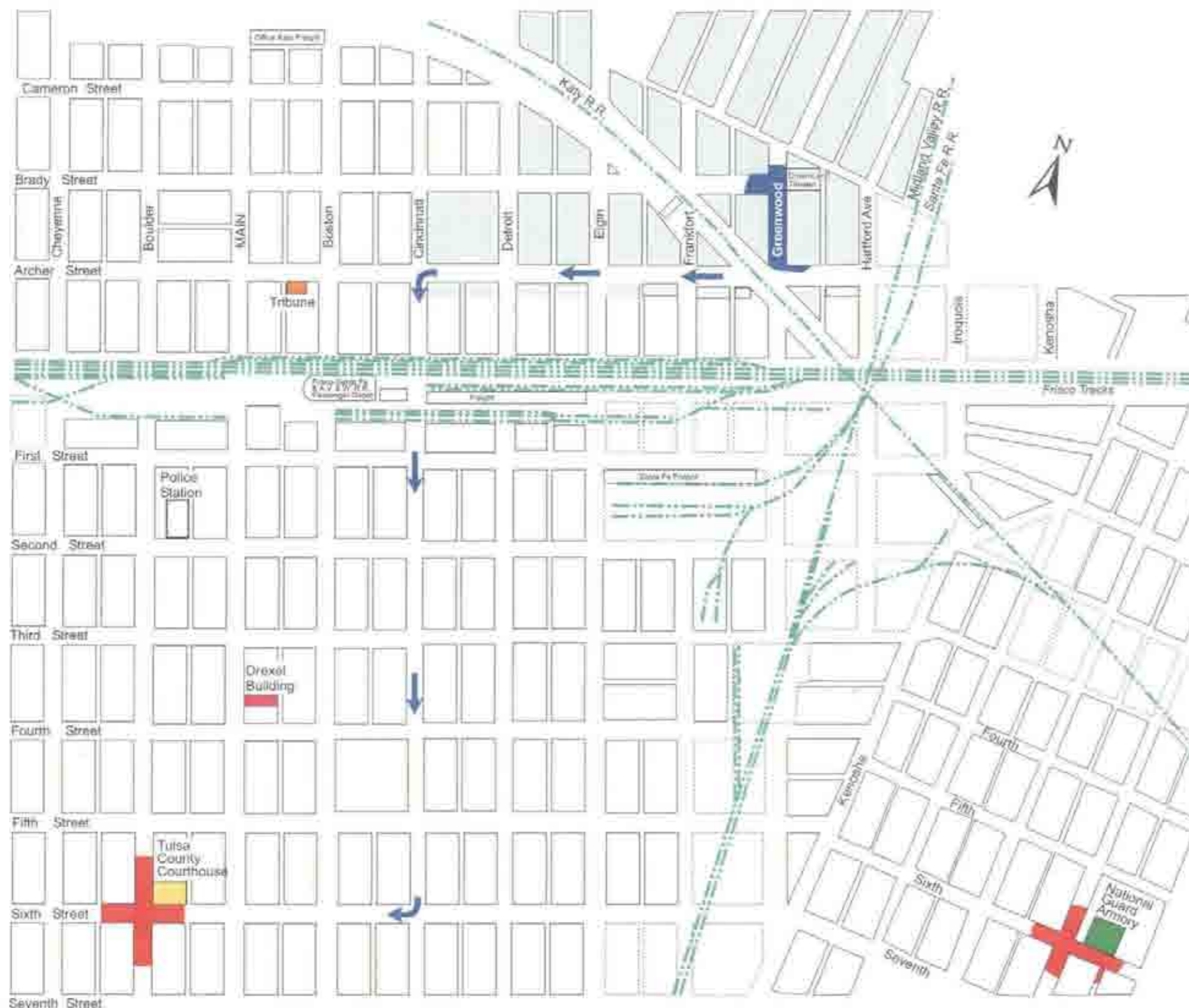
Tulsa, Oklahoma

MAY 31, 1921

3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Partly cloudy - High 87° Low 67°

Sunset 7:34 pm - South winds



The spark that ignited the Tulsa race riot was an alleged assault on Sarah Page, a white teenager, by Dick Rowland, a 19 year old African American who worked in a downtown shoe shine parlor, on Monday morning, May 30, 1921.

The next afternoon, the newspaper ran an inflammatory front-page article claiming that Rowland had attempted to rape Page. More ominously, in a now lost editorial, the paper may have claimed that Rowland, who was now in police custody, would be lynched by whites that evening. The May 31, 1921 edition of the *Tulsa Tribune* rolled off the presses by 3:00 pm.

Whites began to gather outside of the Tulsa County Courthouse, where Dick Rowland was being held, before sunset. The crowd soon grew into the hundreds. At 8:20 pm, three white men entered the courthouse and demanded that the authorities hand over Rowland, but they were turned away.

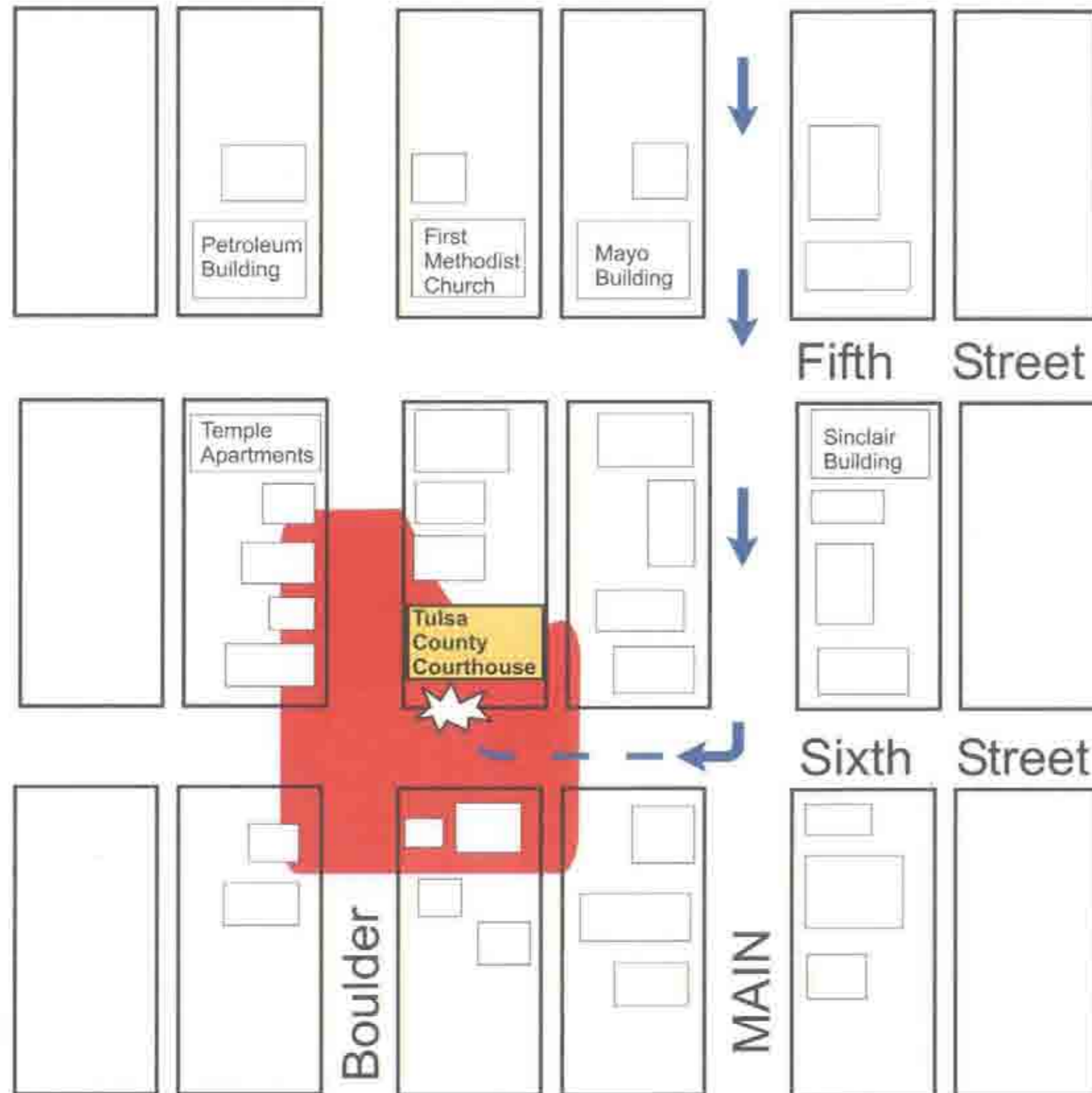
Meanwhile, along Greenwood Avenue, in the heart of the African American district, word of the impending lynching spread. Cries of "We can't let this happen here" were heard as black men and women anxiously discussed how to respond to the oncoming calamity. At 9:00 pm, a group of 25 armed black men traveled by automobile to the courthouse. There, they offered their assistance to the authorities should the white mob attack the courthouse. Assured that Dick Rowland was safe, they returned to Greenwood.

The arrival of the black men at the courthouse electrified the white mob, now more than a thousand strong. Whites without guns went home to retrieve them. One group of whites tried to break into the National Guard Armory, in order to gain access to the weapons stored inside. But a small contingent of armed National Guardsmen, threatening to open fire, turned the angry whites away.

The Riot Erupts

Tulsa, Oklahoma

MAY 31, 1921 10:30 pm



By 9:30 pm on Tuesday evening, the white mob outside the Tulsa County Courthouse had grown to nearly 2,000 persons.

Willard M. McCullough, Tulsa County's new sheriff, tried to talk the would-be lynchers into going home, but the mob hooted him down. McCullough had, however, organized his handful of deputies into a defensive ring around Dick Rowland, who was being held in the jail on the top floor of the building. He also disabled the elevator, and ordered his men at the top of the stairs to shoot any intruders on sight.

