

Appendix VI

The Scott Burton and William Donnegan Murders: The Lynching of Two Innocent Black Men in Illinois' Capital City, August 14-15, 1908

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Part III: The Second Lynched Victim of Springfield's Race Riot: Mr. William Donnegan¹

During that first night of violence, after experiencing an horrific night of terror few had experienced in their life, many Blacks fled Springfield. Others sought refuge at the Armory, many with the limited worldly possessions they could carry (*Illinois State Register*, 8 August 1909, p. 5). On Saturday late afternoon/early evening of the second day of rioting in Springfield, hearing that a number of Black families had sought refuge at the Armory, a large crowd that had gathered downtown proceeded to that facility with the intent to run them out of town. Organized by Raymer and “Slim” Humphry, the mob approached the Armory, and were driven off by a small group of Illinois militia—who rolled out two Gatlin guns (fast firing, large caliber “machine” guns that could fire rounds as fast as the user could crank the handle)—and pointed them at the mob. Not too unsurprisingly, the mob backed down and sought an easier target—William Donnegan and his family located at Spring and Edwards Streets only a few blocks south of the Armory. Although the militia pursued the mob with the Gatlin guns, the troops were ordered to not use the guns on the civilian mob, and they returned to the armory. After re-arming themselves, the militia continued their pursuit of the mob, unfortunately arriving too late to save the elderly Donnegan.² Apparently, the mob’s anger was spurred by Donnegan’s success as a businessman, as well as his marriage to a white woman.³

William Donnegan, a shoemaker (and/or cobbler) by trade, was a respected member of the Springfield community whose claim to fame included being friend and cobbler to Abraham

¹ William’s family name has several variations in spelling. Historically, during the 1840s, it appears that the name was spelled “Donigan” (and/or “Donegan”). More recently, family and historians have used the spelling of “Donnegan.” The 1860 *Springfield City Directory* has listings for individuals named both “Donegan” and “Donnegan.” Except for rare instances, we have opted to use the spelling of “Donnegan.”

² After returning to the Armory, apparently there were some issues with sufficient arms and a supply of ammunition for the militia men. Only outfitted with side arms, sufficient rifles and ammunition were not available. Nonetheless, eight soldiers followed in pursuit of the large mob intent on violence and on its way to Donnegan’s residence.

³ Other successful Black families in Springfield most likely were concerned for their safety during these initial encounters as well. Although William Florville (Fluerville) had died many decades earlier, in 1868, his son William LaRue Florville was one of the wealthiest Black men in Springfield at the turn-of-the-century and owner of a large portion of land comprising the commercial Levee district at the time of his death in 1868. William LaRue Florville, his son, died in 1921.

Lincoln. William Donnegan was the youngest child of Leanna Donnegan Knox, a strong-willed, free-Black woman who moved from Kentucky to Illinois in the mid-1840s and raised a large, successful family often known for their outspoken voices and activist actions in support of racial equality and social justice during the nineteenth century. Unbeknown to many of his white neighbors, William Donnegan was an active participant and one-time “conductor” on the Underground Railroad during the 1850s (Harris 1908). Unfortunately, although William has gone down in history as being an unfortunate victim of the 1908 race riot in Springfield, little has been written regarding Donnegan’s early life in Springfield, let alone in his birthplace of Kentucky. This historical sketch attempts to correct these shortcomings, and with the accompanying historical sketch of Leanna Donnegan Knox (William’s mother) highlight the significance of the extended Donnegan family and their struggle for race equality in mid-century Illinois.

Genealogical research suggests that William Donnegan was born in Christian County, Kentucky in circa 1828 (or 1829).⁴ William’s father reportedly was a man named Wyley Donigan, a Black man purportedly born in Christian County, Kentucky in 1790, and who died in 1839.⁵ Similarly, little is known about the early life of William’s mother, Leanna Donigan. Unfortunately, Leanna’s maiden name is unknown. Leanna is often noted as having been born in Hopkinsville, the county seat of Christian County, in 1794. Although oft-cited as having been born in Christian County, Kentucky, the 1880 U.S. Census of Population suggests that both Wylie and Leanna had been born in Virginia.⁶ Wyley and Leanna Donigan had seven children, the youngest of which was William Kaves Hamilton (1829-1908).⁷ Leanna, was a “free woman of color,” as she had been born the child of a white woman. As Leanna’s mother was a white woman, her offspring were also free upon birth no matter the race of the father. Similarly, any children of Leanna, a mulatto woman living in Kentucky in the 1810-20s, were also born free. Such was the case with William and his six siblings, and unlike many of his Black brethren in Kentucky,

⁴ William’s year of birth is uncertain, as sources vary. Upon his violent death at the hands of the mob in August 1908, the local newspaper carried a short biographical statement claiming that William was born in Christian County, Kentucky on March 16, 1828, and that he immigrated to Springfield in 1845 (*Illinois State Register*, 17 August 1908, p. 2). The 1900 U.S. Census of Population suggests his birth year was 1829. Similarly, although his place of birth is cited as Christian County, current research hints at his birth having been in what is today Todd County, Kentucky. Leanna’s name is variously spelled as Leana, Leanna, Leannah, as well as Lee Ann.

⁵ Information regarding William’s father has been obtained from various Ancestry.com family trees, none of which give a source of information for his name, or birth/death dates. This author has not been able to verify a man named Wyley Donigan and/or his marriage to Leanna.

⁶ The 1880 U.S. Census of Population suggests that both of William’s parents (i.e. Wyley and Leanna) had been born in Virginia. The 1900 U.S. Census of Population suggests that his father, presumably an enslaved individual, had been born in Africa, whereas his mother was born “at sea.” Unfortunately, the source of this basic information has not been verified, other than with various family trees published on Ancestry.com (cf. the Stone Family Tree; <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/170875781/person/192226237447/facts>). Of particular concern is information regarding William’s father Wyley, which has not as yet been verified.

⁷ Caroline (1811-1892) was the firstborn of Wyley and Leanna’s children. Subsequent children of Wyley and Leanna included Nancy (1815-1855), Spencer (1817-1890), Nelson Green Wyley (1820-1865), Grace Narcissa (1824-1879), Melissa (1827-1897), Presley L. (1828-1885), and the subject of this research—William Kaves Hamilton (1829-1908).

William Donnegan was born free—a “free man of color” never having personally experienced the burden of living the life of a slave.

The earliest records found documenting the Donnegan family in Kentucky is the 1830 U.S. Census of Population for Todd County, Kentucky, which is located adjacent to, and to the east of Christian County.⁸ In that document is a household lacking a surname and identified solely by the name of “Free Loann” [sic, “Free Leann”].⁹ Within this household were a single female between the ages of 24 and 35 (presumably Leanna), four male children between the ages of 10 and 23 (two of whom were probably Spencer and Nelson Green Wiley; two additional of which are unidentified), two females between the age of 10 and 23 (presumably Caroline and Nancy), two males between 1 and 9 (presumably Presley and William), and two females between one and 9 (presumably Grace and Melissa).¹⁰ The 1830 Census for Todd County enumerated eleven families with Black heads of households. Of these eleven households, two were comprised solely of enslaved individuals.¹¹ Of the nine free Black families individually listed in the 1830

⁸Todd County was established in April 1820, with Elkton as the county seat. The county was created from splitting off portions of the adjacent Logan County to the east and Christian County to the west. Elkton, the county seat, is located approximately midway between Russellville (the Logan County seat) and Hopkinsville (the Christian County seat). Geographically, the county is split between the northern high country (often referred to as the Highlands) and the low country to the south. The Highlands are known for their steep slopes and rugged terrain whereas the southern low country is characterized by some of the better farmland in Kentucky, farmland that was well suited to tobacco production. The Elk Fork of the Red River begins north of Elkton and flows in a southeasterly direction. The Russellville—Hopkinsville Road, passing through Elkton, is the divide between these two regions.

In June 1847, just prior to moving to Illinois, Leanna sold a 60-acre parcel of ground she appears to have acquired from her husband Wyley. This land, which may have been the location in which the young family had lived, was located “on [the] headwaters of big Whippoorwill.” The upper reaches of the Big Whippoorwill Creek are located north/northeast of Elkton, immediately east of the Elk River and within the Highlands region of Todd County, Kentucky. This farm appears to have been in the vicinity of Daysville, Kentucky. Daysville, located on the Russellville Road five miles east of Elkton, was established in circa 1833. “In quite an early day the Cumberland Presbyterians used to hold camp-meetings at a place known as the Hebron Camp Ground, which was located about one mile west of where Daysville now stands. Here large annual gatherings were held for many years, and subsequently a society was organized at this point, and a church built which was known as the Hebron Church” (https://kentuckygenealogy.org/todd/daysville_todd_county_kentucky.htm; Battey 1884). In his autobiography, Peter Cartwright speaks of early missionary work among the Blacks of this region at an early date (1810s-20s) (Cartwright 1857; see “Leanna Donnegan: Free-Woman of Color, and Matriarch of Springfield’s Activist Donnegan Family,” Mansberger and Stratton (n.d.).

⁹ The online census transcription suggests that the name was “Free Loann” and not “Free Leann” (USCB 1830).

¹⁰ This census return is for the “non-stated” portions of Todd County. This refers to the more rural areas, and not within the separate enumerated area of Elkton. Logan County was established in 1792, with Russellville the county seat. Christian County was established in 1797, with Hopkinsville the county seat. Both counties are located in the region known as the Pennyroyal (and/or Mississippi Plateau) of central Kentucky, adjacent to the Kentucky-Tennessee border. The 1800 Second Census of Kentucky enumerated 2,201 white citizens, and 297 enslaved Blacks in Christian County. At that time, Logan County contained 4,939 white citizens, 775 enslaved individuals, and 93 free Blacks. The presence of 93 free Blacks probably included the Donnegan family.

¹¹ These consisted of the Martha Reden and Thomas McDougal households, with 12 and 11 enslaved individuals living in each house, respectively. Several additional households in the county at the time, with white heads of households, had free Blacks living within the household as well. For example, the Reverend W. K. Stuart had two enslaved Blacks and one free person of color living within the same household.

census of Todd County, Free Leann's was the only one with the head of the household listed as a woman.¹² As such, it would appear that the Donnegan children, may have been born in what was Todd County, not Christian County.

Enumerated in the 1840 U.S. Census of Population of the adjacent Christian County was the "Jo Knox" household, which was listed in the "non-stated," presumably rural area of the county (not within Hopkinsville). At that time, the family consisted of nine individuals—five being free Blacks (presumably the Donnegan family members), and four being enslaved individuals (presumably the Knox family members). The "free color persons" probably included Leanna (approximately 46 years of age at the time), a male 10-23 years of age (presumably Presley or William), one female 10-23 years of age (presumably either Melissa or Grace), and two males 1-9 years of age. In 1840, William would have been approximately 11-12 years of age at this time. Living together as a family with Leanna at this time were four enslaved individuals who included one male 36-54 years of age (presumably Joel Knox, who was by this time presumably married to Leanna), one female 24-35 years of age, and two male children less than ten years of age. Potentially, the young enslaved adult female and two young enslaved males were children of Joel's from a previous marriage. This relationship between the free and enslaved family members of this family suggests that Leanna had purchased her husband and potentially some (if not all) of his children, and had not emancipated them.¹³

Life in Kentucky during the 1840s for free-Black individuals had continued to become more and more restrictive with time. In the spring 1847, Leanna petitioned the courts for emancipation documents so that she could leave Kentucky and resettle in Illinois. For whatever reason, Leanna had not formally pursued a court-issued decree of emancipation for her and her immediate family, as her daughter Caroline had done earlier. Potentially suggesting a sense of urgency, Leanna pursued another avenue to document her legal status. On April 27, 1847, twenty-one prominent citizens of Hopkinsville, Christian County, Kentucky signed a letter attesting to the fact that Lee Ann Donnegan was a free woman of color. The letter described Leanna's physical attributes, that she was traveling with her enslaved husband Joe Knox, son Presly [sic] and grandson Leeander, daughter Caroline Lee (and her husband and their children). The letter noted that Leanna had a large family of children, "among whom sons Spencer & Wiley & daughter Narcissa" had already "removed to Illinois." Although her papers mention the fact that Spencer, Wiley, and Narcissa had already relocated to Illinois, nowhere is their

¹² The 1830 U.S. Census of Population for Christian County indicates only six households of free Blacks living within the county, with five of them in Hopkinsville. Unfortunately, no leads were found in the 1820 census for Christian, Todd, or Logan Counties.

¹³ This practice of a free woman of color purchasing and owning her husband was not unique. The Springfield Hubbard family, also from Kentucky, had the same family dynamics at the time they left Kentucky, with a free Black woman who owned her enslaved husband (Hubbard Family Story Board, African American History Museum, Springfield, Illinois). For information on Free-Blacks in early Christian County: <https://nkaa.uky.edu/nkaa/items/show/2309>. Woodson notes that "It is hardly believed that a considerable number of Negroes were owners of slaves themselves..." (Woodson 1924:v). Whereas most of the Black ownership of enslaved individuals was probably along philanthropic lines, generally a husband (a free Black man) purchased his wife and/or children, and/or the wife purchased her husband. In such cases, if the husband did not emancipate his wife, any children born of their union were considered slaves. With free women of color, the fact that their husbands were enslaved individuals did not affect the status of their children, as they were considered free.

reference to her son William, nor her daughters Nancy and Melissa. Leanna and her extended family immigrated to Illinois sometime shortly after, arriving in St. Clair County by mid-1848.

Limited archival information suggests that Nancy, Melissa, and William previously had immigrated to Illinois prior to Leanna and Joel. Nancy probably arrived in Springfield with her husband John Rolling Hargrave sometime prior to January 1841 (as her first-born child was born in Illinois in late January 1841). John Hargrave was a successful, Jamaican-born barber in Springfield. Similarly, Spencer most likely arrived prior to his mother and step-father as well, as he was instrumental in the establishment of the African Methodist Church, in Springfield in 1843 (*Illinois State Journal*, 1 July 1934, p. 2; 5 August 1956, p. 44). Information published at the time of William's death suggests that he had arrived in Illinois, presumably Springfield, in 1845, perhaps with his brothers Spencer and Wiley, as well as his sisters Nancy and Narcissa (*Illinois State Register*, 17 August 1908, p. 2). Unfortunately, emancipation records for Nancy, Melissa, or William have not been located. Nonetheless, it would appear that part of Leanna's family (William, Spencer, Wiley, Nancy, and Narcissa) had preceded her arrival to Illinois by approximately three to seven years, and had settled in Springfield (not rural St. Clair or Madison County) beginning with Nancy and her husband John Hargrave in circa 1841.

William continues to be rather elusive in civic records during the latter 1840s and early 1850s. Although the 1850 U.S. Census of Population documents several members of his family, including his mother and step-father in Springfield, the young William (who would have been approximately 21 years of age at the time) has not been located in the 1850 census of Sangamon County, or elsewhere in Illinois. The earliest civil records relating to William Donnegan, and documenting his presence in Springfield, are marriage records that suggest he was married in Springfield for the first time on October 5, 1852 to a woman named Charlotte Cox.¹⁴ Charlotte was the 22-year old mulatto daughter of Thomas Cox, a local barber from Tennessee (USCB 1850).¹⁵ Unfortunately, little is known about Charlotte Cox and her marriage to William Donnegan. Subsequent records suggest that Charlotte and William may have had two children. The first, born in circa 1852, was a son named Charles. The second, born in circa 1855 or 1856, was a son named Thomas Spencer Donnegan. William and Charlotte remained married through circa 1855-56.¹⁶

¹⁴ According to the *Illinois State Register*, William was married three times, and he had one child each with each of his wives (for a total of three children).