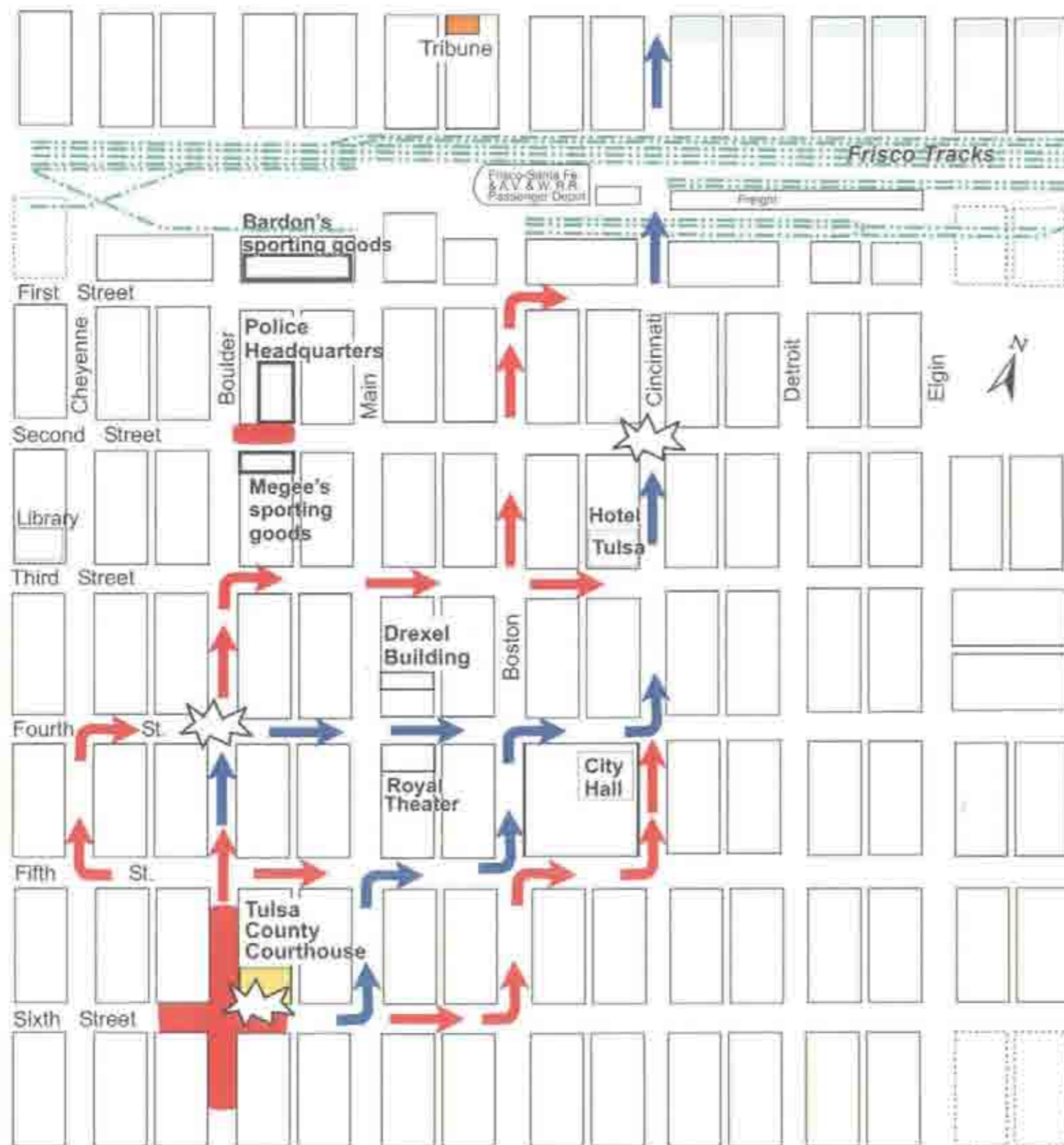
Tulsa police Chief John A. Gustafson later claimed that he too, tried to talk the lynch mob into going home. But, at no time on the afternoon or evening of May 31, did he order a substantial number of his police force to appear, fully armed, in front of the courthouse. Indeed, by 10:00 pm, Gustafson had returned to his office at police headquarters.

In the city's African American neighborhoods, meanwhile, tensions continued to mount over the deteriorating situation at the courthouse. Outside of the offices of the *Tulsa Star*, the city's leading black newspaper, a large group of men and women gathered, debating what to do, and waiting on word of the latest developments downtown. Smaller groups of armed black men also began making brief forays downtown by car, both to try and determine what was happening at the courthouse, as well as to demonstrate their determination to whites that Dick Rowland would not be lynched.

A little after 10:00 pm, when a rumor began to circulate that a white mob was storming the courthouse, a second contingent of armed African American men, perhaps 75 in number, set out for downtown by automobile. Near Sixth and Main Streets, the men got out of their cars and marched, single file to the courthouse. Again, they offered their services to the authorities to help protect Dick Rowland. Once again, their offer was refused.

As the black men were leaving, a white man attempted to forcibly disarm a African American World War I veteran. A struggle ensued, and a shot rang out.

First Blood



Tulsa, Oklahoma

MAY 31, 1921 to June 1, 1921
10:30 pm – Midnight

Almost immediately, members of the white mob — and possibly some law enforcement officers — opened fire on this second contingent of African American men, who returned volleys of their own. The initial gunfire lasted only a few seconds, but when it was over, more than 20 people, both blacks and whites, lay dead or wounded.

Outnumbered more than twenty-to-one, the black men quickly began retreating toward the African American district. With armed whites in close pursuit, heavy gunfire erupted along Fourth Street. A second — and deadlier — skirmish broke out at Second and Cincinnati Street, before the black men, their numbers seriously reduced, were able to head north across the Frisco tracks.

Meanwhile at the courthouse, the sudden and unexpected turn of events had an electrifying effect, as groups of angry, vengeance seeking whites took to the streets and sidewalks of downtown. At police headquarters on Second Street, nearly 500 hundred white men and boys — many of whom, only minutes earlier, had been members of the lynch mob — were sworn in as "Special Deputies."

Shortly thereafter, whites began breaking into downtown pawnshops and hardware stores, stealing guns and ammunition. Dick Bardon's sporting goods store, at First and Main Streets, was especially hard hit, as was J. W. Megee's shop, located across the street from police headquarters. Eyewitnesses later testified that uniformed Tulsa policemen took part in some of the break-ins, handing out guns to whites.

More bloodshed soon followed, as whites began gunning down any blacks who happened to be downtown.

Around midnight, a small crowd of whites gathered — once again — in front of the courthouse. But they did not rush the building.

Night Fighting

Tulsa, Oklahoma

MAY 31, 1921 – June 1, 1921

11:00 pm – 5:00 am

While darkness slowed the pace of the riot, sporadic fighting took place throughout the night of May 31 and June 1.

The heaviest occurred along the Frisco tracks. From midnight until 1:30 am, scores — perhaps hundreds — of whites and blacks exchanged gunfire across the tracks. At one point during the fighting, an inbound train arrived, its passengers forced to take cover on the floor.

A few carloads of whites also made “drive-by” shootings in black neighborhoods, firing indiscriminately into African American residences.

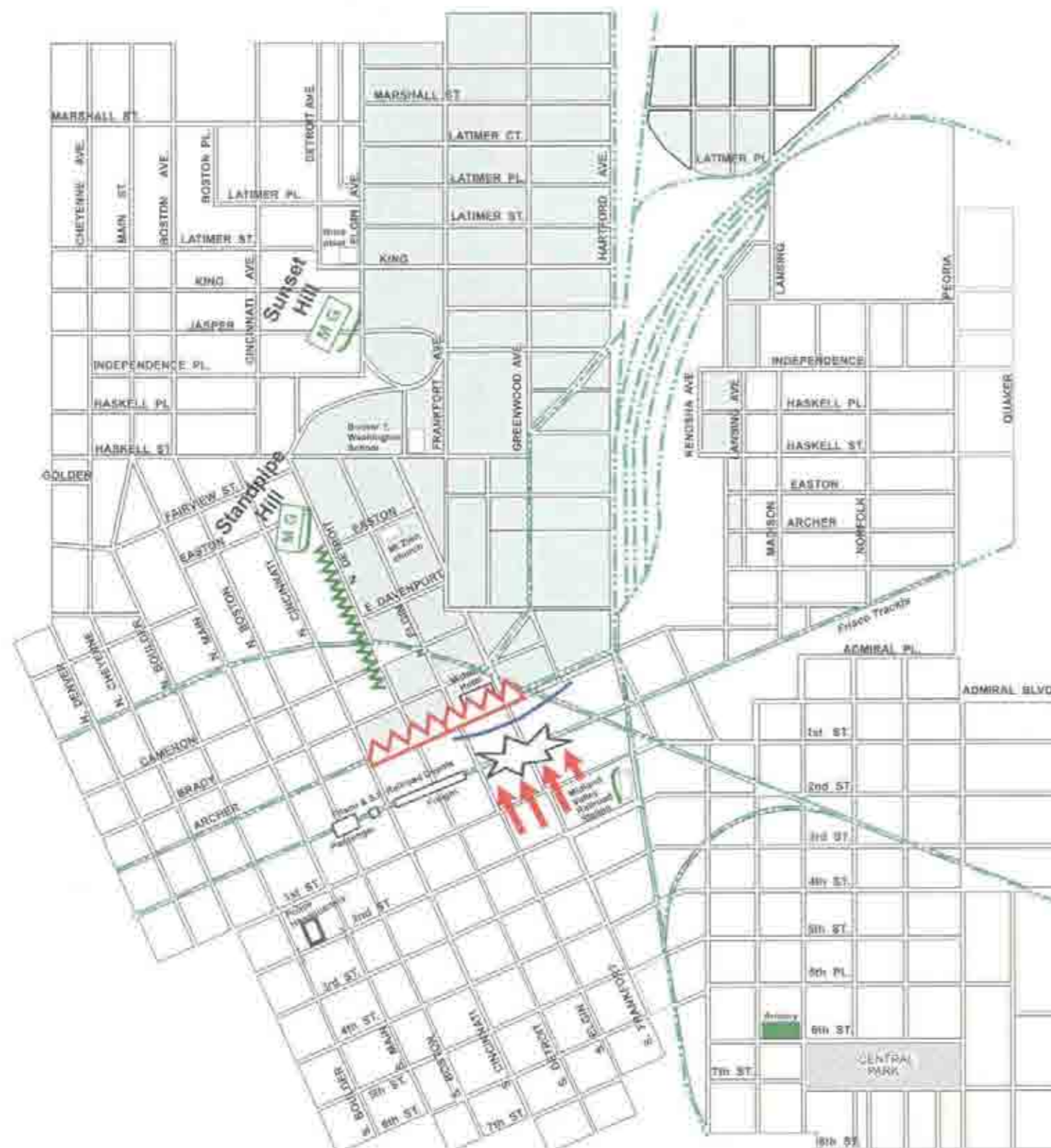
By 1:00 am, whites had set fires in black neighborhoods. African American homes and businesses along Archer Street were the first targets, and when a crew from the Tulsa Fire Department prepared to douse the flames, rioters waved them off at gunpoint. By 4:00 am, more than two dozen homes and businesses, including the Midway Hotel, had been torched.

The pre-dawn hours of June 1 also witnessed the first organized actions by Tulsa's National Guard units. While perhaps as many as 50 guardsmen had gathered at the armory by 11:00 pm, it was not until after midnight that the local commander received official authorization to call out his men to assist the civil authorities.

Initially, the local guardsmen — all of whom were white — were deployed downtown. One detachment blocked off Second Street in front of police headquarters, while others led groups of armed whites on “patrol” of the business district. Police officials also presented the guardsmen with a machine gun, which guard officers mounted on the back of a truck.

Taking the machine gun with them, about 30 guardsmen positioned themselves along Detroit Avenue between Brady Street and Standpipe Hill. There, they set up a “skirmish line” facing the African American district. They also began rounding up black civilians, whom they handed over to the police. Guardsmen also briefly exchanged gunfire with gunmen to the east.

At 3:00 am, reports reached guard officers that white residences on Sunset Hill were being fired upon, resulting in the death of a white woman. Guardsmen, with the machine gun, were then deployed along the crest of Sunset Hill until dawn.



The Invasion of Black Tulsa

Tulsa, Oklahoma

June 1, 1921 5:08 am

During the final pre-dawn hours of June 1, thousands of armed whites had gathered along the fringes of downtown. They were divided into three main groups. One crowd assembled behind the Frisco freight depot, while another waited nearby at the Frisco and Santa Fe passenger station. A third crowd had assembled at the Katy passenger depot. All told, the white rioters may have numbered as many as 10,000.

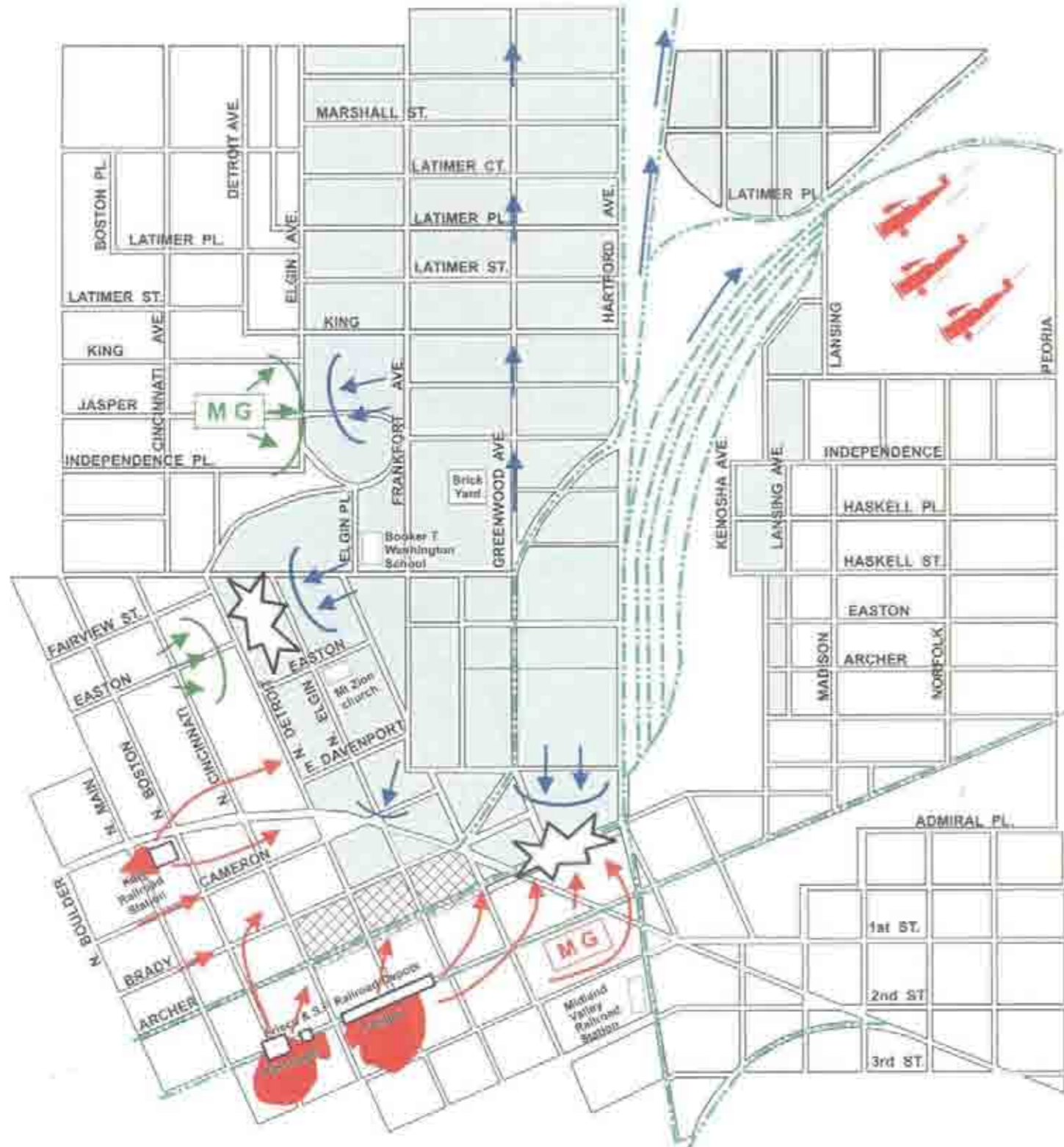
Smaller bands of whites had also been active. One such group hauled a machine gun to the top floor of the Middle States Milling Company grain elevator off First Street, setting up the gun to fire north along Greenwood Avenue.

Several eyewitnesses later recalled that when dawn came, at 5:08 am, an unusual whistle or siren was sounded, perhaps as a signal for the invasion to begin. In any event, the white mobs soon made their move. While the machine gun in the granary opened fire, the white rioters poured across the Frisco tracks. Up at the Katy depot, the stream of whites on foot was soon joined by dozen of other cars, heading east on Brady and Cameron.

While African Americans fought to protect the black commercial district, the sheer numerical advantage of the whites soon proved overwhelming.

As whites poured into the southern end of the African American district, as many as six airplanes, manned by whites, appeared overhead, firing on fleeing blacks.

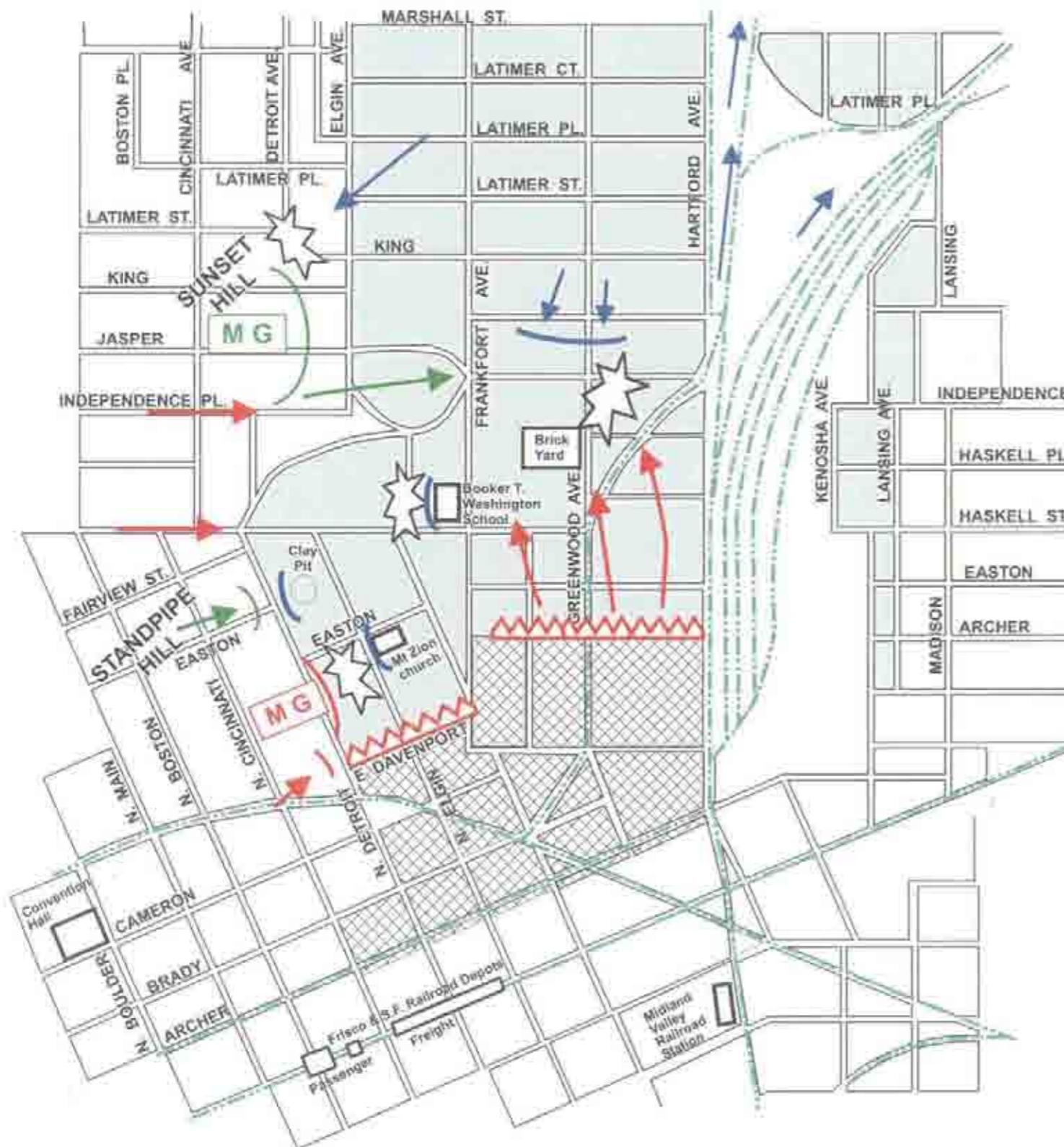
Gunfire also erupted along the western edge of the black community. Particularly fierce fighting broke out along Standpipe Hill, where 40 to 50 National Guard soldiers traded fire with African American riflemen, who set up defensive lines off of Elgin and Elgin Place. On Sunset Hill, the white guardsmen opened fire on black neighborhoods to the east, using both their standard issue 30-caliber 1906 Springfield rifles, as well as the machine gun given them by the Tulsa Police Department.



The Fight for Standpipe Hill

Tulsa, Oklahoma

June 1, 1921 5:30 am – 8:30 am



Eyewitnesses later reported that white men clad in World War I army uniforms — probably members of the “Home Guard,” a loosely organized group of white veterans — were observed setting fires in Deep Greenwood. Others claimed that some Tulsa police officers set fire to black businesses along Archer.

African Americans fought back. Black riflemen positioned themselves in the belfry of the newly completed Mount Zion Baptist Church, whose commanding view of the area below Standpipe Hill allowed them to temporarily stem the tide of the white invasion. But when whites set up a machine gun — perhaps the same weapon that was used at the granary — and riddled the church tower with its devastating fire, the black defenders were overwhelmed. Mount Zion was later torched.