¹⁵ The 1850 U.S. Census of Population enumerated the Cox household. Living within the Cox household were Charlotte's parents (Thomas and Almira), and three siblings (Thomas, Columbus, and Francis), as well as 22-year old, Kentucky-born Anna Guy. It is curious that Anna may have been part of the extended Guy family, of Native-American heritage and intermarried with the Donnegan family. Thomas Cox was noted as having real estate evaluation of \$800.

¹⁶ Charlotte is elusive in local records, particularly after their separation and/or divorce. She appears to have ended up living with William McCoslin in Bloomington by circa 1868. Bowman (2020) has a reference to a Charlott [sic] Cox, a white "child" living with William McCoslin in Bloomington in circa 1868-1870. McCoslin was a Black barber who had settled in Springfield, from Bloomington, by November 1853, and established himself as a partner with both Spencer and Presley Donnegan. McCoslin remained in Springfield through the later 1850s, resettling back in Bloomington as well as nearby Clinton. McCoslin's exit from Springfield corresponds to about the same time that William and Charlotte were divorced. In Bloomington, he had "purchased the interest of Rev. Mr. [Philip] Ward." It seems that there may be some connection between the young divorcee Charlotte Cox and McCoslin.

In November 1852, several members of Springfield's Black community became aware of the Wood River Colored Baptist Association's meeting in Jacksonville where they proposed a system of common school education organized and administered by the Black community, separate from the state-funded public school system.¹⁷ Learning of this effort to form a separate colored school system in Illinois, these Springfield residents responded with a long statement printed in the newspaper and signed by twenty Springfield residents. The group was not in support of "any such system of common school education, under the name of one distinct sect or denomination." The group further noted that they were very pleased with the current private colored schools, and valued the importance of education (*Illinois State Journal*, 11 November 1852, p. 3). Among the ten signatures to this document were Spencer Donnegan and his brother William Donnegan, as well as William McCoslin, John Lee, and William Lee.¹⁸ On November 22, 1852, the *Journal* published an unsigned rebuttal in response to their earlier statement questioning the sanity of this group and their opposition to a "common school education" (*Illinois State Journal*, 22 November 1852, p. 2). The rebuttal incorrectly argued that the group was not in favor of education at all, and had argued in opposition to the public school system in general. Inherent to this issue was the mechanism of the funding related to Black schools at the time. As argued by the opponents of this plan, property-owning Blacks were being taxed, but not receiving their fair share of the property tax for the Black Schools. The Donnegans, among many other Springfield citizens, were arguing against a state-funded, religious based school system administered by the Baptist Association for Black students, and not against a common school system in general. As they argued, a secondary system for Blacks would also do harm to their existing private school system which they were very pleased with. Additionally, they argued that they were entitled to their fair share of the property taxes they paid towards the school system for use with the Black schools, or should be exempt from school taxes and be allowed to build their own school system.¹⁹

In October 1848, shortly after their arrival in Springfield, Leanna's husband Joel Knox purchased property fronting Jefferson Street, adjacent to the northeast corner of Eighth and Jefferson (Figure x). Knox purchased this property (described as the W1/2, Lot 6, Block 30,

¹⁷ The Wood River Baptist Association, an organization of Black churches, was established in the home of Samuel Vinson in April 1838. The group's first meeting was held in September of that year in the Mt. Zion Baptist Church located in Ridge Prairie, Madison County, Illinois. In 1853, the association, along with the Providence Baptist Association of Ohio (and other churches) joined forces and organized the Western Colored Baptist Convention (<https://bgscil.org/history/>).

¹⁸ The two men with surname of Lee most likely are related to the Donnegan family through their sister Caroline (who married a Peter Lee).

¹⁹ In 1874, the State of Illinois mandated that schools not be segregated by race. With the U.S. Supreme Court's Plessy v. Ferguson ruling in 1896, the concept of "separate but equal" racial segregation became the norm in the United States, and the ruling soon resulted in the establishment of separate public-funded school systems for white and Black students of Illinois (and most of the Nation). In 1897, a Black man named Scott Bibb sued the City of Alton to allow his daughter to attend the nearby white school instead of attending the more distant school for Black children in that city. His fight made its way through the courts for many years, finally being adjudicated by the Illinois Supreme Court in his favor in 1908. Unfortunately, the City of Alton interpreted the decision to apply only to two of Bibb's children, and schools in Alton (as well as throughout the Nation) remained segregated through the early 1950s (<https://www.illinoiscourthistory.org/119/The-Alton-School-Cases-2015/history-on-trial-details/>).

Original Town Plat) from William Butler for the price of \$50 (SCDR CC:67). This price suggests the presence of an unimproved lot at that time. Most likely, Leanna and her husband Joel proceeded to construct at least one, if not multiple, small frame houses on this lot shortly thereafter, as the 1854 *City of Springfield* map depicts potentially three small houses at this location at that time. In June 1857, Leanna (then widow of Joel) sold the W1/2, W1/2, Lot 6 to her son, William K. H. Donnegan for the sum of \$250 (SCDR ZZ:320). As part of this sale agreement, the deed stated that “neither party shall dispose of or alien his or her portion of said half lot without the consent of the other party first in writing.” The 1884 Sanborn fire insurance map depicts a single frame house with an L-shaped footprint on the W1/2, Lot 6 which straddled both the east and west halves of the W1/2 of Lot 6. As such, this deed may have resulted in the splitting of the early house into two separate entities, with the smaller east half being occupied by the widow Leanna and the larger west half being occupied by her youngest child, William (and his family). The adjacent E1/2, Lot 6 was purchased from Butler for \$50 by William Mauzy in December 1847 (SCDR CC:48). Mauzy apparently constructed a small house on this property, which he sold in June 1850 for \$400 (SCDR FF:498). In November 1855, Spencer Donnegan purchased the E1/2, Lot 6 and the small frame house constructed by Mauzy for \$500 (SCDR TT:569). Prior to Spencer’s purchase of this property, he may have also been residing in the adjacent house with his mother Leanna and brother William.

Sometime circa 1853, Leanna’s husband Joel Knox died. The 1855 *Springfield City Directory* listed only two Donnegan family members: E. L. Donigan (most likely Presley L. Donnegan) and S. Donigan (Spencer Donnegan), both with the firm of Donigan and Brother. Donigan and Brother was listed as a hairdresser establishment located on Washington Street, near Fifth (SCD 1855). The 1855 city directory also listed Leana Knox, as a resident on Jefferson Street, east of Eighth Street. The 1857 *Springfield City Directory* lists three Donnegan brothers (Spencer, Presley, and William) as residents of Springfield at that time. William was noted as being a shoemaker residing on the north side of Jefferson Street, between Eighth and Ninth Streets, a location he was to remain at for many years.²⁰ Presley and Spencer were both listed as barbers, with Presley residing on the east side of Fourth Street north of Mason Street (adjacent to the African Church) and Spencer on the east side of Second Street between Market and Monroe Streets (SCD 1857:46). Leanna Knox was not listed within the 1857 city directory.²¹

In early 1857, Leannah Knox was in arrears for \$4.68 for her 1856 property taxes. The taxes had been assessed for property located along the north side of Jefferson Street between Eighth and Ninth Streets (specifically, for the W½ Lot 6, Block 30 of the Old Town Plat). The paper noted that the property had an assessed value of \$550. Presumably, the taxes were paid prior to the 1857 tax sale (“City Tax Sale,” *Illinois State Register*, 19 February 1857, p. 3). Leanna’s past due tax bill may have been the impetus for the division of her property into two halves and the sale of the W1/2, W1/2, Lot 6 to her son William in June of that year. Although Hart (2017:76) suggests it was in 1857 that William constructed the house on this lot, the 1854 *City of*

²⁰ William’s step-father, Joel Knox, was also a shoemaker. Perhaps it was his step-father that taught him his trade?

²¹ Both Presley and Spencer may have learned the barber’s trade from their older brother-in-law, John Hargrave.

Springfield map suggests a house was already on this property by that date.²² A newspaper account detailing city improvements in 1857 suggest that a house was constructed during the 1857 building season by B. S. Mauzy on East Jefferson Street, for W. Donnegan, at a cost of \$450 (*Illinois State Journal*, 28 January 1858, p. 2). Mauzy had also constructed the house on the adjacent lot to the east, which Spencer purchased in 1855. If correct, it may imply that William substantially improved his dwelling at this location at that time, and utilized the carpenter/builder (Mauzy) who had only recently before constructed a house on the lot to the east of him.

The 1859 *Springfield City Directory* listed three of the Donnegan family members: P. L. Donnegan (Presley), Spencer, and William. Both Presley and Spencer are listed as barbers.²³ William Donnegan was listed without a residence location, but with an affiliation with the firm “Coleman and Donnegan.” The firm of Coleman and Donnegan were listed as shoemakers, with their shop on the south side of Adams between Sixth and Seventh Streets. L. C. Coleman (Landrum Coleman) resided on the northwest corner of Seventh and Mason Streets (SCD 1859:38, 85).²⁴ Landrum Coleman had married William’s sister, Melissa, in 1852.

During the 1850s, William worked as a self-employed shoemaker supporting his young family. William seems to have prospered during this time, purchasing property and constructing a house, but remaining fairly elusive with his everyday activities. During these immediate pre-Civil War years, William and his activities were seldom documented within the local newspapers (in contrast to his two brothers, Spencer and Presley). Although his social activism was poorly documented during these later 1850s and early 1860s years, later evidence suggest that he may have been involved with more clandestine activity assisting runaway slaves as a “conductor” of the Underground Railroad in Springfield. It may not be coincidental that, as a “conductor” with the Underground Railroad, the young William Donnegan maintained a low profile and was little

²² A comparison of the 1854 city map and 1884 Sanborn map may suggest that the earlier dwellings were demolished and a newer dwelling constructed by William at this time. This location is currently a surface parking lot for Horace Mann.

²³ Presley was listed as a barber with his business located on the north side of Washington Street, between Fourth and Fifth Street. He resided on the east side of Fourth Street, between Mason and Reynolds Streets. His brother Spencer was also listed as a barber, with his shop on the east side of Sixth Street, between Monroe and Adams Streets. His residence was located on Third (?) Street, between Adams and Scarritt Streets.

²⁴ The earlier 1855 *Springfield City Directory* indicates that L. Colmon [sic] was a manufacturer of “boots and Shoes” with his shop on Adams Street, between Sixth and Seventh Streets. His residence at that time was Seventh Street, corner of Madison Street (SCD 1855).

A Louis H. Coleman (white; born in 1842 in Hopkinsville, Christian County, Kentucky) was an early resident of Springfield. His grandfather, a William Hopper emancipated his Kentucky slaves in circa 1830 at which time he relocated to Warren County, Illinois where he pursued farming and mercantile pursuits. He eventually relocated to Bloomington, and then to Springfield in 1868. Louis Coleman married Stephen T. Logan’s daughter. Could the Landrum Coleman family (Black) be associated with the extended Hopper families’ plantations in Kentucky? Landrum apparently was born in Virginia, but may have lived in Kentucky prior to relocating to Missouri, and then Illinois. Although speculative, was Landrum one of the slaves emancipated in 1830 by William Hopper (Inter-State Publishing 1881:661)?

noted in the local newspapers as the activity was dangerous, and required a certain degree of both discretion and “aggressiveness” to survive.

Documentation of William Donnegan’s potential participation with the Underground Railroad did not surface until the twilight years of the nineteenth century. In May 1898, the anonymous reminiscences of an individual believed to be William Donnegan were printed within an edition of Springfield’s *The Public Patron*. These lengthy reminiscences detail the story of a Black Springfield resident shoemaker, living on the north side of Jefferson Street between Eighth and Ninth Streets, in 1858, who assisted runaway slaves in their flight north through Springfield to freedom. Both Mann (*Illinois State Journal-Register*, 1 June 2008, p. 56) and Hart (cf. Hart 2006) arrive at the conclusion that this individual was, indeed, William Donnegan, and detail his clandestine activities during these tumultuous, and dangerous times, for a free Black man. It was spring or early summer 1858, and the anonymous individual (presumably William Donnegan) noted that

I lived, in those days, on the north side of Jefferson, between Eighth and Ninth streets, in a story and a half house. It is still standing, and I could show you the garrett yet in which many a runaway has been hidden while the town was being searched. I have secreted scores of them...

Donnegan’s story proceeds to explain the difficult time he had in secreting an unruly, young Black runaway girl out of Springfield. Pursued by her young master and his father, Donnegan relates a harrowing story of cunning, skill, and violence (the shooting of a dog to prevent their capture), assisted by members of the A.M.E. church and his presumed brother Presley, that details his efforts that succeeded in her escape north (Hart 2006).

On November 28, 1859, approximately three years or so after his separation from his first wife, William was issued a marriage license to marry one Lavina Coleman.²⁵ Lavina (b. 1841 in Missouri) was the younger sister of Landrum Coleman, William Donnegan’s business partner. The Coleman family apparently had moved to Springfield sometime after circa 1853, and both Landrum and his father Rueben were shoemakers by trade. Landrum, the oldest child, was born in the State of Virginia in circa 1830, and like the Donnegan family was actively engaged in social activism during the 1850s.²⁶ William’s sister, Melissa had married Landrum Coleman in September 1852.²⁷

²⁵ Ancestry.com. *Illinois, U.S., Compiled Marriages, 1851-1900* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005.

²⁶ In the early 1870s, Landrum studied theology and became a minister. He was instrumental in the formation of Springfield’s Union Baptist Church.

²⁷ The Rueben Coleman family was documented in late October 1850 as residing at Prairie Township, Randolph County, Missouri in the U.S. Census of Population (USCB 1850). At that time, Rueben and his family were free-Black residents of the state of Missouri. Rueben was noted as a 44-year old shoemaker born in Virginia, and with a real estate evaluation of \$200. Living with him at that time was his 43-year old wife Eliza, their eldest son Landrum (20 years of age), Thornton (18), Mary (16), Eliza (16), John (11), Rosetta (9), Francis (7), and Lucy (4). All of the family members were noted as being “Mulatto.” Based on the age and birth location of their children, Rueben most likely moved to Missouri between 1836 and 1839. It is curious that the household does not have a child named

The following July [1860], the U.S. Census of Population enumerated the young William Donnegan family. At that time, William was 28 years old and living with his 19 year old wife, Lavina. William was noted as having been born in Kentucky, and his wife in Missouri, and as having been married within the past year. It is noteworthy that the young Black man, listed with an occupation of “shoemaker,” had a real estate evaluation of \$900 and personal property evaluation of \$100. Living within the household at the time were one Leona Knox (60 years old born in Illinois; presumably his mother), Jesse Ayers [Ayeose?] (15 year old born in Kentucky), John Ayers (19 year old born in Illinois with occupation of “bill poster”), and a six-year old boy named Thomas Donegan [sic].²⁸ It is unclear as to who the two Ayers boys were. The young Thomas would have been the son of William and his earlier wife Charlotte.²⁹ All six individuals were noted as Black, and no other Black families were enumerated in the census in close proximity to their listing. As to the source of William’s wealth at this time, he would have been

Lavina (future wife of William Donnegan). Lavina would have been 9 years of age at that time, and one might question if the 9-year old Rosetta represents Williams future wife, Lavina.