Black attempts to defend their homes and businesses were undercut by the actions of both the Tulsa Police and the local National Guard units, who, rather than disarming and arresting the white rioters, instead began imprisoning black citizens. Guardsmen on Standpipe Hill made at least one eastward march early on the morning of June 1, rounding up African American civilians, before being fired upon near Greenwood Avenue. The guardsmen then returned to Sunset Hill, where they turned over the imprisoned black Tulsans to police officers.

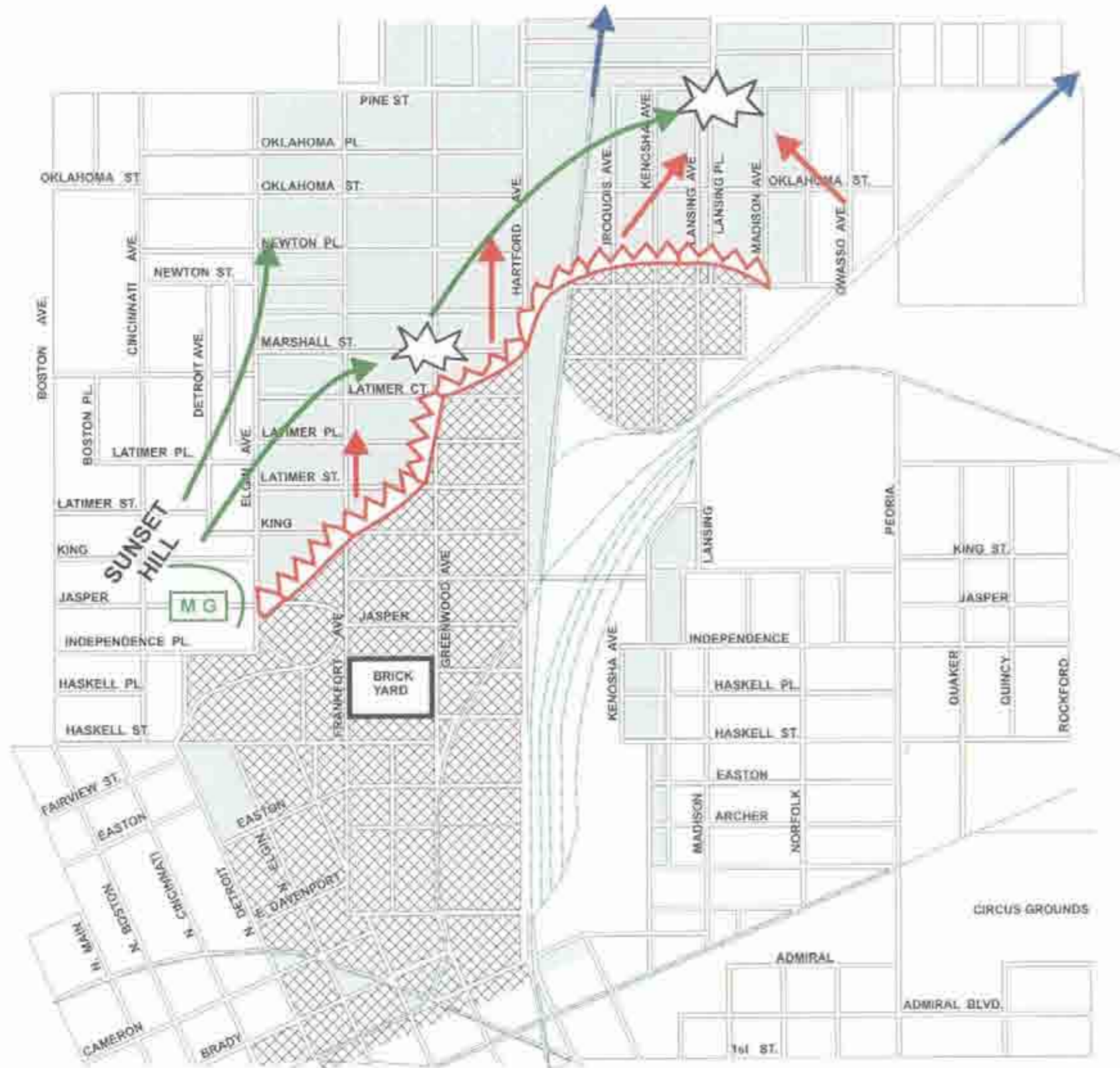
White civilians also took black prisoners, sometimes with murderous results. At about 8:00 am, Dr. A.C. Jackson, a nationally renowned African American surgeon, surrendered to a group of young white males at his home at 523 N. Detroit. Before he stepped off his front lawn, two of the men opened fire, killing him.

A deadly firefight erupted at the site of an old clay pit off Standpipe Hill, where several black defenders went to their deaths fighting. And along the northern edge of Sunset Hill, the white guardsmen briefly found themselves under attack.

Wall of Fire

Tulsa, Oklahoma

June 1, 1921 8:00 am – 9:00 am



As the whites moved north, they set fire to the African American community, including churches, hotels, restaurants, drug stores, doctor's offices, grocery stores, and the black public library. More than a thousand homes were torched, the fires becoming so hot that nearby trees and outbuildings also burst into flames.

The fighting continued — though now with a startling new development. After the firefight with African American gunmen to the north, the National Guard troops on Sunset Hill then joined in the invasion of black Tulsa, one detachment heading north, the other to the northeast.

Initially, the guardsmen met with little armed resistance. About halfway across the district, however, they exchanged fire with black defenders in houses. A second skirmish broke out near the second line, where guardsmen joined with white rioters in assaulting a group of African Americans who were holed up in a concrete store.

And along the city's southern edge, in the well-to-do neighborhood off 21st Street, carloads of white vigilantes started going from house to house, rounding up African American maids and butlers at gunpoint, and hauling them off to internment centers.

Arrival of the State Troops

Tulsa, Oklahoma

June 1, 1921 9:15 am - 11:30 am

The special train from Oklahoma City carrying Adj. Gen. Charles F. Barrett and the 109 soldiers under his command pulled into the bullet-scarred Frisco passenger station at 9:15 am. The soldiers, who arrived armed and in uniform, were all members of an Oklahoma City-based National Guard unit. But in Tulsa they became known, by both blacks and whites, as simply the "State Troops." All of them were white.

While the majority of black Tulsans had either fled to the countryside, or were being held at a handful of internment centers, there were still pockets of armed resistance to the white invasion along the northern edge of the African American district. Perhaps one-third of black Tulsa's homes and businesses were standing, including some of the finest African American homes that belonged to the city's most prominent black citizens.

Led by Adj. Gen. Barrett, one detachment marched to the Tulsa County Courthouse, where an unsuccessful attempt was made to contact sheriff McCullough. Others began taking over custody of imprisoned African Americans — largely domestic workers who lived in quarters on the south side — from armed white vigilantes.

After the failed visit to the courthouse, Adj. Gen. Barrett then went to City Hall, where after conferring with city officials, he contacted Governor J. B. R. Robertson and asked that he be given authority to proclaim martial law.

While the state troopers were occupied downtown, four Tulsa police officers finally arrived at the aforementioned homes of Greenwood's prominent citizens, setting them on fire, and by the time that state troops arrived the houses had been destroyed.



Final Fighting and Martial Law

Tulsa, Oklahoma
June 1, 1921 11:30 am – 8:00 pm

By the time martial law was declared at 11:30 am on June 1, the race riot had nearly run its course. Scattered bands of white vigilantes, some of whom had been awake for more than 24 hours, continued to loot and burn African American homes, but many were simply going home.

A final skirmish occurred around 12:20 pm, when remnants of the white mob converged upon a two-story building near where the Santa Fe railroad tracks cut across the line at Pine Street. For quite some time, African American defenders inside the building had been able to hold off the invading whites, most of whom had gathered along the railroad embankment to the east. But when a new group of whites — armed with high powered rifles — arrived, the blacks were overwhelmed. The building and a nearby store were then set on fire.

Following the martial law declaration, the State Troops proceeded to what remained of Tulsa's African American neighborhoods, disarming whites and sending them away from the district. While black eyewitnesses later condemned both the Tulsa police and the local National Guard units for their actions during the riot, they largely praised the State Troops.

Yet even with the end to the violence, for black Tulsans, a whole new set of ordeals had just begun. Thousands had fled to the country, hiding in the woods, while hundreds more had gathered at the outskirts of the city. Homeless, penniless, and often unsure of the fate of loved ones, those who began to venture back to town soon found themselves placed under armed guard.

Convention Hall having been filled to capacity, black Tulsans were also taken to the Fairgrounds and to McNulty baseball park. A few blacks also found refuge at First Presbyterian Church, and other white churches downtown. Crowds of whites often cheered as the imprisoned African Americans were led away.

Additional detachments of State Troops — namely, National Guard units from other Oklahoma towns — arrived in Tulsa throughout the day, and with their help, the streets were finally cleared. All businesses were ordered to close by 6:00 pm., and one hour later, only members of the military or civil authorities — or physicians and relief workers — were allowed on the streets. Adj. Gen. Barrett later claimed that by 8:00 pm order had been restored.



HISTORIC GREENWOOD AREA RESOURCES

Intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Archer Street - Greenwood Historic District

The Greenwood Historic District, consisting of a small group of buildings — three on the east side and eight on the west side of Greenwood Avenue one block north of Archer Street — was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places by the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Officer in 1980. These historic structures (district includes one modern [1967] noncontributing structure) are all masonry one-to-three red and yellow brick veneer commercial building that were replacements for buildings destroyed during the race riot. The 11 buildings represent the remaining portion of the Greenwood business community that was established during the early 20th century and rebuilt in the aftermath of the riot. The Greenwood Historic District is isolated from the Downtown Tulsa Civic Center and north side residential and south side light industrial areas by distinct boundaries: Frisco and Santa Fe Railroad tracks, Interstate 244, and urban renewal clearance lands. Mostly abandoned during the 1960s, the structures were rehabilitated during the 1980s under an Economic Development Administration grant to the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce



Looking north on Greenwood Avenue from Archer Street toward Interstate 244 bridge.



Looking south on Greenwood Avenue from Interstate 244 bridge toward Archer Street.



West Side of Greenwood Avenue looking north from Archer Street.



West side of Greenwood Avenue looking south from Interstate 244 bridge.



East side of Greenwood Avenue looking north from Archer Street.



East side of Greenwood Avenue looking south from Brady Street.



Rear of historic buildings on west side of Greenwood Avenue looking east from historic site of Royal Hotel on Archer Street.

**Greenwood Cultural Center
(322 North Greenwood Avenue)**



Greenwood Cultural Center - Modern facility completed in 1995. Mabel B. Little Heritage House at far right.



"1921 Black Wall Street Memorial" at Greenwood Cultural Center - Dedicated in 1996.



Mabel B. Little Heritage House at Greenwood Cultural Center – Prior to the 1921 Tulsa race riot Sam and Lucy Mackey built a white two-story frame house at 418 North Elgin Avenue in Greenwood. After the structure was destroyed during the riot, the Mackeys built a two-story brick home on their property which became the center of Greenwood's social life. Perhaps fearing another burning, the Mackeys constructed their new home without wood framing. After the building languished for many years, the Business and Industrial Development Corporation assumed ownership of the structure and obtained funding for its rehabilitation. As a result of the Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, campus, it was determined to move the building to its present location at the Greenwood Cultural Center. The structure could not be moved because of its masonry framing; hence the historic residence was replicated brick by brick at the Greenwood Cultural Center at a cost of nearly \$3.5 million. Opened for use in 1995, the reconstructed building was renamed the Mabel B. Little Heritage House.

Mt. Zion Baptist Church (421 North Elgin Avenue)

Located at 421 North Elgin Avenue (intersection of historic Elgin Avenue and Easton Street and present-day Elgin Avenue and Newton Street), the Mt. Zion Baptist Church was constructed between 1915 and 1921. On April 4, 1921, the first services were conducted in the church building. After its destruction during the 1921 Tulsa race riot, the congregation met in the basement of the burned-out structure under cover of a temporary roof that spanned the basement walls while construction of a new sanctuary above the basement proceeded slowly. On October 21, 1952, the new buff brick church building was dedicated.



Southwest (Front) Façade.

Vernon Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church (311 North Greenwood Avenue)

The Vernon Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church was constructed in 1919. After suffering considerable damage during the 1921 Tulsa race riot, the church structure was rebuilt over its original basement in 1926. A large addition was added to the south façade of the church during the 1970s. The church is located on the east side of Greenwood Avenue across the street from the Greenwood Cultural Center.



North and West (front) Facades.



South and West (Front) Facades Showing 1970s-era Addition.

Greenwood Avenue and Frisco and Santa Fe Railroad Tracks (Approximately one block south of intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Archer Street)

These photos were taken from near the present-day “Oklahoma Eagle Building,” on Archer Street just east of Greenwood Avenue. They look toward the area where a machine gun was located in a granary (not extant) and where whites gathered and crossed the Frisco and Santa Fe Railroad tracks to attack the Greenwood business and residential areas about 5:00 AM on June 1, 1921. The railroad tracks separated the historic African American Greenwood community from the Downtown Tulsa Civic Center and white residential areas to the south and west — a function that they still perform today.



Looking south-southwest toward Downtown Tulsa Civic Center with urban clearance lands in foreground and Greenwood Avenue and railroad tracks in middle ground.



Looking south immediately toward site of granary in which machine gun was emplaced with urban clearance lands in foreground and railroad tracks in middle ground.

Historic Site of Royal Hotel on Archer Street (approximately one block west of Greenwood Avenue)



Looking south toward Downtown Tulsa Civic Center with urban renewal clearance lands in foreground, intersection of Archer Street and South Frankfort Avenue in middle ground, and historic Royal Hotel site at extreme left.



Looking northwest from historic Royal Hotel site on Archer Street toward Standpipe Hill.

Future Site of Dr. John Hope Franklin Greenwood Reconciliation Museum

This three-acre site in the historic Greenwood area (approximately two blocks southwest of the historic intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Archer Street), consists of vacant urban clearance lands. The site is bordered on the north by the Inner Dispersal Loop of Interstate 244, on the south by a parking lot, on the east by Elgin Avenue, and on the west by Detroit Avenue.



Looking north-northeast.



Looking south-southwest.



Looking south-southeast.

Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, Campus

Since its establishment in 1982, the campus of Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, has been developed in the heart of the historic Greenwood residential area.



Modern university building in central campus at historic site of Booker T. Washington High School.



Monument memorializing Booker T. Washington High School.



Looking west along Jasper Street on the Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, campus toward the east side of Sunset Hill.



Looking northwest toward the southeast side of Sunset Hill from Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, campus parking lot.



Looking northwest toward east side of Standpipe Hill (grassy area in foreground belongs to Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, campus) from near Mt. Zion Baptist Church.



Looking south-southeast toward Mt. Zion Baptist Church and Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, campus from Standpipe Hill.



Looking south-southwest from Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, campus parking lot toward Downtown Tulsa Civic Center (Vernon Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church in left-center middle ground and Greenwood Cultural Center in right-center middle ground).

Modern Housing Developments in Greenwood Area



Looking north toward Sunset Hill from Staudpipe Hill.

EVAAUATION OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Criteria for National Significance

The criteria for national significance as defined in the National Park Service's *Management Policies 2001* (Section 1.3.1) were used to assess whether or not the story of, and extant cultural resources associated with, the 1921 Tulsa race riot possess national significance. 'Resources are nationally significant if they meet the following criteria:

An outstanding example of a particular type of resource

Possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our national heritage

Offers superlative opportunities for recreation, for public use and enjoyment, or for scientific study and

Retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of the resource

As stated in the *Management Policies* national significance for cultural resources, such as the story of, and extant resources associated with, the 1921 Tulsa race riot, were also evaluated by applying the national historic landmarks process as delineated in *36 CF Part 65*.

According to the National Park Service's Criteria for Parklands, cultural areas that are considered in evaluating national significance may be districts, sites, structures, or objects that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting our national heritage and that possess a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship,

feeling, and association. Specific examples include:

A resource that is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to and are identified with, or that outstandingly represent the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained

A resource that is importantly associated with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States

A resource that represents some great idea or ideal of the American people

A resource that embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, exceptionally valuable for study of a period, style, or method of construction, or represents a significant, distinctive, and exceptional entity whose components may lack individual distinction

A resource that is composed of integral parts of the environment not sufficiently significant by reason of historical association or artistic merit to warrant individual recognition but collectively composes an entity of exceptional historical or artistic significance, or outstandingly commemorates or illustrates a way of life or culture

A resource that has yielded or may be likely to yield information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures, or by shedding light upon periods of occupation over large areas of the United States

National Significance Evaluation National Significance Analysis

The period between 1896, when the U.S. Supreme Court provided legal sanction to “Jim Crow” legislation in its historic *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, and the early 1920s witnessed one of the greatest periods of racial violence in American history as whites sought to reestablish an ironclad system of white supremacy following the African American surge toward equality during Reconstruction. In the wake of World War I the summer of 1919 ushered in the greatest period of interracial violence that the nation had witnessed in its history and has become known as “The Red Summer” because of the resulting bloodshed. From June to the end of the year there were approximately 25 race riots that resulted in more than 100 African American deaths and thousands wounded and left homeless.

One of the most violent incidents in terms of bloodshed and property loss during the postwar years erupted in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on May 31-June 1, 1921, as rampaging white mobs invaded Greenwood, the city’s segregated African American community, during an 18-hour period. Lured by Tulsa’s oil-based boom economy, blacks had migrated to Greenwood in ever increasing numbers for more than a decade, and by 1921 the African American community of nearly 11,000 residents featured a thriving commercial district that boasted some of the finest black-owned businesses in the southwestern United States. During the immediate postwar years, Tulsa — a city with a noteworthy reputation for lawlessness, lynching, and racial violence — became a tinderbox as a result of postwar social and economic dislocation. Rising racial tensions, fueled by white newspaper sensationalism and threats of an attempted lynching, resulted in an explosion of devastating violence that destroyed virtually every building in Greenwood’s commercial district and left some 35-40 square blocks of its residential area in smoking ruins and nearly 9,000 African Americans homeless.

The mass violence in Tulsa, in effect a “white riot” that exhibited the key characteristics of race riots during the late 19th and early 20th

centuries, ranks not only as one of the most devastating incidents of racial violence in American history but also serves as one of the most noteworthy examples of interracial violence for understanding and interpreting the tragic chapter of America’s race relations during the post-World War I era. Paul A. Gilje, in an authoritative study of race riots in American history, has written that the riot in “Tulsa, Oklahoma, combined all of the worst features of the racial strife of this era.”¹

As a result of the way in which the bodies or riot victims were buried, the number of deaths resulting from the violence is difficult to determine with accuracy. Although the Department of Health’s Bureau of Vital Statistics reported in 1921 that the death toll was 26 blacks and 10 whites, research findings in the 2001 report of the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 indicate that the number of confirmed fatalities was 26 blacks and 13 whites. In their overview history of the race riot which was printed as part of the commission’s 2001 report, historians John Hope Franklin and Scott Ellsworth concluded that considerable evidence exists to suggest that at least 75 to 100 people, both black and white, were killed during the riot. However, just after the riot the NAACP estimated that 50 whites and between 150 and 200 blacks were killed, while Maurice Willows, who directed the relief operations of the American Red Cross in Tulsa following the violence, stated in his official report that the total number of riot fatalities may have been as high as 300.

The number of riot injuries is also difficult to determine. American Red Cross records include the names of 48 whites who passed through hospitals after the riot, although the organizations officials believed the number to be higher. It has been suggested that many whites would not give their names when they were treated for wounds for fear of later being subjected to legal action. Red Cross records also indicate that 183 blacks were given surgical treatment within 24 hours after the riot, with more than 70% of these people being hospitalized. The organization gave first aid treatment to 531 persons, and during the first week after the riot, about 20 doctors (11 of whom were

black) performed 163 operations, 82 of them classified as “major.”