Rueben Coleman, a 55-year old Black farmer was enumerated as living in District 16, rural Sangamon County in the 1860 U.S. Census of Population. At that time, Rueben was living with Francis J. (17-years old), Lucy Ellen (13-years old), Susan Manda [sic; Amanda] (7 years old), and John V. (a 21-year-old farm laborer). At that time, Rueben had a real estate evaluation of \$1,600 and personal property evaluation of \$250. The 7-year old Susan had been born in Missouri, suggesting that the family had moved to Sangamon County sometime after 1853.

²⁸ The census taker had incorrectly noted that Leanna had been born in Illinois. It is unclear as to who the two Ayers boys were, but there is a slight possibility that they may have been of Choctaw heritage. Senate Document No. 144 (1897:8) noted six individuals with that surname were “declared naturalized citizens of the Choctaw Nation” in 1856. This same source contains a list of the names of 84 individuals of the Catawba Nation descended from William Guy, of Granville County, Georgia, the majority of whom had the surname Guy, seeking relief from the U.S. Government in 1872. Initially, these individuals had been mistakenly identified as Cherokee and thus were not able to get government subsidies for their relocation west to Indian Territory. These individuals were described “as “good and loyal people, and that if any Indian deserved assistance from the Government these Indians did; that their grandfathers on both sides assisted the Government in the war for Independence, and that their names were on the muster rolls in the War Department (U.S. Senate 1897:10). Spencer and Wyley married sisters with the surname Guy, both believed to have been of Catawba heritage. The Ayers family may have been related to the Hargrave family [Unsubstantiated referenced from Ancestry.com has information on Sidney Guy in *Eastern Cherokee Applications of the U.S. Court of Claims, 1906-1909*, as well as *Dawes Commission Index (Overturned), 1896.*]

The six-year-old Thomas Donegan [sic] most likely was William’s first-born child which he had with his first wife Charlotte Cox. The young Thomas was listed within the census after the other three household occupants (after the Ayers boys) as if not an immediate family member. The young age of the Donnegan family, the age of Thomas (born in circa 1854), the placement of his name in the listing after the Ayer family members, and the differential spelling of his surname all suggest that he was not William and Lavina’s son. Thomas married a woman named Catherine Pennie in September 1875, was divorced in 1893, and had three children: Mabel Charlotte, Julia Harriet, and Arthur William (*Illinois State Register*, 26 October 1993, p. 6). The *Illinois State Register* noted that one Thomas Donnegan had constructed a new house at the corner of Seventeenth and Stuart Streets in 1889 (*Illinois State Register*, 4 August 1889, p. 8). Thomas appears to have been fairly civic minded and involved with several community organizations during his life, and may have been actively involved with the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU; established in 1874).

²⁹ The 1870 U.S. Census suggests that Thomas Spencer Donegan was born in about 1855, during William’s marriage to Charlotte Cox. The 1880 census suggests he was born in circa 1856. Illinois death records suggest an unrealistic birth year of 1843 (Ancestry.com).

in Springfield for approximately 15 years by this date, and had become well-established as a shoemaker by this date.³⁰ The 1860 *Springfield City Directory* listed W. K. H. Donagan [sic] as a shoemaker with his residence at 53 Jefferson Street, between Eighth and Ninth Streets—a location he was to remain at for several years (SCD 1860:74, 155).³¹ The directory also noted that his business was located on the north side of Adams Street, between Seventh Street and the Public Square.³² The “Business Mirror” in the 1860 city directory noted that William was one of five “shoe makers” within the city at that time (SCD 1860:155). Sometime prior to 1860, William had purchased property near the southeast corner of Sixth and Jefferson Streets, a location adjacent to Simeon Francis’ residence and the offices of the *Illinois State Journal*.³³

In 1863, the *Springfield City Directory* variously listed several members of the Donnegan family. The first to appear, in alphabetical order, was W. K. H. Donigan (William), a “colored” shoemaker located at Adams, between Sixth and Seventh Streets. The 1863 *Springfield City Directory* lists William Donegan as residing at 53 Jefferson Street, the location of the family home (northeast corner of Eighth and Jefferson Streets). Based on the 1860 census, it is presumed that William was living at this location with his extended family, which included his mother Leanna. The 1863 city directory substantiates this, with a listing of Mrs. L. Knox, “colored” residing at 53 Jefferson Street (SCD 1863:99).

In an interesting twist, only two Donnegan family members were listed within the 1864 *Springfield City Directory*. The first was William (“W. K. H. Donigan”), who was listed as a shoemaker with his shop at Adams Street, between Sixth and Seventh Streets (SCD 1864:29). His listing did not indicate that he was “colored.” The immediate post-war city directory from 1866 is much more inclusive for the Donnegan family listing Presley, Spencer, a W. T. H. Donnegan, and one W. M. Donnigan (principal with the firm of Donnigan and Coleman) (SCD 1866:229). The individual identified as “W. M. Donnigan” was living in a house on the north side of Jefferson, between Eighth and Ninth Streets, and most likely refers to William K. H. Donnegan. The firm of W. M. Donnegan and Coleman were listed as boot and shoemakers with a shop on the west side of Fourth Street, two doors south of Washington Street (SCD 1866:92-93). The accompanying “Classified Business Register” lists numerous boot and shoe makers in the city at that time (SCD 1866:231). It would appear that the city directory was intentionally distinguishing between the various family members, suggesting that William Donnigan was not of the same family as Presley, Spencer, and W. T. H. Donnegan.

³⁰ What was the source of young William’s wealth? Gates suggests that the Donnegan family had owned property in Kentucky, and part of the young William’s wealth upon his arrival in Springfield may have originated from the sale of that property upon their removal from Kentucky?

³¹ This address is probably in reference to one of several houses located Lot 6, Block 30, Old Town Plat, and most likely purchased by Joel Knox (and William’s mother, Leana). The *Illinois State Journal* (7 February 1860, p. 3) also listed W. K. Donnegan as the owner of the East ½, West ½, Lot 2, Block 12, Old Town Plat—a prime location adjacent to Simeon Francis residence and the location of the *Illinois State Journal* offices.

³² Besides William K. H. Donnegan, the 1860 *Springfield City Directory* listed Spencer Donnegan, a barber in partnership with Hiram Boyd (Donnegan and Boyd, east side Sixth between Adams and Monroe), and Presley Donnegan, also a barber (partnership with Benjamin Rogers; north side Washington between Fourth and Fifth Streets) (SCD 1860:74). The 1860 city directory has no entry for “colored,” and makes no reference to race.

³³ This was the E1/2, W1/2, Lot 2, Block 12, Original Town Plat (*Illinois State Journal*, 7 February 1860, p. 3).

Many Springfield citizens answered Lincoln's call to military service during the Civil War. Among these volunteers were several free-Black citizens that called Springfield home, including members of the Donnegan family. William's nephew, the 21-year old Cyrus Donnegan (Wiley's eldest child) volunteered for military service in 1863. In May 1863, Cyrus (a young shoemaker at the time) traveled east to Readville, Massachusetts where he enlisted with the 55th Massachusetts Infantry on May 30 of that year. As part of the 55th Massachusetts, the young Cyrus participated in many of the brutal battles of the war, including active participation in the infamous Battle of the Crater.³⁴ Cyrus was mustered out of service in late August 1865 while in Charleston, South Carolina, having attained the rank of Corporal. Fortunately, Cyrus returned to Springfield safely after the war, and was subsequently known as "Captain Donnegan" throughout much of his later years. Although he did not serve in the military, the 27-year-old William K. H. Donnegan (a "colored," married, shoemaker born in Kentucky) registered for military service in the Eighth Congressional District, State of Illinois, with Captain Isaac Keys in August 1863.³⁵ That same day, John Dial and William Daniels (both listed as "Colored") also had registered.³⁶ At this same time, William's brother Wiley (Cyrus' father) was experiencing problems with southern sympathizers, and sometime in circa 1863-64, Wiley had been farming south of Riverton, on a farm he owned for over a decade when he was accosted (potentially shot) and intimidated to such a degree by local Copperheads, that he moved his family north to Paw Paw, Michigan. Shortly after moving to this location, he died in late 1865 (or very early 1866) (Casey [1926]).

The Donnegan family continued their efforts to better the life of the common Black man during the post-war years, and their political activism was evident on both a local and state level at that time. In 1865, the Wood River Baptist Association—the same "colored" Baptist organization that had proposed changes in the organization of Black schools in Illinois in late 1852—held a conference in Springfield to discuss "The Suffrage Question." Not so many years prior, both Spencer and William Donnegan (as well as many other Springfield citizens) had wrangled with the Association over funding of schools for Black children. In the current convention held in Springfield, the Association circulated a *Report on the State of the Country* which pointed out the hypocrisy of re-instating the vote of Southerners who had fought for the dissolution of the Union, whereas the "colored men" of the country who had fought in support of the Union were "its true supporters and faithful friends [and] are denied those rights and privileges, when their free and

³⁴ Ancestry.com; U.S., Colored Troops Military Service Records, 1863-1865 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. (https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/2021:1107?tid=&pid=&queryId=344c777e0f47154bc518ea5dcc6fe293&_phsrc=IPJ276&_phstart=succesSource).

³⁵ Ancestry.com. U.S., *Civil War Draft Registrations Records, 1863-1865* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Original data: Consolidated Lists of Civil War Draft Registrations, 1863-1865. NM-65, entry 172, 620 volumes. NAID: 4213514. Records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau (Civil War), Record Group 110. The National Archives in Washington D.C.

³⁶ Ancestry.com; U.S., Civil War Draft Registrations Records, 1863-1865. [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. (https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/1666/images/32178_1220705228_0007-00227?pId=425102).

unrestrained exercise is the only means by which to compel respect of their liberty...”.³⁷ Although the newspapers did not name any individuals involved with this meeting, there is no doubt that members of the Donnegan family—particularly Spencer and his brother William, as well as Landrum Coleman and other members of the Springfield community most likely were active participants at this conference.

Although the *Illinois State Journal* generally wrote favorably in support of Black suffrage and equality at the time, the competing *Illinois State Register* wrote vehemently against suffrage and other civil liberties for Blacks.³⁸ The *Register* often wrote condescendingly about many of the community’s prominent Black activist families at the time, including members of the Donnegan and Coleman families which they apparently lumped under the heading “negro equality theorists.” Intent on contrasting the perceived real-life scenarios of Springfield to the racial “theories” proposed by the editors of the *Journal*, the editor of the *Register* wrote “theory without corresponding practice, is but a tinkling brass and a sounding cymbal, like almsgiving without charity, it is all bosh, it profiteth [sic] nothing.” In one such piece of journalistic tripe, the *Register* wrote

We are opposed to mingling the races, and insist that the true interests of the negro consist in removing him from the intervention of the white man. In some measure it may be regarded as a question of taste. We do not fancy all kinds of odors, nor an amalgamation of dissimilar colors. Give the black man a country of his own and an opportunity for cultivation and developement [sic], and if he profits nothing by his sometime affiliation with white men and the opportunities for improvement he has already received, he will very presently descent to his normal status and become a very Congoese and a natural Hottentot. Then, if our neighbor is dissatisfied with the black man’s progress, let him emigrate with his earnest toners to negro land and endeavor to accelerate his more rapid developement [sic]. We are still advocates for a distinct country for the freedman; but, as at present advised, would not object that the rabid and radically loyal should act as missionaries to that region, provided it was a good way removed from blessed America (“Precept and Practice—A Short Disquisition,” *Illinois State Register*, 26 July 1865).

Thus was the state of the anti-suffrage and equality sentiment in Springfield shortly after President Lincoln’s assassination, as expressed by the *Illinois State Register*. It was not until five years later, on February 3, 1870, that the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified giving African-American men the right to vote. Politically, the struggle for equal rights was a hard, up-hill struggle for the likes of the Donnegan and Coleman families, but the initial post-war years were a time of economic stability and growth for several of the Donnegan family members.

³⁷ The Suffrage Question,” *Illinois State Journal*, 23 August 1865, p. 2; “COLORED SUFFRAGE,” *Illinois State Journal*, 23 August 1865, p. 1.

³⁸ The *Register* cited the *Journal* as saying “It would be wise to accept the fact of negro citizenship as it now exists, and go to work to educate and elevate him where he is.” Several other quotes could be added here.

Sometime circa 1866, the elder Leanna Knox moved out of the family home on Jefferson Street and relocated into a new house located on the northeast corner of Tenth and Madison Street—a location immediately adjacent to the residence of Reverend Henry Brown. Brown was a renowned A.M.E. activist minister who had settled at this location in the later 1850s, and was the anchor of a small enclave of free-Black residents that had constructed houses at this location. Upon her daughter-in-law’s return to Springfield from Michigan after her son Wiley’s death in 1865, Sidney Donnegan and her family also settled in the neighborhood on the opposite side of Brown’s house.³⁹

During the latter 1860s, the Springfield city directories suggest that William K. H. Donnegan continued in business with his partner Landrum Coleman under the business name of Donigan and Coleman, shoemakers. The 1868 *Springfield City Directory* had three listings for the “Donigan” family: one for the firm Donigan and Coleman, and individual listings for W. K. H. Donigan (William, of Donigan and Coleman), and William (a laborer; presumably Spencer’s son) (SCD 1868:79).⁴⁰ Additionally, the directory had a subsequent listing for another family member with a slightly different spelling of the last name. Presley *Donnegan* was listed as a “colored” barber residing at 86 North Fourth Street. No other family members were mentioned in the 1868 or 1869-70 city directories (SCD 1868; 1869-70). The reason for the differential spelling of the various family members’ surname is unknown. By this date, William’s brother Spencer had moved out of Springfield, settling in nearby Lincoln, Logan County, where he continued to work as a barber, and was instrumental in the establishment of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Lincoln in circa 1868.⁴¹

Sometime in early 1869, William and his wife Lavina—residing at their Jefferson Street residence—had their first child. According to the 1870 U.S. Census of Population, their child was born circa April 1869, and was named Benjamin. Subsequent records suggest that the couple’s first child was named Harry Francis Donnegan (1869-1939), and no other records exist for a child named Benjamin within the Donnegan household. It is unclear whether Benjamin and Harry Francis was one and the same individual.⁴² No further information is known regarding a Benjamin Donnegan.

³⁹ See “Wright and Brown’s Subdivision of Lots 9, 10, and 11, Block 2, J. Whitney’s Addition to Springfield: A Free-Black Enclave in Civil War Era Springfield,” Appendix X, Mansberger and Stratton [2024, Volume IV].

⁴⁰ In late March 1868, a resident of East Lincoln (Logan County) named William Donigan obtained a marriage license and married a woman named Violet Madison [Aunty Violet]. This William Donigan, the son of William H. K. Donigan’s brother Spencer, was a 23-year old barber living with his 21 year old wife Violet and their 8-month old daughter in East Lincoln, Logan County in 1870 (USCB 1870).

⁴¹ The Lincoln AME church was organized from their home by Spencer Donnegan and his wife (Elizabeth Guy Donegan), and for several months they held service within their home. In circa 1869, Spencer purchased a school house located on the corner of Sherman and Broadway Street in Lincoln and converted it into a church. In 1880, the school house/church was moved and a new brick church was constructed. This small church still is in service in Lincoln (*Lincoln Evening Courier*, 26 August 1953, p. 12; “The Churches of Black Lincolnites,” <http://findinglincolnellinois.com/churches.html>). Other sources suggest that the African M.E. Church in Lincoln was not organized until July 1870, with Spencer Donnegan being one of the original trustees (Pioneer Publishing Company 1911).