Regarding property loss the American Red Cross reported that 1,256 houses were burned, 215 houses were looted but not burned, and the total number of buildings not burned but looted and robbed was 314. The Tulsa Real Estate Exchange estimated nearly \$1.5 million worth of damages, one-third of that in the business district, and claimed personal property loss at \$750,000. Between June 14, 1921, and June 6, 1922, some \$1.8 million of claims were filed against the city of Tulsa, and by July 30, 1921, more than 1,400 lawsuits for losses upward of \$4 million had been filed.²

While African Americans in Tulsa attempted to cope with the scorched wasteland of vacant lots, crumbling buildings, and burned ruins that had once been their community, blacks on the national scene analyzed the significance of the racial violence and its meaning for American society. Walter F. White, a national NAACP official who would later become its executive secretary and one of the nation’s foremost experts on racial violence, visited Tulsa during the week after the riot. Shocked by what had taken place, he observed in the *New York Call* on June 10, 1921, that “I am able to state that the Tulsa riot, in sheer brutality and willful destruction of life and property, stands without parallel in America.”³ Later on June 29, in an article that he wrote for *The Nation*, White referred to the Tulsa race riot as a “pogrom” and noted:

What is America going to do after such a horrible carnage – one that for sheer brutality and murderous anarchy cannot be surpassed by any of the crimes now being charged to the Bolsheviki in Russia? There is a lesson in the Tulsa affair for every American who fatuously believes that Negroes will always be the meek and submissive creatures that circumstances have forced them to be during the past three hundred years. Dick Rowland [who’s

threatened lynching and black efforts to protect constituted the spark that set off the riot] was only an ordinary bootblack with no standing in the community. But when his life was threatened by a mob of whites, every one of the fifteen thousand [11,000] Negroes of Tulsa, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, was willing to die to protect Dick Rowland. Perhaps America is waiting for a nationwide Tulsa to wake her. Who knows?⁴

Capitalizing on the post-riot racial climate, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) mounted a successful membership recruitment drive in Tulsa and the state of Oklahoma and became a powerful force in the life of the city and state until the mid-1920s after which the organization’s violent reputation led to its demise. Despite escalating KKK violence during 1921-24 in the city and state, it appears that there was never another attempt at lynching a black person in Tulsa County after the riot. At a terrible price, African Americans in Tulsa had shown white Tulsans that they were not going to let lynchings happen there.⁵

As the last major race riot of the 1896-early 1920s era, Tulsa represented a closing chapter to the racial violence that swept America during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although a few race riots would periodically erupt during the 1930s and 1940s, such as those in Harlem in 1935 and 1943 and in Detroit in 1943, major racial conflicts declined dramatically in the United States after the early 1920s. Although another era of widespread racial unrest and violence would occur in the United States during the 1960s, that era’s racial disturbances would exhibit markedly different characteristics than those of the late 1890s and early 20th century. Race riots during the 1960s were characterized by African American violence within ghetto communities as blacks vented their frustrations with continuing discrimination and poverty on ghetto businesses, white police, and white civilians who chanced to be within riot areas.

ENDNOTES

¹ Paul A. Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 114.

² Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), pp. 71-97; State of Oklahoma, *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, February 28, 1921 (“History Knows No Fences: An Overview,” by John Hope Franklin and Scott Ellsworth, pp. 21-36; “The Tulsa Race Riot,” by Scott Ellsworth, pp. 37-102; and “Confirmed Deaths: A Preliminary Report,” by Clyde Collins Snow, pp. 109-32.) [Hereinafter, this document is referred to as the *Tulsa Race Riot Commission Report*].

³ Quoted in Tulsa Race Riot Commission Report, “History Knows No Fences: An Overview,” by John Hope Franklin and Scott Ellsworth, p. 24.

⁴ White, “The Eruption of Tulsa,” *Nation*, June 29, 1921, pp. 909-10, reprinted in Joseph Boskin, *Urban Racial Violence*, pp. 34-38.

⁵ Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land*, pp. 102-03.

Integrity Evaluation Analysis

Integrity is defined as the ability of a property to convey its significance. Properties must retain essential physical features that enable them to convey their historic significance. All properties must retain the essential physical features that define both why a property is significant and when it was significant. These are the features without which a property can no longer be identified as, for instance, a building, structure, site, or landscape associated with the 1921 Tulsa race riot.

During the 1921 Tulsa race riot approximately 70% of Greenwood's residential area and virtually its entire business district were destroyed. Within one year of the race riot, however, the majority of the destroyed buildings in Greenwood were rebuilt. Most of the reconstructed buildings were sited within the footprints of the structures that had been destroyed and most closely resembled the Greenwood area's pre-riot vernacular architectural characteristics. Thus, reconstruction of Greenwood's residential neighborhoods and business section is a significant part of the 1921 Tulsa race riot story because it is testimony to the resilience and fighting determination of the community's African American residents to carry on in the face of staggering odds.

Since the 1970s the historic residential and business areas of Greenwood in which the events of the 1921 Tulsa race riot occurred have been impacted by urban renewal clearance programs, Tulsa Redevelopment Authority activities, interstate highway construction, and development of the Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, campus. While some areas of historic Greenwood that were cleared during urban renewal have been rebuilt with new construction, entire blocks remain vacant. Moreover, much of the historic street grid pattern, particularly in the southern portion of present-day Greenwood, has been changed. Thus, the Greenwood area retains only a few original buildings, structures, and sites that have association with the 1921 Tulsa race riot. As so many of these buildings, structures, and sites have

been lost, it is particularly important to recognize the ones that have survived.

Because many of the historic resources associated with the 1921 Tulsa race riot were destroyed during the event itself and the Greenwood area has been subjected to significant alteration since the 1970s, integrity cannot be evaluated by usual standards. Instead, integrity should be evaluated in a manner analogous to that of the Japanese-American war relocation centers during World War II (Draft, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Historic Landmarks Survey, National Register, History and Education, Japanese Americans in World War II: A National Historic Landmark Theme Study July 2004) in which many of the centers' buildings, structures, landscapes, and sites have disappeared.

There are seven aspects or qualities that, in various combinations, define integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Decisions about historic integrity require judgments about whether a property today reflects the spatial organization, physical components, and historic associations that it attained during its period of significance. The importance of these aspects within the context of this survey is as follows:

Location: Location is the place where the significant activities that shaped a property took place. Most properties will remain in their original location by virtue of their scale. In some cases, individual buildings, structures, sites, or landscapes that were elements of larger properties may have been removed, destroyed, or reconstructed, but the overall property may still retain its integrity if it generally conforms to the original construction and/or site plan and retains the ability to illustrate the property's evolution through time.

Although the 1921 Tulsa race riot area has been impacted by urban renewal clearance and redevelopment programs, interstate and freeway construction, and development of the Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, campus, the African American Greenwood community

retains its historic “downtown” center at the intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Archer Street where significant riot-related events occurred. The Frisco Railroad tracks and the intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Archer Street that separated Greenwood from the Downtown Tulsa Civic Center and white residential neighborhoods to the south in 1921 still delineate the city’s black and white worlds. Topographical features, such as Standpipe Hill and Sunset Hill, both of which played significant roles during the race riot, are still discernible, although their integrity has been compromised by construction of roads and buildings.

Although 35 blocks of business and residential structures were destroyed in Greenwood during the race riot, most of the buildings were reconstructed within one year, the majority in the footprint and closely resembling the pre-riot vernacular architectural characteristics of the structures that had been destroyed. Therefore, extant structures that were rebuilt in the aftermath of the riot, such as those in the Greenwood Historic District at the historic intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Archer Street, retain this aspect of integrity because they illustrate the significant reconstruction/rebuilding effort undertaken by residents of the Greenwood community and thus depict a direct relationship to the riot story. The Mt. Zion Baptist and Vernon Chapel African Methodist Episcopal churches, which were rebuilt on the historic foundations of structures destroyed during the race riot, also contribute to the quality of location. Thus, the 1921 Tulsa race riot area retains a high degree of this aspect of integrity.

Design: Design is the combination of natural and cultural elements comprising the historic form, plan, and spatial organization of a property. Design includes such elements as organization of space, proportion, scale, technology, ornamentation, and materials. Design results from decisions over time about land use, roadways, buildings, and structures and their relationship to one another.

Integrity of design for the 1921 Tulsa race riot should be judged based on the overall design of the area. The integrity of individual buildings, structures, sites, and landscapes should also be considered, but given the extremely small number surviving elements from this area, the area as a whole should be the standard for determining whether integrity of design is retained. Because of rigid segregation the historic Greenwood community constituted a self-contained and largely self-sustaining community. In considering its integrity of design, buildings, structures, sites or landscapes, and other elements (or their remains) that contributed to its community life should be considered in assessing integrity of design. Division of the community into functional business and residential areas was an important element, and the ability of the area to convey this quality should be considered in assessing integrity of design.

The historic buildings in the Greenwood Historic District, the Mt. Zion Baptist Church, and the Vernon Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church retain integrity of design. However, urban renewal clearance and redevelopment programs, interstate and freeway construction, and development of the Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, campus in the heart of the historic Greenwood residential area have had significant impacts on the overall design integrity of the Greenwood community. Approximately one-third of the street grid in the southern section of present-day Greenwood reflects its 1921 pattern, while perhaps two-thirds of the grid in the northern section retains its historic location. Thus, the Greenwood community retains a low degree of this aspect of integrity.

Setting: Setting is the physical environment of a historic property. Whereas location refers to the specific place where a property was built or an event occurred, setting refers to the character of the place in which the historic property is located.

The 1921 Tulsa race riot area setting should include the urban character of the Greenwood business and residential community in which the riot occurred and should consider how the

community was situated within the context of the Tulsa metropolitan area. Much of the original urban setting in which the riot occurred should remain and elements of the extant urban landscape should illustrate the relationship of the riot area to the Tulsa Downtown Civic Center and adjacent white residential areas. Division of Tulsa into segregated white and black residential and business areas and development of Greenwood as a segregated and largely-self sustaining African American community within the context of greater downtown Tulsa was a critical element that provided the context for the race riot, and the ability of the present-day community to convey this concept should be considered in assessing the integrity of the area's setting. Thus, the elements that illustrate the division of the two worlds are particularly important.

The Greenwood business section, centered at Greenwood Avenue and Archer Street and within 1 mile of the Downtown Tulsa Civic Center, historically constituted, and continues to constitute, a "downtown" within the "downtown" of Tulsa. Furthermore, the two "downtowns," along with the extant Frisco Railroad tracks, were, and continue to be, key features that delineate the city's black and white worlds. The historic Greenwood area was separated from white business and residential areas by Sunset and Standpipe Hills on the west; these topographical features, although compromised by recent road and residential development, still remain as visible landmarks from which one can obtain perspective on the setting of the historic Greenwood residential community.

The general segregated Greenwood community boundaries that existed in 1921 are still much in evidence today: Pine Street to the north; Archer Street and the Frisco tracks to the south; Cincinnati Avenue on the west; and Lansing Avenue on the east. The historic and present-day segregation is pronounced in subtle landmarks. Greenwood Avenue does not exist in white neighborhoods south of Archer Street; to the north of Pine, in what was historically an all-white area, it is called Garrison. Thus, the 1921 Tulsa race riot area retains a high degree of this aspect of integrity.

Materials: Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. Retaining integrity of materials requires evidence that sympathetic materials have been used during the course of subsequent reconstruction.

Most of the materials associated with the 1921 Tulsa race riot are gone as a result of the riot itself or more recent urban renewal and redevelopment, highway and freeway construction, and development of the Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, campus. Most of the materials associated with pre- and post-race riot construction in Greenwood are gone, although the reconstructed buildings in the Greenwood Historic District, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, and Vernon Chapel African Methodist Church retain a degree of this aspect of integrity. Nevertheless, the 1921 Tulsa race riot area, along with its buildings and structures, retain a low degree of this aspect of integrity.

Workmanship: Workmanship is exhibited in the ways people have fashioned their environment for functional and decorative purposes and refers to the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history. Workmanship is also of importance for illustrating a time period associated with an event. This quality is most often associated with architecturally important properties; in the case of properties associated with the 1921 Tulsa race riot, however, vernacular or expedient construction may be the sense of workmanship that is important.