⁴² The 1898 *Springfield City Directory* does list a Benjamin F. Donegan, a “colored” janitor, residing at 1143 S. Spring Street (SCD 1898:168) suggesting that Benjamin and Harry represent two separate individuals. Part of the

In late September 1869, the *Illinois State Journal* carried a story relating to an incident that occurred at William Donnegan's Jefferson Street residence. This news account was signed simply "A Citizen" (*Illinois State Journal*, 13 September 1869).

Sunday morning at about 1 o'clock, as Mr. William Donigan chanced to be in the front yard of his house, situated on Jefferson street, between 8th and 9th, he saw two suspicious looking individuals, and overheard what he considered suspicious conversation. As there had been a number of fires in the immediate vicinity within a few weeks, he at once went into the house and got his gun, then stationed himself in his grape arbor, where he remained for about half an hour. Soon after he saw a man climb over his fence from the alley in the rear of his house, enter his barn and open the alley door and let his comrade in, they then passed through the barn, coming in the direction of his house. When they were within a few feet of Mr. D. he halted them, and they broke and ran. Mr. D. discharged his piece, but failed to bring them down. Mr. D. might have been a little haste in shooting, but when one remembers that his barns were burned about a year since, and four incendiary fires have been discovered within so many weeks, and all within one block of his residence, we think much allowance should be made. Where are our vigilant night police? This neighborhood should have an extra force.

This was the second time we learned of William's familiarity with firearms and his propensity to use them for his defense—the first being used during his Underground Railroad days.

The 1870 U.S. Census of Population listed William H. K. Donegan [sic] as a 41-year old "shoe maker" born in Kentucky. His wife Lavina was listed as a 29-year old housekeeper born in Missouri. Living with the family at the time was Thomas Donegan (15 years of age, born in Illinois) and the 2-month old Benjamin. William was listed with a real estate evaluation of \$2,000. William's mother Leana Knox was no longer living within William's house at this time. Leanna was also noted as a head of household for the last time in the 1870 U.S. Census of Population. At that time, the 70-year old widow was living next door to the Reverend Henry Brown, on the north side of Madison Street (near its intersection with Tenth Street in Wright and Brown's Subdivision), and was noted as the head of the household with an occupation of "keeping house."

William's business partnership with L. A. Coleman was dissolved sometime between 1869 and 1872, presumably due to Coleman's increased dedication and work with the Union Baptist Church (which was organized in 1873).⁴³ The 1872 *Springfield City Directory* is the first to list the firm of Donogan [sic] and Company, boot and shoemakers located on Washington Street,

problem with understanding the dynamics of the family at this time is the suspected date of birth for both children (1869; twins?) and the fact that we cannot find Lavina (and her children) in the subsequent 1880 U.S. Census of Population.

⁴³ Coleman was the pastor of the Union Baptist Church from 1874 through 1879.

between Fourth and Fifth Streets. Principals in the firm were William K. H. Donogan and Cyrus Donogan—William’s nephew (SCD 1872; 1873; 1874; 1875).

The 1875 *Springfield City Directory* lists four Donnegan family members: George (painter), Narcissa, William (shoemaker, 811 Jefferson Street), and Wm. (presumably William, also a shoemaker) (SCD 1875:55). By early 1875, William and Lavina apparently were no longer living together. Although the circumstances are unknown, it would appear that the couple had divorced by late 1874. In late August 1874, William deeded his Jefferson Street home located on the W1/2, W1/2, Lot 6 to his wife Lovinia Donegan, Thomas Donegan (his son with Charlotte Cox), Harry Francis Donegan (his son with Lavinia Coleman), and Charles Hamilton Donegan (his son with Charlotte Cox) for the sum of one dollar. The deed noted that the property included “half of the house & barn on the W1/2 of said Lot 6, Block 30 to be equally divided between the parties holding the E1/2 & the parties holding the W1/2” (SCDR 53:69). This transaction may have been part of the couple’s divorce settlement at the time, which deeded the family home to his wife and children. , Shortly before her death, in the following February 1875, Leanna Knox sold the E1/2, W1/2, Lot 6 to William for the sum of \$800 (SCDR 53:68). What became of Lavina Coleman Donnegan and her young child after this date is unclear, and the lack of documentation may suggest they left Springfield at this time.⁴⁴ Also by this time, Leanna had relocated to a new residence at the northeast corner of Madison and Tenth Streets. It may have been at this time that William moved to the Spring and Edwards Street location where he was to remain through August 1908.

In early February 1875, William Donnegan and Sarah Ann [Monnet] Bowers were issued a marriage license.⁴⁵ At the time of William’s death, the *Illinois State Register* (17 August 1908, p. 2) wrote that his last marriage had occurred in 1876 and that “his last wife being formerly Miss Sarah Rudolph, a white woman and a member of a German family of this city.” At the time of his marriage to Sarah, William would have been approximately 57 years of age, whereas Sarah was approximately 29 years of age—23 years his junior.⁴⁶ In early March 1879, approximately

⁴⁴ It would appear that Lavina may have remarried in early 1875, as a woman named Louevina Donegan married one William H. Paine in early May of that year. No further archival information after this date has been located for Lavina Coleman Donegan. Her son, Harry Francis Donegan was located in Peoria prior to returning to Springfield in the latter years of the nineteenth century. Perhaps Lavina and her new husband removed to Peoria after her divorce from William.

⁴⁵ The marriage occurred on 13 February 1875 (*Illinois State Journal*, 1 February 1875, p. 4; Ancestry.com. *Illinois, U.S., Marriage Index, 1860-1920* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015; See also, *Illinois State Register* 17 August 1908, p. 2). Its Out There family tree in Ancestry.com suggests that Sarah’s maiden name was Monnet. Her father was a Belgium-born man named Joseph Monnet (died 1877). Her mother was a German-born woman (died 1896). The Monnet family, less the 20-year old Sarah, was settled in St. Louis by 1870 (USCB 1870). During the Civil War, Joseph served with the First Regiment, U.S. Reserve Corps, Missouri Home Guard. He relocated to Springfield by the early 1870s, and is buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery. The validity of this family tree is unknown, and further research needs to be conducted to verify that Sarah’s maiden name was, indeed, Monnet.

⁴⁶ The 1850 U.S. Census of Population lists one Sarah Bower as a 23-year old Illinois-born, domestic servant living and working in the Hypolite Fayart household. Fayart was a successful 38-year old, French-born shoemaker with a real estate evaluation of \$20,000 and a personal property evaluation of \$5,000. It seems very likely that the commonality of their trades (shoemaking) may have been the impetus for the young Sarah and older William to

four years after their marriage, William and Sarah Ann Donnegan had a child, who they named William Kaves Hamilton Donnegan (1879-1941). In later life, William was known by the nickname “China.”⁴⁷

The year 1876 was one of celebration for the nation with the country celebrating its 100th birthday. Clearly it was a time of pre-Jim Crow excitement for the Black citizens of the nation, particularly those living in Illinois hopeful for new personal liberties and civil rights. Reflective of these social and political changes was the appearance of the *Directory of the Colored People of Springfield* within the *Springfield City Directory* published that year (SCD 1876:232). Although the 1876 *Colored Directory* listed seven individuals with the surname Donnegan living and working in the Capitol City, some major changes were noted from the earlier directories. By this date, neither of William’s older brothers (Spencer or Presley) were listed within the directory. At the head of the list was the remaining Donnegan brother—William. At the time, William was listed as a shoemaker, residing at 811 East Jefferson (and noted as a “lessee”). It was also that year [1876] that both William, and his brother Presley, were listed as founding members of the “Colored Hayes and Wheeler Club” (in support of the upcoming Presidential election) (*Illinois State Journal*, 8 August 1876, p. 5). Although it was a year of jubilation for the nation, the year 1876 was a sad year for the Donnegan family, as it was on 21 June 1876 that the Donnegan family’s matriarch—the 82-year old Leanna Donnegan Knox—died. A simple notice appeared in the local newspaper announcing her funeral at the A.M.E. Church. She was buried in Oak Ridge cemetery.

Although the extended Donnegan family had begun to age by this time, the latter 1870s continued to be good times for the family. The 1877 *Springfield City Directory* listed eight members of the Donnegan family. As with earlier 1876 *Directory of the Colored People of Springfield*, many of the entries represented the second generation of the Donnegan family, with William being one of the elder family members by this date.⁴⁸ The 1879 *Springfield City*

have met, and eventually marry. As such, one must assume that William and Hypolite had some form of professional, or personal, interaction during the early 1870s that would have brought the couple together.

⁴⁷ William’s Social Security Administration paperwork suggests that his mother’s maiden name was “Monuett.” To confuse the issue, William K. H. Donnigan (aka China) [William II] also had a child by the same name, William K. H. Donnegan, Jr. (1900-1919) [William III]. William and Sarah’s son, William (China), served with the 8th Illinois Infantry in Cuba. The 1920 U.S. Census of Population suggests that he was an inmate at the Chester Penitentiary that year. In 1925 (February 11-September 30), and again in 1930 (September 5-29), William “China” was a resident of the Veteran’s Home in Danville, suffering from Chronic Alcoholism. The 1930 U.S. Census of Population indicates that William was a resident of the Soldiers’ and Sailors Home in Quincy (as of April 9, 1930). China died in Springfield, in 1941 and is buried in Camp Butler National Cemetery (Ancestry.com. *U.S., Spanish American War Volunteers Index to Compiled Military Service Records, 1898* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012).

⁴⁸ At that time, the family included two shoemakers: William K. H. S. Donegan (married two years, residing on the south side of Reynolds Street four doors east of Eleventh Street) and his nephew Cyrus (also married for two years; boarded at 624 North Third Street), three porters: George (with a residence on Third Street), Thomas (with a residence at 212 North Thirteenth Street), and George W. (with a residence at 640 North Third Street), and one barber: Presley Donegan, Jr. (with his residence on the north side of Carpenter Street, two doors west of Third Street). Additionally, three of the Donnegan ladies were also listed within this directory, and included: Narcissa (residence on the north side of Madison Street, two doors east of Tenth Street); Phoebe E. (with a residence two

Directory listed only five Donvegan family members, among them being William K. (shoemaker with shop at the west side of Seventh Street, between Washington and Adams Streets and living on Seventh Street, between Washington and Adams) (SCD 1879:52).⁴⁹ William's sister Grace died in 1879.

The 1880 U.S. Census of Population listed the 41-year old William Donnegan as residing at 218 Edwards Street with his 30-year old wife Sarah A, and one-year old son, William.⁵⁰ William (Sr.) was listed as Black, his wife as white, and their son as mulatto. The census indicated that William was a Kentucky-born shoemaker, with both of his parents having been born in Virginia. Sarah was noted as an Illinois-born house keeper, with both of her parents having been born in Germany. The 1880 *Springfield City Directory* indicates that William had a shop on the south side of Washington Street, near Tenth, apparently suggesting that he had moved his shop from his downtown location by this date, and that he resided at 118 West Edwards Street. Both sources suggest that William had relocated his residence to the corner of Spring and Edwards in late 1879 or early 1880 (SCD 1880:64). In the spring of 1879, Williams's sister, Narcissa Donegan died.⁵¹ In 1880, neither Spencer nor Presley, Sr. were listed in the city directory. Presley, Jr. was noted as a barber boarding at 225 East Carpenter Street in that year.

The 1880 U.S. Census of Population also enumerated several households located around the corner on Spring Street, most likely living in William's rental property attached to his residence (which face Edwards Street). At this time, the census-taker noted the presence of a single dwelling with four families—presumably representing the elder Donnegan's rental units attached to the rear of his dwelling. Living in these apartments was the Jonathan Frara family (a white Madeira-Island laborer with his two teenage sons), the Rhoda Miles family (a middle age white woman with her five children, aged 7 to 18 years), Robert Asbury (a 22-year old Black laborer sharing the apartment with his wife, their two young children, a 21-year old Black hotel worker named James Madison and his young wife), and Thomas Donnegan (a 25-year old Black coal miner living with his young wife, two young daughters, and his mother-in-law Julia Perkins)—it clearly was a very full house! Thomas Donnegan probably was William's son from his first wife Charlotte Cox.

During the 1880s and early 1890s, William and his wife remained at their family home at 118 West Edwards Street. The 1881 *Springfield City Directory* lists only the location of William's

door west of 229 Carpenter Street), and the widow Sidney (with a residence at 624 North Third Street) (SCD 1877:31).

⁴⁹ These included: G. W. (a porter at the Leland Hotel, residence at 1038 South Third Street, Susan (help at 612 North Sixth Street), William K. (shoemaker with shop at the west side of Seventh Street, between Washington and Adams Streets), Sarah (dressmaker, residence north side Carpenter Street between Second and Third Streets), and an unidentified woman listed as "E. Donegan" (a washerwoman residing on the north side of Carpenter Street between Second and Third Streets).

⁵⁰ The street number most likely was in error, as the family home was located in the 100 block of West Edwards Street.

⁵¹ The *Illinois State Journal* published an "Adjustment Notice for the estate of Narcissa Donegan, Deceased" in early April 1879 (*Illinois State Journal*, 2 April 1879, p. 4).

business on Washington Street, between 9th and Tenth (SCD 1881:42). The 1882 city directory notes that William was a shoemaker living on 118 West Edwards (SCD 1882:74). The 1887 city directory listed William K. Donnegan as a “colored” shoemaker with his shop at 910 East Washington Street, and residence at 118 West Edwards (SCD 1887a:96). Subsequent city directories in 1886, 1887, 1888, and 1891 list similar information regarding Williams’s shop and residence locations (SCD 1886:84; 1887b 89; 1888:94; 1891:98). The 1886-87 *Springfield City Directory* noted that William’s 64-year old brother, Presley Donegan, had died the previous year, on June 10, 1885 (SCD 1886:22).

Although William had deeded his half of the family home on Jefferson Street (W1/2, W1/2, Lot 6) to his ex-wife and children in the mid-1870s, he continued to own the half of the house once occupied by his mother (E1/2, W1/2, Lot 6). In the fall 1884, the *Register* reported on a roof fire at “the old Donegan property” at the corner of Eighth and Jefferson Streets. The fire apparently burned a hole in the roof, before the fire department was able to extinguish the blaze (*Illinois State Register*, 31 October 1884, p. 3). By the 1880s, the neighborhood around the Eighth and Jefferson Streets intersection had become the heart of Springfield’s vice district, often referred to as “Greasy Row.”⁵² The presence of the residence within this district, and the high crime rate associated with it, most likely had precipitated William’s move from the neighborhood and resettlement on West Edwards Street (which was a more respectable white neighborhood). Again, in mid-1890, the *Journal* reported on the destruction by fire of a “barn on the corner of Eighth and Jefferson streets, the property of W. K. Donegan.” At the time of the fire, the barn was occupied by “Jones, the ragman, and Jacob Sanders, who owned a quantity of hay which was burned up” (*Illinois State Journal*, 21 July 1890, p. 4).⁵³ The following year, the *Register* reported that Donnegan’s house, presumably the house on Edwards Street, had been burglarized with the loss of a gold watch and \$15 cash (*Illinois State Journal*, 7 September 1891, p. 5). An unusual entry in the *Illinois State Register* in May 1891 states that “Mr. W. K. H. Donegan, a shoemaker at No. 912 East Washington street, has removed his family to Watertown, Md., where they will reside” (*Illinois State Register*, 9 May 1891, p. 6).⁵⁴

⁵² For a detailed context of vice in Springfield, see “‘Springfield A Wicked Old City’: The Rise of Vice in Illinois’ Capital City,” Appendix I in Mansberger and Stratton (2024, Volume I).