The workmanship exhibited in the extant reconstructed buildings in the Greenwood Historic District illustrate vernacular architectural characteristics of the pre- and post-1921 Tulsa race riot era. Moreover, the inscribed date "1923" on one of the buildings on the west side of Greenwood Avenue in the historic district, as well as dates inscribed in the cornerstones of the Mt. Zion Baptist and Vernon Chapel African Methodist Episcopal churches, testify to the rebuilding effort and illustrate the practice of dating construction work in concrete

and marble. Although retention of such features enhances integrity of workmanship for a property and the historic buildings in the Greenwood Historic District exhibit a degree of workmanship that harkens back to the 1921 Tulsa race riot era, the area retains a low degree of this aspect of integrity.

Feeling: Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical and natural features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character. The cumulative effect of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship creates the sense of past time and place. Alterations dating from the historic period add to integrity of feeling while later ones do not.

The 1921 Tulsa race riot area expresses a high degree of this quality through the combination of the Greenwood community's overall location and historic setting within the urban context of the Tulsa metropolitan area and Greenwood's relationship to the Downtown Tulsa Civic Center. Although most of the resources associated with the race riot are gone, the remaining topographical features of the area, such as Standpipe and Sunset hills, together with the extant Frisco Railroad tracks and surviving historic street grid pattern and buildings (Greenwood Historic District and Mt. Zion Baptist and Vernon Chapel African Methodist Episcopal churches), convey a sense of the magnitude of the riot when one compares what is there today with the 35-block area of residences and businesses that were destroyed during the riot.

Association: Association is the direct link between an important historic theme, event, or person and a historic property. A property retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer. Integrity of association will exist in cases where features remain to convey a strong sense of connectedness between the property and a contemporary observer's ability to discern the historical activity which occurred at the location. Continued use and occupation help main-

tain a property's historic integrity if traditional activities (i.e., continuation of the Greenwood community) are carried on. Standing up to white attack in defense of their commercial and residential community during the 1921 Tulsa race riot resulted in a sense of racial and family pride for Greenwood's African American residents. Rebuilding and reconstruction of the Greenwood business and residential community by its determined citizenry in the aftermath of the violence reinforced the community's sense of pride, resilience, identity, and self-confidence. Although most of the resources associated with the race riot are gone, one still may obtain a sense of the riot's magnitude by comparing what is there today with the 35-block area that was burned. Recent endeavors, such as establishment of the Greenwood Cultural Center at 322 North Greenwood Avenue, and current plans to construct the Dr. John Hope Franklin Greenwood Reconciliation Museum near the historic Greenwood business district, have resulted, and will continue to result, in reinforcing the community's identity, self-awareness, and integrity by linking the past and the present. Thus, the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot area retains a high degree of this aspect of integrity.

Conclusion

The 1921 Tulsa race riot, along with its associated extant resources, is nationally significant because it is "an outstanding example of a particular type of resource" and "possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our national heritage." Furthermore, the race riot, along with its associated extant resources, is nationally significant under National Historic Landmark Criterion 1 – "Properties that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or that outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained."

Resources associated with the 1921 Tulsa race riot area retain a relatively high degree of four aspects or qualities of integrity — location, set-

ting, feeling, and association, although the area generally retains a low degree of three aspects of integrity — design, materials, and workmanship. The area of Greenwood that retains the highest degree of integrity and contains the largest concentration of extant resources associated with the race riot and its commemoration includes the following components: (1) Greenwood Historic District; (2) Greenwood Cultural Center; (3) Mt. Zion Baptist Church; (4) Vernon Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church; (5) Greenwood Avenue and Frisco and Santa Fe Railroad Tracks; (6) Historic Site of Royal Hotel on Archer Street; and (7) future site of Dr. John Hope Franklin Greenwood Reconciliation Museum.

This national significance conclusion is supported by Dr. William M. Tuttle, Jr., a professor of American Studies at the University of Kansas, who provided the National Park Service with an evaluation of the 1921 Tulsa race riot on August 11, 2004. In his report Tuttle concluded that the riot was an event of “supreme national significance” and “might well be the most significant race riot in United States history.”

Potential Management Strategies for Resource Protection

Because the 1921 Tulsa race riot possesses national significance, and elements of the race riot area retain some aspects or qualities of integrity, Congress could authorize the National Park Service to conduct a special resource study to: (1) further study questions regarding the area’s integrity; (2) evaluate the area’s suitability and feasibility for inclusion in the national park system; and (3) consider various management strategies for ensuring protection, preservation, and interpretation of the race riot and its associated resources. Based on information that has been gathered to date, the 1921 Tulsa race riot might have some potential for future affiliation with the National Park Service. Because of a significant loss of integrity throughout the study area, designation as a national historic land-

mark, national historic site, or national historical park is problematic. A more likely scenario might be that of a national memorial or an affiliated area of the National Park Service. Each of these categories of affiliation with the National Park Service is described below.

National Historic Landmarks Generally a national historic landmark is a site, building, or historic district that possesses national significance and retains physical and architectural integrity. These sites commemorate and illustrate the history of the United States. Most of these landmarks are privately owned and can receive technical as well as financial assistance from the National Park Service through cooperative agreement. The National Historic Landmark Program is administered by the National Park Service to encourage the preservation of our nation’s most important places.

National Historic Sites Generally, a national historic site contains a single historical feature that was directly associated with its subject. Derived from the Historic Sites Act of 1935, a number of historic sites were established by Secretaries of the Interior, but most have been authorized by acts of Congress.

Manzanar National Historic Site in Owens Valley, California, was established as a unit of the national park system in 1992 by Congress. The national historic site protects and interprets the historical, cultural, and natural resources associated with the relocation and internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Only three of more than 800 original buildings are extant: the Japanese-style sentry post and police post buildings and the auditorium (all three buildings were constructed by evacuees). The overall site plan is largely intact and much of the road system remains. Walls, foundations, sidewalks, steps, landscaping features (including gardens and concrete ponds), ditches, and trash concentrations are numerous. The camp cemetery and 1943 memorial marker are extant. Footings of seven of the eight camp watchtowers remain, and portions of the barbed wire fence surrounding the cen-

tral area of the camp are present.

Washita Battlefield National Historic Site in western Oklahoma was established as a unit of the national park system in 1996. The national historic site protects and interprets the site where 7th U.S. Cavalry under Lt. Col. George A. Custer destroyed Peace Chief Black Kettle's Cheyenne village just before dawn on November 27, 1868. Black Kettle, still honored as a prominent leader who never ceased striving for peace even though it cost him his life, and more than 100 Cheyenne were killed or captured. Although the strike was hailed at the time by military and many civilians as a significant victory aimed at reducing Indian raids on frontier settlements, it remains controversial because Indians and whites labeled Custer's attack a massacre. The national historic site comprises the core of the battlefield and is believed to include the site of Black Kettle's encampment, Custer's command post, and troop and Indian positions recently discovered during surveys of the battlefield. The Black Kettle Museum in nearby Cheyenne, Oklahoma, contains exhibits about the Cheyenne and the Battle of the Washita.

Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site was established by Congress as a unit of the national park system in 2000 to commemorate the November 29, 1864, attack by Col. John M. Chivington and approximately 700 U.S. volunteer soldiers on a village of some 500 Cheyenne and Arapaho people camped along the banks of Big Sandy Creek in southeastern Colorado. Although the Cheyenne and Arapaho believed they were under the protection of the U.S. Army, Chivington's troops attacked and killed about 150 people, mainly women, children, and the elderly. Ultimately, the massacre was condemned following three federal investigations.

Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site was established to recognize the national significance of the massacre in American history and its ongoing significance for the

Cheyenne and Arapaho people and descendants of the massacre victims. The legislation authorized establishment of the national historic site once the National Park Service has acquired sufficient land from willing sellers to preserve, commemorate, and interpret the massacre. Currently, the majority of land within the site's authorized boundary is privately owned and is not open to the public. The National Park Service is working in partnership with The Conservation Fund, the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, and the state of Colorado toward establishment of the national historic site.

National Historical Parks This designation generally applies to historic parks that extend beyond single properties or buildings.

New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park in Louisiana was established by Congress as a unit of the National Park System in 1994 to celebrate the origins and evolution of America's most widely recognized indigenous musical art form. Through interpretive techniques designed to educate and entertain, the park seeks to preserve information and resources associated with the origins and early development of jazz in the city widely recognized as its birthplace.

In recent years the National Park Service has taken a deeper look at the intangible resources associated with American culture. These resources are "cerebral kinds of parks" – parks that may be more of a "state of mind" than historic houses, monuments, trees, and animals. One of these "cerebral parks" is New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park.

Visitors can begin their New Orleans jazz experience at the park's visitor facility located within the French Quarter. This orientation facility features exhibits, an indoor and outdoor stage for live public performances and interpretive programs, and video documentaries. Visitors can obtain the latest information on the best places to experience the people, places,

events, and stories associated with New Orleans jazz.

The park continuously works to establish partnerships with, and provide assistance to, a diverse group of local, state, and national organizations involved in jazz history and performance. These partnerships assist the historical park in carrying out its mission of identifying historic resources, coordinating educational programs, and promoting a broad range of activities.

National Memorials National memorials commemorate a historic person or episode and need not occupy a site historically connected with its subject.

Johnstown Flood National Memorial was established by Congress in southwestern Pennsylvania as a unit of the national park system in 1964 to commemorate the Johnstown Flood of 1889 in which 2,209 people died as a result of a break in the South Fork Dam. Two worn abutments are all that remain of what was one of the largest earthen dams in the world in 1889. The old lake-bed behind the dam and the quiet Little Conemaugh River give little indication of the awesome power released the day the dam broke, causing the deadliest flood in American history. The South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club (a group of wealthy Pittsburgh industrialists and businessmen that had purchased the abandoned reservoir, repaired the old dam, and raised the lake level to create an exclusive and somewhat secretive retreat) Historic District preserves eight of the original cottages and the 1889 clubhouse in the town of Saint Michael at the edge of the old lake-bed near the national memorial.

The USS Arizona Memorial in Honolulu, Hawaii, was established as a unit of the national park system in 1980 to honor those who died in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. This memorial, designed by architect Alfred Preis, marks the spot where the USS Arizona was sunk during the attack. The

memorial structure spanning the mid-portion of the sunken battleship consists of three main sections: the entry and assembly rooms; a central area designed for ceremonies and general observation; and the shrine room, where the names of those killed on the Arizona are engraved on the marble wall. The memorial is owned by the U.S. Navy and administered by the National Park Service under a cooperative agreement.

Flight 93 National Memorial in southwestern Pennsylvania was established as a unit of the national park system in 2002 to commemorate the passengers and crew of Flight 93, who, on September 11, 2001, gave their lives to thwart a planned attack on the nation's capital. One of the most powerful elements of the Flight 93 story is the rural Pennsylvania landscape where the airplane crashed. This landscape of small communities, rolling farmlands, and wooded hills is the setting for experiencing and understanding the events of that day.