⁵³ According to the news report, the fire was described as “a beautiful blaze... [that] attracted an extraordinarily large crowd of spectators... the jam of spectators was something remarkable. Two thirds of the crowd were feminine, and they pushed and jostled in the excitement in a way that shamed the men. The firemen were promptly on hand, but could do nothing to save the burning building.” The reporter suggested that “the blaze was probably started by a crowd of boys who frequently play with matches, in that vicinity” (“RUNNING TO THE FIRE. The Whole Town Turns Out to See a Burning Barn,” *Illinois State Journal*, 21 July 1890, p. 4). The large “feminine crowd” most likely was due to the proximity of the property to the adjacent red light district. The following day, the *Register* ran a story about the fire suggesting that it had started at 9:00pm Sunday evening and engulfed a “barn in the rear of Mrs. Amanda Johnson’s (colored) residence, No. 813 East Jefferson street, a barn on the property of Con Civil, and a shed owned by Wm. Donnegan were burned. Mrs. Johnson’s barn was filled with rags, the property of Alex. Jones, colored and with hay, owned by Jacob Sonders. The loss will probably not exceed \$400. Incendiarism or spontaneous combustion are thought to be the cause... The fire drew several thousand people from all parts of the city” (“A Sunday Night Blaze,” *Illinois State Register*, 22 July 1890, p. 6).

⁵⁴ It is unlikely that this was William, Sr., and it also seems unlikely that it would have been William, Jr.

During his later years in life, William, and immediate members of his family, participated in several civic organizations. In 1892, the *State Capital* (3 December 1892, p. 2) reported on W. K. H. Donnegan as being elected the treasurer of the St. John's Chapter of an unidentified organization (potentially the Masons).⁵⁵ In 1893, William was elected as the treasurer of the St. James Chapter No. 2, Holy Royal Arch Masons (*Illinois State Journal*, 18 November 1893, p. 4). William was again elected to the same position in November 1894 (*Illinois State Journal*, 23 November 1894, p. 4). In October of that same year [1894], William was selected by the "Fourth Ward Republican Club (colored)" as a delegate for the October 10th convention (*Illinois State Journal*, 6 October 1894, p. 4). In 1898, Thomas Donnegan, William's son, was president of the Colored Free Silver Club, an organization closely allied with the Race Rights League (*Illinois State Register*, 26 January 1898, p. 4). At the time of his murder, even the radical *Register* noted that William "was quite popular among the people of his race" (*Illinois State Register*, 17 August 1908, p. 5).

During the latter 1890s and early years of the twentieth century, the Donnegan family name was often noted within the pages of the local newspaper. In January 1897, the newspapers noted the death of "William Donigan (colored), aged 21 years"—born circa 1876, it is unclear who were the parents of this young child (*Illinois State Journal*, 9 January 1897, p. 6).⁵⁶ In February 1897, the *Journal* reported that Mrs. Donnegan apparently was having problems with her step-son, William. The family, including the young William, were living at the corner of Spring and Edwards Street at the time, and Mrs. Donnegan accused him of stealing money from her purse and a gold watch valued at \$75 (*Illinois State Journal*, 13 February 1897, p. 3).⁵⁷ The following year, a William Donnegan—presumably the 19-year old son of William and Sarah (William II)—enlisted with the Eighth Illinois Volunteer Regiment from Springfield, and served in Cuba in late 1898 and early 1899).⁵⁸ A couple years later, the young William Donnegan (William and Sarah's son), presumably upon his return from Cuba, was accused of having purchased liquor (*Illinois State Register*, 15 December 1899, p. 6), and in mid-July 1900, the young William was arrested for entering a saloon while intoxicated, and drawing a revolver and threatening to shoot

⁵⁵ Unfortunately, the newspaper is damaged and the name of the organization is not present.

⁵⁶ This individual's headstone, in Oak Ridge Cemetery, states he was 19 years of age (and thus born potentially in circa 1878). William and Lavina's son, also named William, was born in 1879, but he did not die until 1941.

⁵⁷ Although the paper noted that William was Sarah's step-son, this most likely was incorrect, as William and Sarah's son William was living in the home at that time.

⁵⁸ In July 1898, Thomas Donnegan—William and Charlotte's son—co-signed a request "To the Colored Citizens of the City of Springfield" for prospective volunteers to meet at the Union Baptist Church for "the purpose of filling out the colored company of soldiers, for we feel it is our duty at this time that we cannot set with idle hands when a call of this kind is made, for we feel we are loyal to the stars and stripes, and we hope you will come out and do all you can in assisting us" (*Illinois State Register*, 3 July 1898, p. 5). Among the enlistees were Elijah Greenleaf and Robert Wright (McCard and Turney 1899:63; *Illinois State Register*, 26 April 1898, p. 5; "New Company Organized. Colored Sons of Veterans to Join the Ninth Battalion Under Buckner," *Illinois State Journal*, 26 April 1898, p. 2). See also "'A Splendid Good Old Man:' Ex-Slave, Civil War Veteran, and Forty Year Resident of Springfield, Illinois," Appendix V, Mansberger and Stratton [2024, Volume V]) and "Robert Nathaniel Wright (1880-1935): Springfield Citizen, Spanish-American War Veteran, and Victim of the 1908 Springfield Race Riot," Appendix V, Mansberger and Stratton [2024, Volume III]).

the bartender for not serving him liquor (*Illinois State Register*, 6 July 1900, p. 2).⁵⁹ In Late 1903, a William Donnegan apparently was living in Lincoln, where he had been arrested and sentenced to 30 days in jail for pleading guilty of “bribery at elections.” Besides jail time, he was disenfranchised for ten years (*Rockford Morning Star*, 17 November 1903, p. 1; *Illinois State Register*, 19 June 1903, p. 2). It is unclear whether this is young William “China” Donegan of Springfield. During the winter of 1904-05, a William Donnegan’s hands and feet were badly frozen, after which he was hospitalized, and taken to the Veterans Hospital in Danville (*Illinois State Journal*, 13 May 1905, p. 2; *Illinois State Register*, 15 May 1905, p. 9).⁶⁰

William (Sr) was no stranger to violence and the need for self-protection. In late 1898, in retaliation to a warrant against him for assault and battery sworn out the day before by Donnegan, one Arthur Staunton, broke into the Donnegan residence early in the morning with revolver drawn. Entering William’s bedroom, Staunton fired three shots, one of which passed through William’s foot. Donnegan sprang from his bed, seized his revolver from a nearby dresser, and fired two shots at Staunton, who by that time was fleeing the house. Apparently, the two men had been feuding “for some time over a young lady whom Staunton is desperately in love.” Although the newspaper account began with an insinuation that Donnegan, “a colored man” married to a “white woman,” was romantically involved with this “young lady,” the newspaper continued by stating

Staunton is also colored and the young lady for whom his heart yearns is a white girl. Staunton rented a room at the Donnegan homestead and lived there with the young lady for some time. He has neglected to pay room rent, and as Mr. and Mrs. Donnegan took compassion on the young lady, who was being poorly cared for, they ejected Staunton and sheltered the girl. A baby was born to the young girl some time ago and Staunton claims that Donnegan has torn him away from his child and “his own flesh and blood...”

Upon his arrest the following day, Staunton was under the influence of both alcohol and opium and exclaimed “I’ll kill Donnegan if I ever get another chance. It was an accident that I did not kill him yesterday” (“BOMBARDED ENEMY. Arthur Staunton Shoots William Donnegan Through Foot,” *Illinois State Register*, 20 November 1898, p. 7). The elder William and his wife exhibited compassion for, and assisted one of their young female tenants in a very personal manner, only to be the brunt of physical violence by her disgruntled male companion. William

⁵⁹ The 21 year old William K. H. Donegan (118 West Edwards Street) and 21-year old Anna S. Moton (1312 East Adams) were issued a marriage license in early October 1900 (*Illinois State Journal*, 2 October 1900, p. 7).

⁶⁰ There is some confusion as to which of the many William Donnegan’s are referenced in these accounts. It is unclear whether the young William who relocated to Lincoln was William and Sarah’s son, or Spencer’s son. The veteran named William Donnegan who had his hands and feet frozen “off”, and taken to the Veterans Hospital in Danville, was noted as being a *Civil War* veteran, and most likely was Spencer’s, and not William “China” Donnegan (*Illinois State Register*, 15 May 1905, p. 9). The only other possibility of a Civil War veteran named Donnegan would have been Cyrus, but the elder Cyrus Donnegan appears to have died in Arkansas in 1896 ([https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/249234851/cyrus-donagan?_gl=1*1gkc4lq*_ga*MTEyNjIyNTE3Ny4xNjM1NDM4NTk4*_ga_4QT8FMEX30*Z\).mQ3NTM3M2UtODU5Ni00OTk0LTkyOTEtMzAwZjE5YzQ3NTRkLjQxLjEuMTY4MDgxMzc1NC41Ny4wLjA.#source](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/249234851/cyrus-donagan?_gl=1*1gkc4lq*_ga*MTEyNjIyNTE3Ny4xNjM1NDM4NTk4*_ga_4QT8FMEX30*Z).mQ3NTM3M2UtODU5Ni00OTk0LTkyOTEtMzAwZjE5YzQ3NTRkLjQxLjEuMTY4MDgxMzc1NC41Ny4wLjA.#source)).

Donnegan filed a last will and testament, leaving all of his worldly possessions to his wife Sarah, in September 1899 (SCPR, p. 295-296).

The William Donnegan household was listed in the 1900 U.S. Census of Population as being located at 118 West Edwards Street. Living with the 71-year old William was his 46-year old wife Sarah A. (born August 1853) and their 21-year old son, William (born in 1879). Although previously listed as mulatto, the 1900 census listed William, Jr. as Black. At this time, the dwelling located at 118 West Edwards housed two families—whether in a single dwelling, or a double house is unknown. The second family listed in this dwelling was that of Robert Gray, a Black, 31-year-old day laborer, and his 30-year old wife Anna. Living within the Gray household was a daughter Flossie (12), and two sons, Roy (6) and Paul (3). Living immediately around the corner, at 608 South Spring Street and presumably in one of William Donnegan’s rental houses, was the 63-year old widower, William Sanders—also an African American day laborer. Together, the three families represent a small cluster of African-American households at this location.

Other than an occasional news story regarding the younger William, the newspapers were relatively silent regarding the William Donnegan family during the early years of the twentieth century leading up to August 1908. The elder William most likely was living the life of a retired shoemaker and business man, with his wife, managing his rental properties attached to the rear of his residence. But in August 1908 that life came to a brutal end at the hands of a white mob.

It was Saturday August 15, the second day of racial violence in Springfield. Early that morning, just a couple hours past midnight, the mob that had ransacked the Levee District, burned out a large section of the residential neighborhood known as the Badlands, and lynched Scott Burton, was disbursed forcibly by the Illinois militia who had just arrived in Springfield. On Saturday morning, Springfield residents awoke to the presence of the militia downtown, and a temporary calm that had followed the disbursement of the mob the night before.⁶¹ But that calm was short-lived. By 7pm, crowds had begun to form around the downtown square, the location of the county courthouse. At the time, the militia (under the command of Major General Edward Young) were patrolling the Levee and more heavily occupied Black neighborhoods such as the Badlands (and the far southeast “Goose Prairie” neighborhood), and the downtown was under the jurisdiction of the county sheriff and local police. Fearing conditions were escalating; Sheriff Werner requested assistance from Major General Young, who quickly sent members of the cavalry to disburse the crowd. As the crowd dispersed, and learning that a large group of Black citizens had sheltered in place at the nearby State Arsenal (at 424-426 North Fifth Street), the mob proceeded to that location bent on harassing the innocent Blacks gathered at this location for safety. Although thwarted in their plans at the Arsenal by armed militia, the crowd hit on a new target—the elder William Donnegan—and subsequently proceeded south through the grounds of the Illinois State Capital and the Illinois militia’s encampment—to the home of the elderly Donegan and his family.

⁶¹ By 11am, approximately 500 militiamen were in Springfield patrolling both the Levee and the Badlands. By that evening, the number of troops had swelled to over 1,400, and more were on the way. By Monday, as many as 3,700 militiamen were patrolling the streets of Springfield (Senechal 1990:40, 45).

During the early evening, the Donnegan family was sheltered in place at their residence located to the southeast of the downtown business district, well removed from the violence downtown and in the Badlands. The neighborhoods to the southeast of the public square were predominately white, with only an occasional Black family residing in them. As such, the militia (which had been stretched thin patrolling the more heavily Black-occupied neighborhoods to the north and northeast) had not been patrolling that area of the town, and the mob's actions went unobstructed. Apparently, the Donnegan family had been notified that they were being targeted and that the mob was on their way to their house. "We had been warned that a mob was coming to kill us, but we knew of nothing to do but remain here and await their arrival. We telephoned the jail and the militia headquarters several times, asking for protection, and though we were promised each time that the soldiers would come, none came" (*Illinois State Register* 17 August 1908, p. 2). Upon the arrival of the mob at the Donnegan house, they were met at the front door of the house by the elder Donnegan, who was knocked off his feet, dragged out of his house, beat and pelted with bricks and dragged across the street where the crowd proceeded to cut his throat with a razor, and hang him by a thin rope from a tree in the local schoolyard across from his house in view of his wife and family. Some accounts suggest the mob also attempted to burn his house. The day after the attack on William, the *Associated Press* carried a story originally published in Peoria regarding the confession of one Charles Gadwin in the murder of William Donnegan. Gadwin, a veteran who had served with the Thirty-second U. S. Volunteers in the Philippines, claimed he was "going insane" and had turned himself in to the Bartonville asylum located near Peoria. He was quoted describing the attack on Donnegan, noting that "we stamped in his face; cut his throat; and then put a rope round his neck. That's what it took to kill him" ("LYNCHER FEARS INSANITY. And Surrenders Himself to Police at Peoria," *Tacoma Daily News*, 17 August 1908, p. 3).

Although Donnegan survived the attack, he died the following morning of his injuries (Senechal 1990:42-46).⁶² Immediately after the mob action, "fearing to remain in her house," William's wife Sarah took refuge in the Armory. She told the newspaper "I left my sons to take care of the house... for I was afraid to stay there any longer. This is just an awful blow to me" (*Rockford Morning Star*, 18 August 1908, p. 1). Sarah remained at the Armory for a brief time, returning to her home and family on Edwards Street.

At the Donnegan home there was a sad family gathering. The aged wife of the old negro, who saw the mob hanging her husband to a tree, was scarcely able to talk. She sat in her rocker on the rear porch, a picture of grief and despair.

⁶² William Donnegan was taken to the police station where a military surgeon attended to his wounds, upon which he was transferred to St. Johns Hospital. Mr. Donnegan never regained consciousness, and died from his injuries at 11:30am, Sunday morning at St. Johns Hospital ("Hanged Negro Fifth to Die," *Illinois State Register*, 17 August 1908, p. 2; see also "W.H. Donnigan [sic] Dies Sunday," *Illinois State Register*, 17 August 1908, p. 2, 5 and "Widow of Old Negro Lynched is White Woman," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 17 Aug 1908). Another account suggests that he died at 3:15am Sunday morning ("W. H. Donnigan Funeral Held," *Illinois State Register*, 20 August 1908, p. 5).

Although no local evidence suggests that it actually occurred, the *Washington Times* wrote that the mob, after leaving the Donnegan residence on Saturday evening, proceeded to the home of Abraham Lincoln on south Eighth Street—then owned by the State of Illinois—and threatened to burn it down ("Torch Threatens Home of Lincoln," *The Washington Times*, 18 August 1908, p. 9).

Neighbors came to comfort her, for she, as well as her family, has been regarded highly by the white people of the neighborhood (*Chicago Tribune*, 17 August 1908, p. 2).

Shortly thereafter, Sarah left Springfield seeking refuge in Chicago with relatives.⁶³ Several of her immediate family members (including Mrs. Mary Lee, her daughter Mrs. Carrie Hamilton, and her grandson) accompanied her to Chicago, and the *Chicago Tribune* subsequently carried a well-illustrated story of the killing of her husband (*Chicago Tribune*, 17 August 1908, p. 3).⁶⁴ The *Chicago Daily News* (18 August 1908, p. 3) also carried a story with photographs of Mrs. Mary Lee, her daughter Mrs. Carrie Hamilton, and her young son, labeled “Springfield Refugees in Chicago” noting that the three were “waiting for the storm in Springfield to blow over.” In solidarity of their fellow Mason, the *Chicago Daily News* noted that William Donnegan, “the 80-year old colored citizen of Springfield... was a member of the colored Knights Templar commandery [sic] in Springfield and his fellow knights plan to do all in their power to see to it that the persons responsible for this death are punished” and the Colored Knights Templar “from all parts of the United States” held an interstate conference at the damaged Pekin Theater to address “the problem of the Springfield race riots” (*Chicago Daily News*, 18 August 1908, p. 3).⁶⁵ At the time of his death, the *Register* simply noted that Donnegan was a cobbler, “but for several years past had not been actively engaged in business” and that he suffered from rheumatism “and has remained at his home most of the time” (*Illinois State Register*, 17 August 1908, p. 2).

Services for William Donnegan were held on Wednesday (August 19) at 10am at the undertaking rooms of Henry T. Rhoden, with the Rev. T. D. Logan, pastor of the First Presbyterian church officiating. He was laid to rest in the Colored Section of Oak Ridge Cemetery. Pall bearers were his two sons Thomas and William, and two cousins Harry and John Donnegan. William’s wife Sarah was not able to attend his funeral as she was still in Chicago fearful to return to Springfield (“W. H. Donnigan Funeral Held,” *Illinois State Register*, 20 August 1908, p. 5; *Illinois State Journal*, 19 August 1908, p. 2). Donnegan’s grave site remained unmarked for many years; a tombstone was not placed on William Donnegan’s gravesite until 1994. Although his final resting place was within sight of the Great Emancipator himself, Donnegan was separated from Lincoln by a great divide even in death—Jim Crow segregation. Sarah Ann Donnegan eventually returned to Springfield and lived out her remaining years of life in the home she had shared with her husband, William at the corner of Edwards and Spring Street. She died in April 1931. The *Journal* ran a short notice of her funeral (*Illinois State Journal*, 29 April 1931, p. 14).

In an effort to rationalize and/or legitimize what had happened in Springfield, it took very little time for the press to villainize Donnegan. Immediately after his death, numerous stories were published in an effort to demonize the elder William Donegan. At the time of his murder, the yellow journalism typical of the *Illinois State Register*, noted that he “was worth about \$15,000

⁶³ The *Chicago Tribune* suggests that the relatives resided at 4765 Dearborn Street (18 August 1908, p. 2).

⁶⁴ Mary Lee [nee Mary Belle King] was the wife of Peter and Caroline’s son, John Samuel David Lee (1832-1909). Caroline (1811-1892) was William’s older sister—the oldest of Leanna’s children. In 1908, Mary would have been about 67 years of age. Her daughter Carrie (a school teacher) was about 31 years of age in 1908. She had married a man named Ernest Hamilton. Carrie’s son, Lee, would have been about two years old at this time.

⁶⁵ The Pekin Theater was the first Black-owned theater in Chicago that catered to Black residents.

at the time of his death,” and that “he had made most of this *by the practice of slave importation and by gaining possession of and holding valuable real estate in this city.*” Clearly, in the eyes of the *Register*, it would appear that William’s accumulation of wealth was more than would have been suspected of an ordinary Black ‘shoe maker.’ In an effort to villainize the murdered Donnegan, the *Register* suggested that his wealth had been accrued due to importation of slaves into Springfield—a highly improbable and unlikely activity. According to the newspaper:

Slave Importer

During the times of slavery Mr. Donnigan [sic] was a prominent slave importer of this district. Since slavery did not abound in Illinois at the time, he would import negroes from the southern states and then hire them out as laborers. He was engaged in this business during the presidency of Abraham Lincoln. It is said that he had some trouble as a result of these importations, just preceding the civil war. Local people are said to have forced him to discontinue the practice of bringing negroes from the southern states to Springfield and Illinois.⁶⁶

Krohe (1973:15) continues this thought, noting that “Donnegan, an 80 year old black man who had made a modest fortune for himself importing Southern blacks to work in the homes and shops of pre-Civil War Springfield.”

Accused of capitalizing on the importation of slave labor into Springfield, and being responsible for the large influx of ex-slaves into Springfield following the Civil War, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* repeated the claim. “Uncle Bill,” as the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* called Donnegan, “was probably the most widely known negro in Springfield. Older residents say that he brought many negroes to Springfield in the days following the war. He was never a slave, it is said, and it is charged that, in the days following the war, he was the agent for white men who made a hard contract with a large body of negroes, causing conditions which were complained of as resembling slavery” (“Widow of Old Negro Lynched is White Woman,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 17 August 1908, p. 2). Similarly, the *Register* noted that “During the civil war he imported southern negroes here and hired them out to contractors. This fact may have been known by some of the men of the crowd, who probably concluded that Donnigan [sic] was the cause of a great many negroes being in the city, and acted upon the supposition” (“WILLIAM DONNIGAN LYNCHED,” *Illinois State Register*, 21 August 1908, p. 1).

No evidence of William Donegan’s purported activities of importing slaves into the Springfield labor market during the 1850s-60s, and contracting them out as indentured servants, has been encountered. On the contrary, William’s activities strongly suggest that he was involved with just the opposite activity—assisting runaway slaves to find freedom in the north. In a tongue-and-cheek comment, in discussing his clandestine Underground Railroad activities of the latter 1850s, William state that “I once had seven hundred dollars in gold and silver turned into my lap by the owner of a slave as a bribe for my assisting in his recapture. This took place in my shoe shop on Fourth street. ... Well, [I] could not capture the fellow, and had to return the money; but

⁶⁶ “W. H. DONNIGAN DIES SUNDAY. Was Lynched by Mob at Spring and Edwards,” *Illinois State Register*, 17 August 1908, p. 5; see also “WILLIAM DONNIGAN LYNCHED,” *Illinois State Register*, 21 August 1908, p. 1).

all the same he was under a pile of leather in that very room when the money was paid.” It would appear that William’s acceptance of this money was a ruse, as he was pretending to assist in the capture of the runaway, all the while assisting him in his escape. It seems doubtful that individuals in 1908, in reflecting on William’s early life in Springfield, would have had any recollection of these activities.

A search of Springfield newspapers for reference of clandestine activity undertaken by Donnegan—or others for that matter during this politically and racially charged period of the 1850s—was not uncovered.⁶⁷ Part of this anonymity, no doubt, was due to the clandestine nature of these activities, but anyone who would have been caught violating legal statutes by importing slaves into Springfield—whether white or Black—would clearly have made the newspapers. In contrast, accounts in Donnegan’s own words suggest that he was actively involved in just the opposite—as a cog (or “station”) with the clandestine underground railroad. These conflicting accounts regarding the young William Donnegan’s activities during the 1850s and early 1860s are astounding. On one hand, Donnegan represented an Abolitionist hero as a prominent participant with the Underground Railroad in central Illinois. On the hand, as suggested by the hardline *Register*, Donegan profited off potential free-Black immigrants and runaway slaves and betrayed his own race.

Apparently, William’s wealth (class resentment), and the supposed manner in which he earned it, was not the only factor that riled the local newspaper men. The second reason for Donegan’s murder was attributed to his marriage to a white woman (“Widow of Old Negro Lynched is White Woman,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 17 August 1908, p. 2). The Post correspondent wrote that I regard the lynching of Dunnigan [sic] as the most atrocious crime of the entire outbreak. His only offense was that he married a white woman, and that happened more than 30 years ago.” Similarly, the *Register* wrote:

Married White Woman

Mr. Donnigan was a cobbler in the city and is said to be worth \$15,000. He owns considerable real estate throughout the city and is well known. His wife is said to be a white woman, who he married many years ago. It is thought by many that this fact is the direct cause of the lynching of last night.⁶⁸

In an uncharacteristic manner, the *Register* noted that Donnegan was a Mason, and that he “was quite popular among the people of his race. Some of the older residents of the city state that considerable feeling was aroused when he married his present wife, because she is a white woman and he a negro of the southern type” (*Illinois State Register*, 17 August 1908, p. 5; see also Rogers 1908:77). In reference to the biracial nature of their relationship, journalists noted that it was “because of her marriage to Donnegan that the mob feeling against her husband is

⁶⁷ Belief in manner in which Donnegan attained his wealth continued in the popular myth surrounding the events of August 1908. “Donnegan made a small fortune bringing southern blacks to Springfield to find jobs. He had never been accused of a crime. He had, however, broken the unwritten law of being married to a white woman for the last thirty-two years” <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/29887569/william-k.-donnegan>

⁶⁸ “WILLIAM DONNIGAN LYNCHED,” *Illinois State Register*, 21 August 1908, p. 1.

believed to have been aroused” (*Rockford Morning Star*, 18 August 1908, p. 1). In refuting this reason for her uncle’s murder, Mrs. Hamilton (William’s grand-niece) noted that it was

not so much the hatred of the colored people as a desire to rob and plunder on the part of hoodlums that caused the riots. The better class of the white people have done all they could to protect peaceable and decent colored people, but they are powerless to cope with the mob. They say that my uncle [sic, great uncle] was killed because he is married to a white woman, but they neglect to state that they have been married twenty years, have children and own considerably property. *It was just the plain desire of the mob to kill and loot that caused the rioting*” (italics original; *Chicago Daily News*, 18 August 1908, p.3).

The *Chicago Tribune* carried a similar statement from Mrs. Hamilton:

The mobs at the capital are made up of the hoodlums and young desperadoes, and it is not hatred of the colored people, but just plain desire to kill and loot, which caused all the rioting... the better class of white people have done all they could to protect the peaceable and decent colored people, but they are powerless to cope with that mob.

They say my uncle was killed because he is married to a white woman, but they have been married twenty years, have children, and own considerable property. And the property was the cause of his murder. He was event told by some of the ringleaders of the mob that he had too much property for a ‘nigger,’ and that he would be killed unless he and his family moved away.

The scenes at Springfield were terrible beyond all description. Everywhere was the same tale of the shooting and beating of negroes and the looting of their homes. As for my poor uncle, it was just plain murder, for he was an old, defenseless, and innocent man who held the respect of our white neighbors (“Explains Capital Lynching: Niece of William Donnegan Says Uncle's Possession of Property Caused Mob's Attack," *Chicago Tribune*, 18 August 1908, p. 2).

In an effort to further demonize William Donnegan, even though his niece noted her uncle’s relationship with his white neighbors, the *Register* stated that “Several relatives of the dead man reside near the Donnigan home and in houses owned by the aged negro. Their yards adjoin, and they have practically the entire corner. At various times, it is alleged, trouble has arisen between the Donnigan family and white people residing in that district in the past” (*Illinois State Register*, 17 August 1908, p. 5). One such episode of trouble between the elder Donnegan and his white neighbors was that of the Staunton affair in which the Donegans assisted and gave aid to an abused young pregnant woman resulting in the violent intrusion of the white lover into the Donnegan’s residence and shooting him in the foot!

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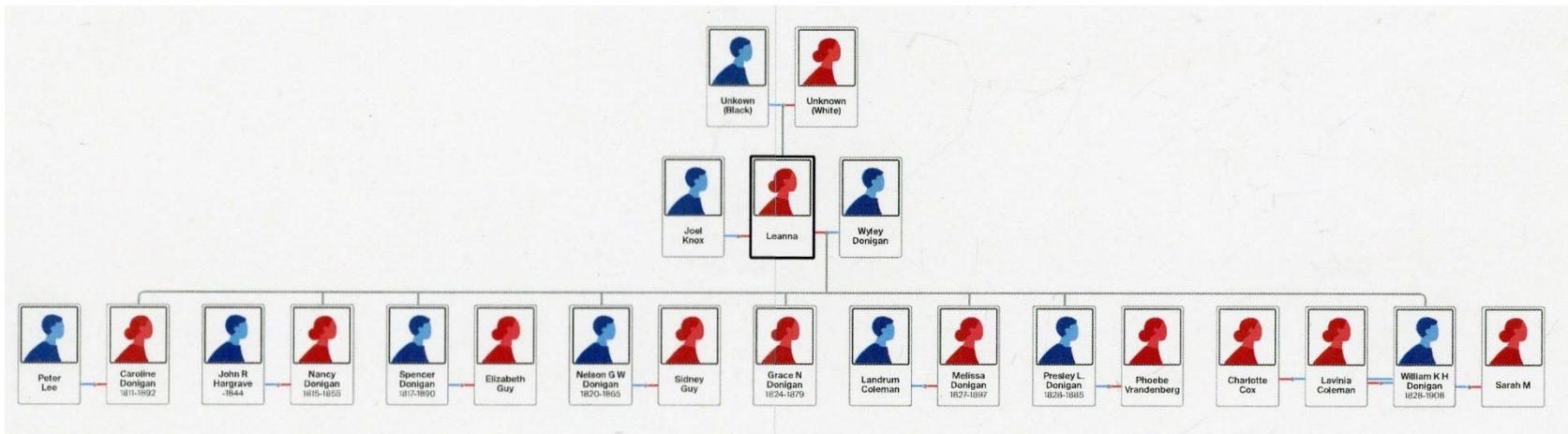


Figure 1. Leanna Donnegan's family tree.