Pursuant to the establishing legislation a Flight 93 Memorial Task Force was established to provide a voice for all interested and concerned parties in planning and designing the memorial. The Task Force nominated members for the Flight 93 Advisory Commission and serves as the Commission's operational arm. To connect the story of Flight 93 to this landscape, the Flight 93 Memorial Task Force created a Resource Assessment Committee. Some of the committee's initial work was to identify important features of the landscape that are necessary for understanding the story. Some of these features include the impact site, the surrounding areas (including a cathedral grove of hemlocks), and a natural bowl or basin in the topography that surrounds the impact site. The task force, National Park Service, and The Conservation Fund continue to work closely with local landowners, township and county officials, and other partners to ensure that important elements of the landscape are protected, local planning is con-

ducted to secure an appropriate setting for the national memorial, and the impact on area residents is minimized.

Affiliated Areas In an Act of August 18, 1970, the national park system was defined in law as “any area of land and water now or hereafter administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the National Park Service for park, monument, historic, parkway, recreational or other purposes.” The law specifically excluded “miscellaneous areas administered in connection therewith,” that is, those properties that are neither federally owned nor directly administered by the National Park Service but which used National Park Service assistance.

The affiliated areas comprise a variety of locations in the United States and Canada that preserve significant properties outside the national park system. Some of these have been recognized by acts of Congress, while others have been designated national historic sites by the secretary of the interior under authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935. Importantly, the National Park Service does not own nor manage these resources. However, all of the areas can draw on technical or financial aid from the National Park Service. Examples of Affiliated

Areas include:

Chicago Portage National Historic Site, Illinois — A portion of the portage between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River, discovered by French explorers Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet, is preserved and interpreted here. Administered by Cook County.

Father Marquette National Memorial, Michigan — The memorial commemorates the life and work of Father Jacques Marquette, French priest and explorer. It is located in Straits State Park near St. Ignace, Michigan, where he founded a Jesuit mission in 1671 and was buried in 1678. Administered by Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Department of State.

International Peace Garden, North Dakota — Peaceful relations between Canada and the United States are commemorated here. North Dakota holds the 888-acre U.S. portion for International Peace Garden, Inc., which administers the area for North Dakota and Manitoba.

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APPENDIX A

Inventory of Extant Cultural Resources Associated With 1921 Tulsa Race Riot That Are Located Outside of Historic Greenwood Area

In addition to the 1921 Tulsa race riot area, other extant buildings, structures, and sites in Tulsa have significant associations with the racial violence that occurred on May 31-June 1, 1921, and could be used to interpret important elements of the race riot story within the broader historic context of the City of Tulsa. Such properties, which retain varying degrees of integrity, include the following:

Oaklawn Cemetery

In 1921 Oaklawn — located between 8th and 11th Streets and Madison and Peoria Avenues near Downtown Tulsa but outside of the Greenwood area — was the city's municipal cemetery. Mortuary records indicate that 21 African American riot victims were buried in the cemetery. At that time, the cemetery was segregated by race, and blacks were buried in the western-most section. Construction of the Cherokee Expressway (Interstate 44) undoubtedly claimed the western section of the cemetery. Currently, there are markers for two blacks who died during the riot in the African American section of Oaklawn, but it is not known if the placement of the headstones for these graves is accurate. Reports of mass interments of riot victims being buried at Oaklawn in unmarked graves have led to investigations of portions of the cemetery to locate such burials, but no mass grave locations have been identified.



Looking west from Oaklawn Cemetery toward Downtown Tulsa (Cherokee Expressway is visible at the western edge of the cemetery).

Newblock Park

Newblock Park — the reported site of mass burials of 1921 race riot victims in unmarked graves — is located adjacent to Downtown Tulsa and less than 1 mile from the Greenwood section. It is bounded on the south by the Arkansas River, on the east by a residential area and 7th Street, on the north by Charles Page Boulevard, and on the west by city property. At the time of the 1921 race riot, Newblock Park comprised a substantial amount of open land that was used in part for Tulsa's landfill, incinerator, and water pumping/treatment system operations. Today, Newblock Park is dramatically altered from the way it appeared in 1921; much of the park has been developed for recreational activities and as "greenspace."

There have been numerous unverified accounts of victims of the riot being buried in mass unmarked graves 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 Tulsa's official records documenting a mass grave or human remains being found in Newblock. Investigations of areas of the park have not identified the location of any graves.



Looking east/southeast from the west edge of Newblock Park.

Frisco and Santa Fe Railroad Freight Depot

Significant riot action occurred at and near the Frisco and Santa Fe Railroad Depot, which was located just south of the railroad tracks between South Cincinnati and South Elgin Avenues (present-day address is 2 South Elgin Avenue). Although in somewhat deteriorating condition, the structure appears to retain a relatively high degree of integrity.



Southeast Façade.



Northwest Façade.

Drexel Building

The alleged attempted rape of a 17-year-old female elevator operator by a 19-year-old African American male in the four-story Drexel Building [center of photo] at 317 South Main Street in Downtown Tulsa on Monday morning, May 30, 1921, set the stage for what would become the 1921 Tulsa race riot. The present-day four-story business and office building at this address has undergone considerable renovation and remodeling and retains little historic integrity.



Front façade of Drexel Building.

Tulsa National Guard Armory

The arrival of African American men at the county courthouse during the evening of May 31 electrified the white mob that had gathered there. Whites without guns went home to retrieve them. One group of whites tried to break into the national guard armory (on 6th Street between Owasso and Norfolk Avenues) to gain access to the weapons stored inside. However, a small contingent of armed national Guardsmen, threatening to open fire, turned the angry whites away. The armory, which was replaced by a much larger facility at the Tulsa County Fairgrounds in 1936, currently serves as the headquarters for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 577.



Front and west facades of the Tulsa National Guard Armory.

Tulsa Convention Hall

On the morning of June 1 martial law was declared in Tulsa and most African American Tulsans were taken into "protective custody" and marched to the city's Convention Hall, located at 105 West Brady Street (at the intersection of Brady Street and North Boulder Avenue). As the day wore on, however, more and more blacks were taken into custody and new "internment centers," such as McNulty Baseball Park (not extant) and the Fairgrounds (area either greatly altered or not extant), were established to house the incarcerated riot victims. The Tulsa Convention Hall, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, was built in 1914. Although the structure has been altered and currently functions as the Brady Theater, it retains a fairly high degree of integrity.



Front and southeast facades of the Tulsa Convention Center.

Tulsa Municipal Building

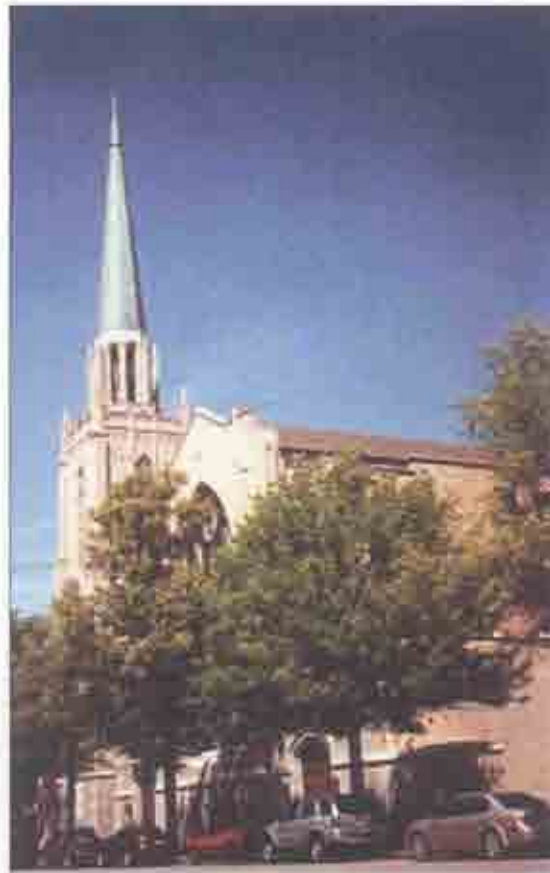
Located at 4th Street and Cincinnati Avenue in the Downtown Tulsa Civic Center area, the Municipal Building, which retains a high degree of integrity and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, was constructed in 1917. The structure served as the seat for Tulsa city government during the 1921 race riot. It was vacated in 1969 and rehabilitated in 1973 for use as a private office building.



North and east facades of Tulsa Municipal Building.

First Presbyterian Church

Located between 7th and 8th Streets and South Boston and South Cincinnati Avenues in Downtown Tulsa, the First Presbyterian Church provided refuge for African Americans as the Greenwood residential area burned on June 1. Church structures were completed at this site in 1885 and 1910.



Looking north from the intersection of 8th Street and South Boston Avenue.

Brady Mansion

This mansion at 620 North Denver Avenue, a replication of Robert E. Lee's home at Arlington, Virginia, was the home of W. Tate Brady, a wealthy and powerful member of Tulsa's establishment. In 1921 the North Denver Avenue vicinity was an upper class white residential area less than 1 mile west of Greenwood and only about six blocks from Sunset Hill. A Tulsa city incorporator and one of its first aldermen, Brady built the first hotel in the city in 1903, where Democrats headquartered and laid plans to control the constitutional convention leading to statehood that provided the legal foundation for segregation. A member of the Ku Klux Klan, Brady's political associations extended from City Hall, to the Oklahoma Governor's office, and into the White House. He was vilified by African American riot victims for fermenting the tragedy and leading the conspiracy to steal their land following the 1921 race riot. While serving as vice-chairman of the city's reconstruction committee, Brady led the effort to push African Americans from their lands and redevelop the burned-out Greenwood area for light industrial purposes by sponsoring the infamous Fire Ordinance No. 2156 that would have prevented blacks from rebuilding their homes and businesses. The Brady Mansion is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing resource to the Brady Heights Historic District.



Front façade of the Brady Mansion.

Tulsa Tribune Building

Located at East 20 Archer Street (between North Main Street and North Boston Avenue about 10 blocks west of Greenwood Avenue), the Tulsa Tribune published an inflammatory article and editorial in its May 31 afternoon edition that would ultimately lead to the 1921 race riot. Richard Lloyd Jones purchased Tulsa's first daily newspaper, the Tulsa Democrat, formerly the New Era, in 1919, renaming it the Tulsa Tribune. The newspaper was printed in a small two-story building on the same land that is the site of the present building. The present building, constructed in 1924 and expanded in 1929, was considered Oklahoma's largest and most modern newspaper facility. The building has been rehabilitated and remodeled for residential lofts and apartments.



Front and west façade of Tulsa Tribune Building.



As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has the responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.