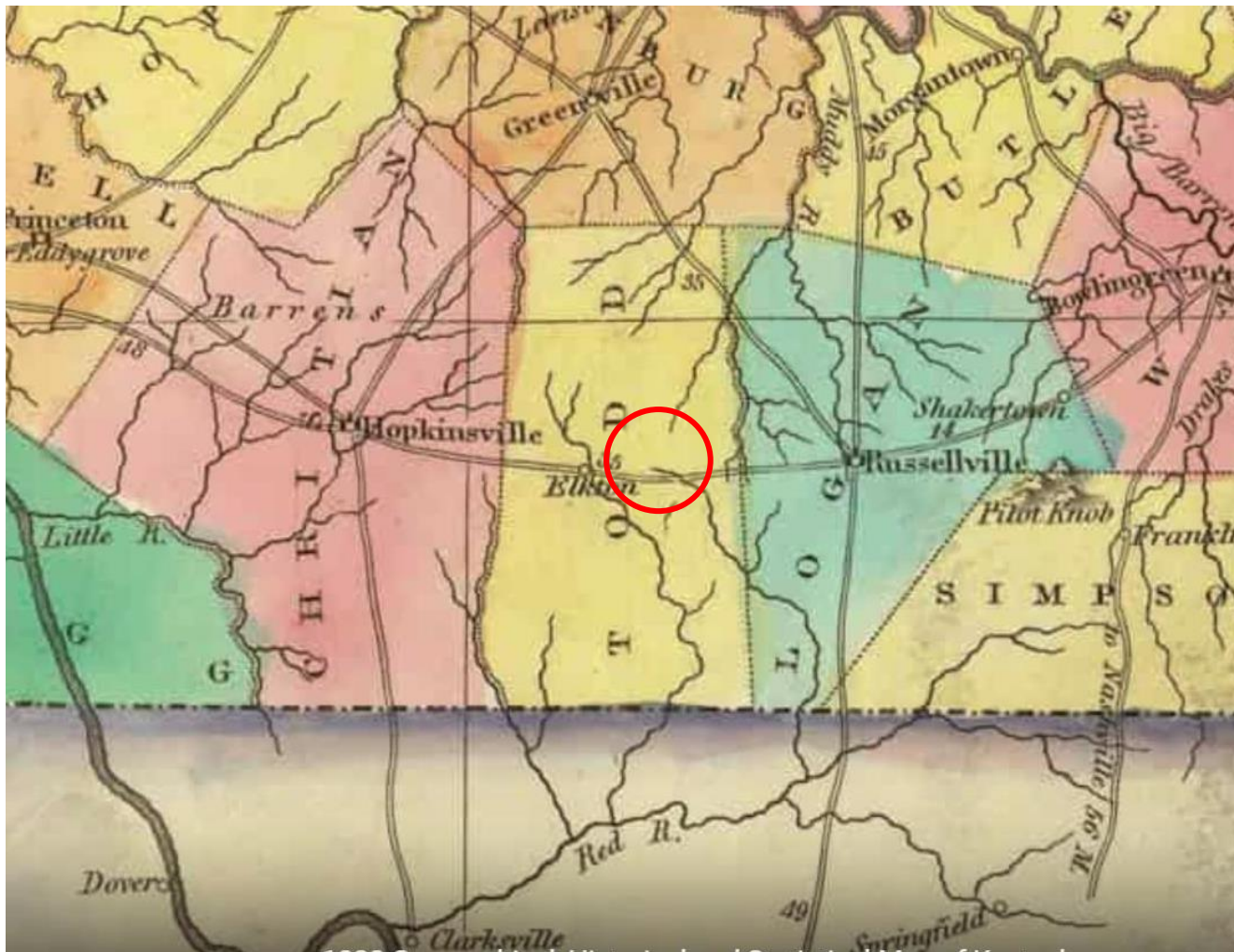


Figure 2. Detail of Christian, Todd, and Logan Counties in west Kentucky, as depicted on the *Map of Kentucky* (Carey and Lea 1822, Plate No. 27). The red circle depicts the suspected region of what is now Todd County in which “Free Loann” [Leanna Donnegan Knox) raised her early family. This region is the headwaters of the Red River, east/northeast of Elkton, Kentucky. In circa 1837, Leanna and her family relocated to the vicinity of Hopkinsville (Christian County) prior to relocating to Illinois in 1847.

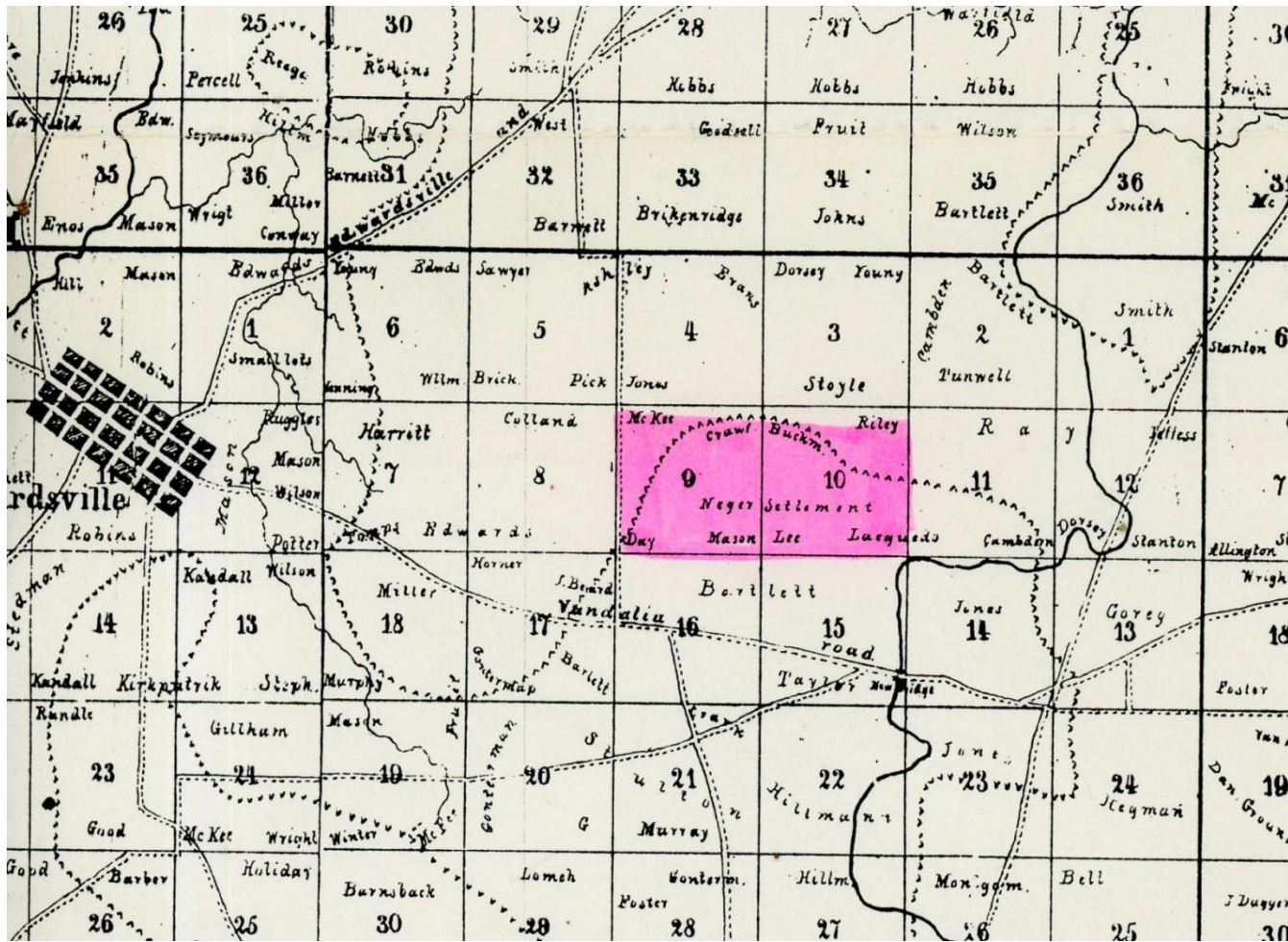


Figure 3. Detail of *Map of Madison County, Illinois* (Meyer 1851) illustrating the location of the “Neger Settlement” [sic] in Sections 9 and 10, Township 4 North, Range 7 West (eastern portion of Edwardsville Township). By this date, ex-Governor Coles had transferred much of his prairie lands to his emancipated slaves. Coles Prairieland Farm started as 80-acres in the SW1/4 Section 4, and soon grew to over 400 acres in size. The farm’s long time manager was Coles’ ex-slave Robert Crawford.

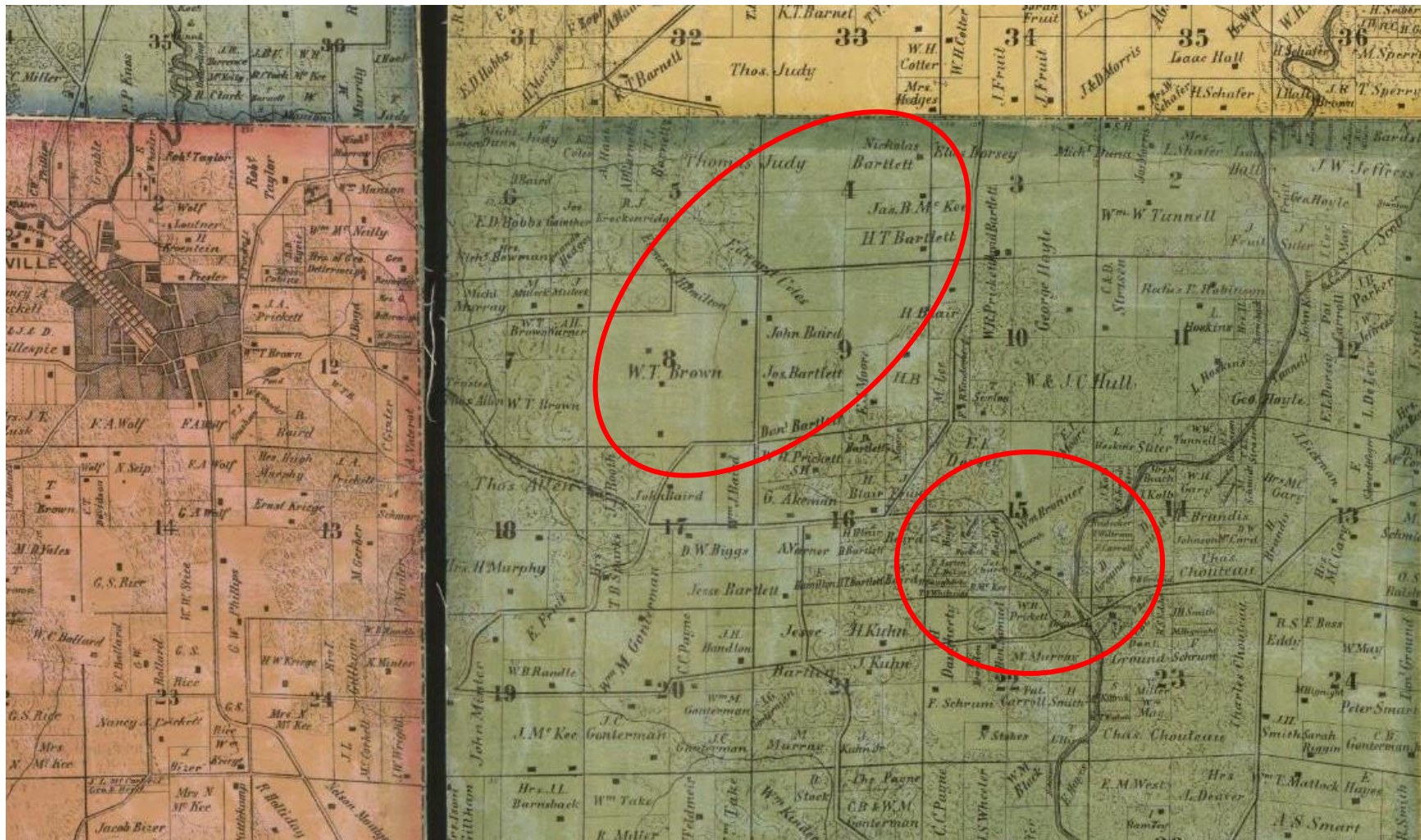


Figure 4. Detail of *Map of Madison County, Illinois* depicting the location of Edward Coles' landholdings (Prairieland Farm) and the Ridge Prairie settlement in 1861 (Holmes and Arnold 1861). By this date, the Ridge Prairie settlement appears to have coalesced around the nearby Silver Creek crossing in Section 15. Coles' landholdings are relatively small by this time. W. T. Brown, one of the larger landowners depicted in the vicinity of Prairieland Farm was not a Black man, and presumably had purchased lands from Coles (<https://madcohistory.org/online-exhibits/edward-coles-champion-of-freedom/life-in-illinois/>).



Figure 5. Location of Bethel Church as depicted on the *Map of St. Clair County, Illinois* (Holmes 1863). This area is just south of the Madison/St. Clair County line and the Ridge Prairie Settlement. It is believed that it was in this vicinity that the extended Lee and Donnegan family settled in 1847 prior to relocating to Springfield.

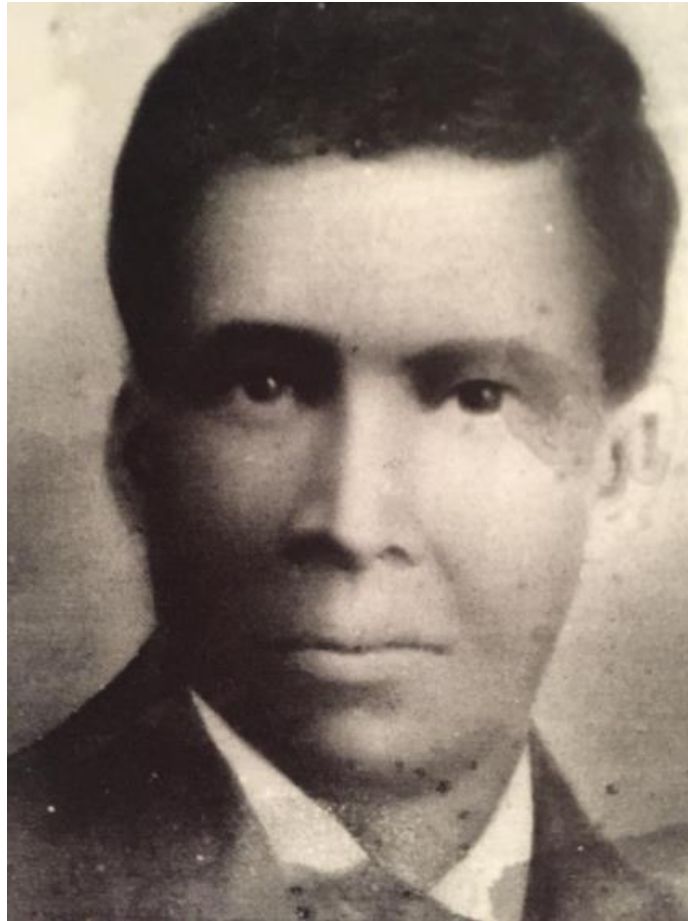


Figure 6. Two views purported to be William Donnegan, Springfield shoemaker lynched during the Springfield Race Riot, August 15, 1908. Left: View of William Donnegan, Sr, as published in *Lincoln Memoirs: From the Log Cabin to the White House* (Harris 1908:83). Right: Picture attributed to William Donnegan, Sr., but most likely an image of his son, William “China” Donnegan, Jr. (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/29887569/william-k.-donnegan>).

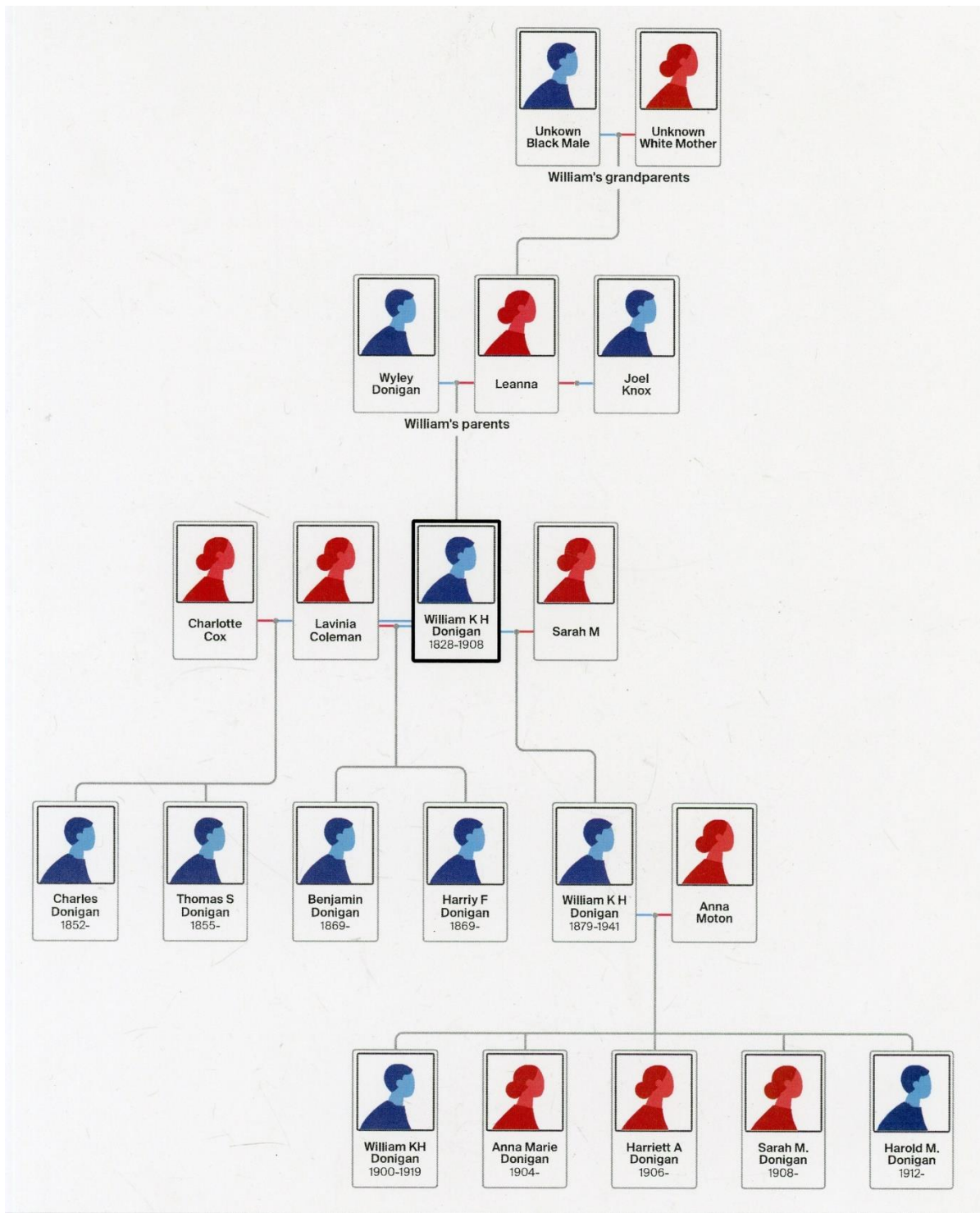


Figure 7. William Donnegan's family tree (Ancestry.com).

BARBER'S NOTICE.

S. DONEGAN will close his Barber's Shop on Saturday nights at 12 o'clock, and will not open his shop on Sunday morning. april 7.

REMOVED.—SPENCER DONEGAN would hereby return his thanks to the public generally who have patronized him so liberally heretofore. He would also inform them that he has removed his Barber's shop to the City Hotel, where he will be happy to wait on all who will favor him with a call in his usual good style. The shop he now occupies is much better adapted to his business, and nothing shall be wanting to accommodate customers. oct 20.

**S. DONEGAN, Tonsorial Professor,
BARBER AND HAIR DRESSER,**

WOULD respectfully inform his old customers and the public generally, that he has now fitted up in superb style as neat a shop as any in the city, and has associated with it one of the best barbers now in the west. Call and see for yourselves. One door east of the City Hotel.

Springfield, Feb. 9, 1853.

Figure 8. Three newspaper advertisements presumably for Spencer Donegan's barber shop. Top: *Illinois State Journal*, 11 April 1849, p. 3. Middle: *Illinois State Journal*, 20 October 1849, p. 3. Bottom: *Illinois State Journal*, 10 February 1854, p. 3.

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Flushing, N. Y., Jan. 20, 1855.

Hair Dressing Saloon.

THE subscribers have now in complete order, with some half a dozen workmen, the large room, a few doors west of Freeman's corner, where they will be ready at any moment to wait upon customers. This establishment is the largest and most liberally furnished of any in the city; and we hope that our liberal citizens, and strangers, will patronize us sufficiently to justify us in our heavy outlays.— We trust we have an establishment that does credit to our city.

(Jan 20) S. & E. DONEGAN.

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S. Donegan the popular barber and hair dresser has removed from the Chenery House to one door south of the American House, with a full supply of work men that can't be surpassed in the city.

—•—

BARBER WANTED.

S. DONIGAN, ONE DOOR SOUTH OF the American House, will give for a good hand \$8 per week, (Sundays excepted.)

jan 31

Figure 9. Three newspaper advertisements presumably for Spencer Donnegan's barber shop. Top: *Illinois State Journal*, 27 January 1855, p. 2. Middle: *Illinois State Journal*, 9, January 1857, p. 3. Bottom: *Illinois State Journal*, 31 January 1857, p. 3.



Figure 10. Detail of *Map of Springfield* (Potter 1854) illustrating the location of the African Church on Fourth Street, north of Madison. Houses located each side of the church at this time were occupied by Presley Donnegan and L. Coleman—as well as the Sappington brothers.

DIED.

In this city, June 21st, LEANNAH KNOX,
aged 82 years. Funeral to day, at 8 o'clock p. m.,
from the A. M. W. Church, North Fourth street.
Friends are invited.

Figure 11. Short obituary notice for Leanna Knox (*Illinois State Journal*, 29 June 1876, p. 4).

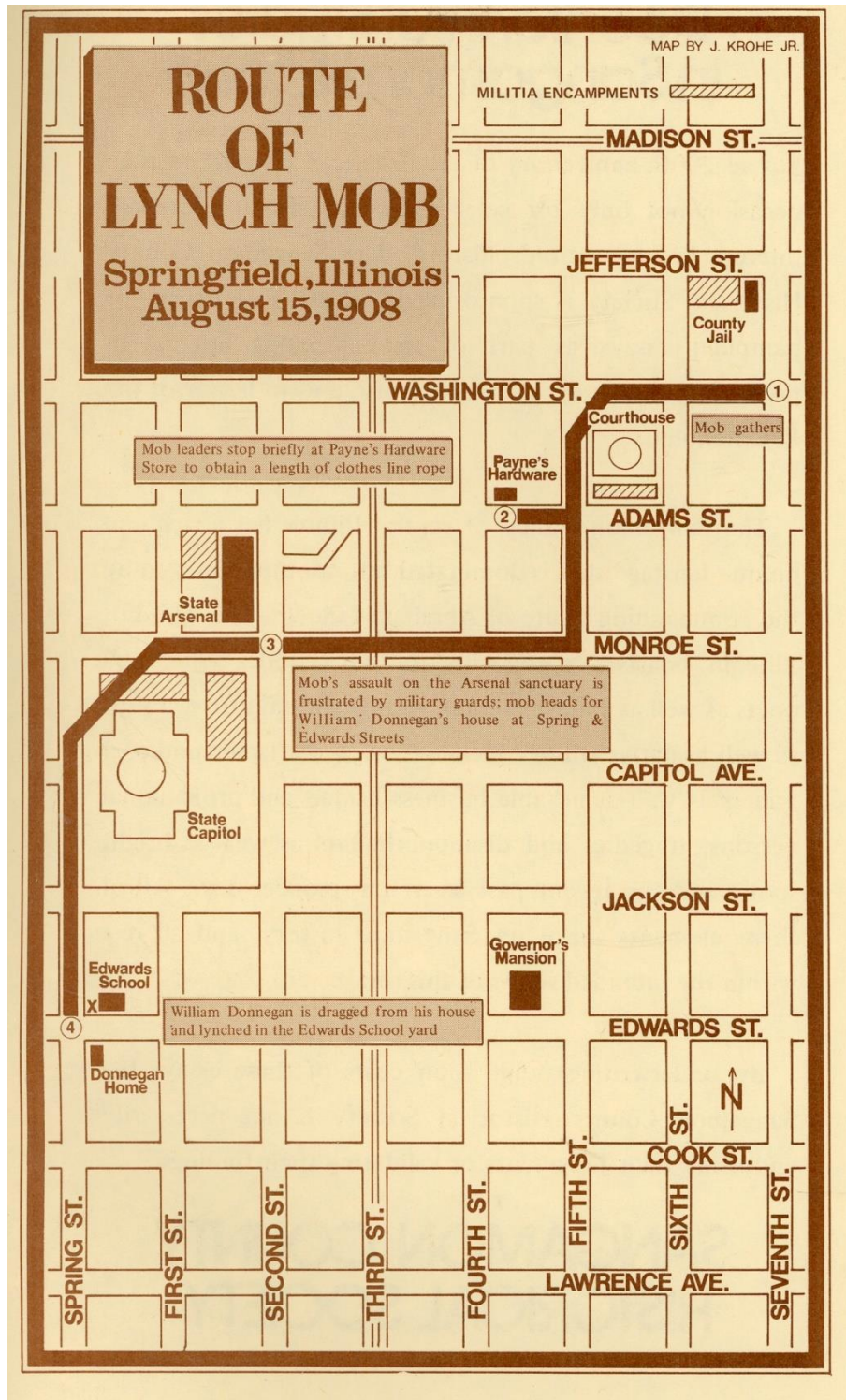


Figure 12. Path taken by mob during the second night of rioting, August 15, 1908, in which William Donnegan was murdered (Krohe 1973).

Family and Home of Aged Negro Lynched Saturday Night; Alleged Mob Leaders.



ERNEST HUMPHREY ABRAHAM RAYMER
MOB LEADERS UNDER ARREST
Raymer is Accused of Having Taken Part in Donnegan Lynching



Family of Donnegan, His Widow in Chair, Her Son, Grandchildren and Neighbors

CHICAGO, Aug. 16.—(Special to Tribune.)—A mob of about 200 men, many of them armed with revolvers and shotguns, gathered Saturday night in front of the home of an aged Negro, James Donnegan, and lynched him.

Negroes Best Assault.
The mob were getting ready to break down the door when a mob leader, Ernest Humphrey, who had been in the neighborhood for some time, stepped forward and ordered the mob to wait. He then turned to the aged Negro and said: "You are a good man, but you are a nigger, and you are in the way of the white man's progress. You must go."

'Messed' in Front of Larder.
The mob of the larder to get something to eat were those who remained after the mob had broken down the door. They were all armed with revolvers and shotguns. They were all dressed in dark clothing. They were all looking at the aged Negro with a look of hatred.

Drains Up Misinformation.
The mob were all dressed in dark clothing. They were all looking at the aged Negro with a look of hatred. They were all armed with revolvers and shotguns. They were all dressed in dark clothing. They were all looking at the aged Negro with a look of hatred.



Home of Donnegan, 80 Year Old Negro, Friend of Abraham Lincoln, Hanged By Mob, To Tree in Front of His House.

DROWNS AS GIRLS LOOK ON

Carl Johnson Sinks, Chimpantons "Thinking It a Joke."

LAUNCH VICTIMS RECOVERED

Body of Emil G. Pfeiffer, Lost Thursday, Found at Killebuck, Wis.

DROWNING OF THE TEAL

Carl Johnson, 20-year-old, of Hammond, Ind., was drowned Saturday night when he fell from the deck of a launch. He was with a group of girls who were looking on. The launch was carrying a load of coal. The girls were all dressed in light-colored clothing. They were all looking at Carl Johnson with a look of surprise.

Figure 13. Collage of photographs published by the Chicago Tribune (17 August 1908, p. 3), juxta positioning the widow Donnegan alongside her husband's killer.

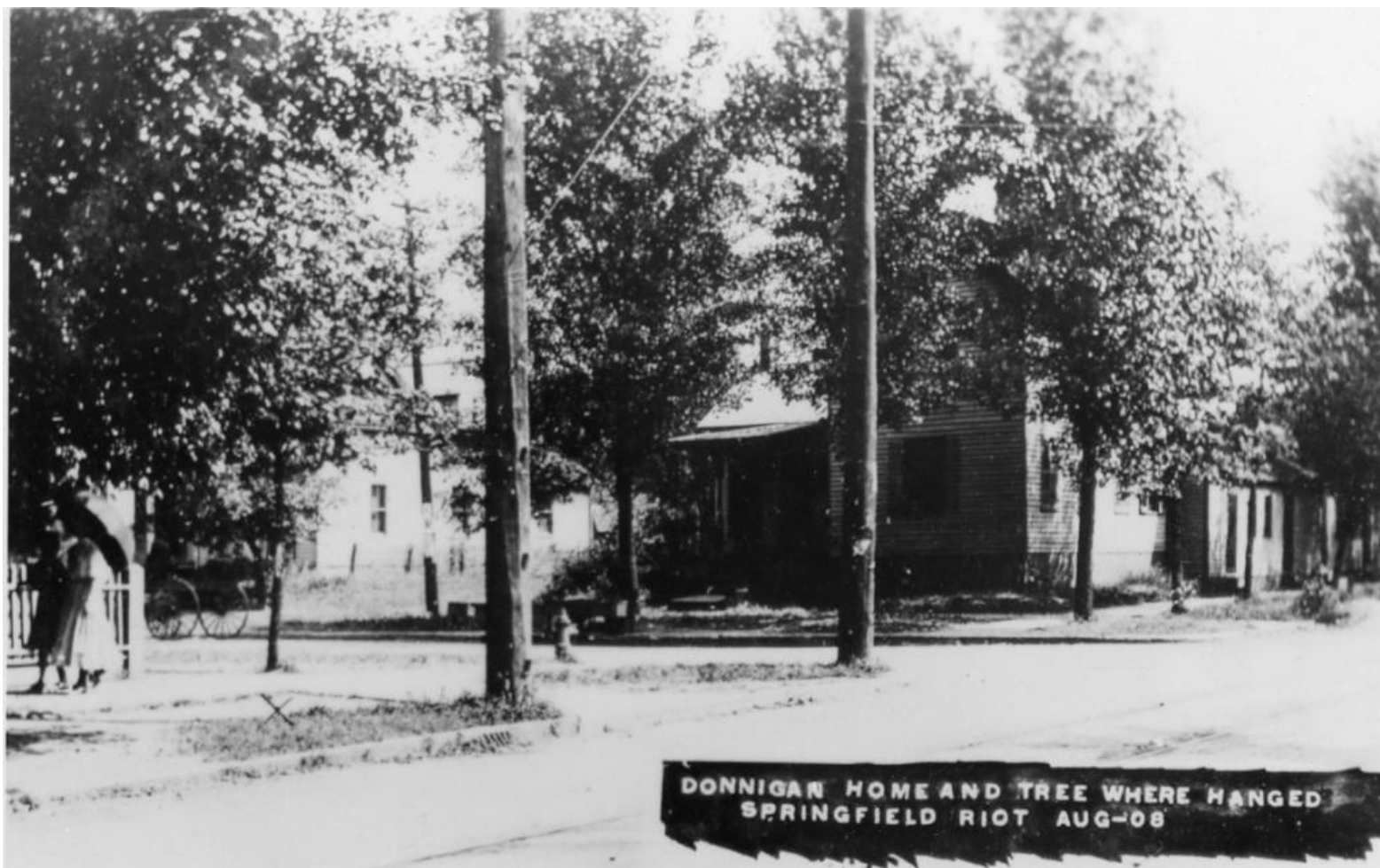
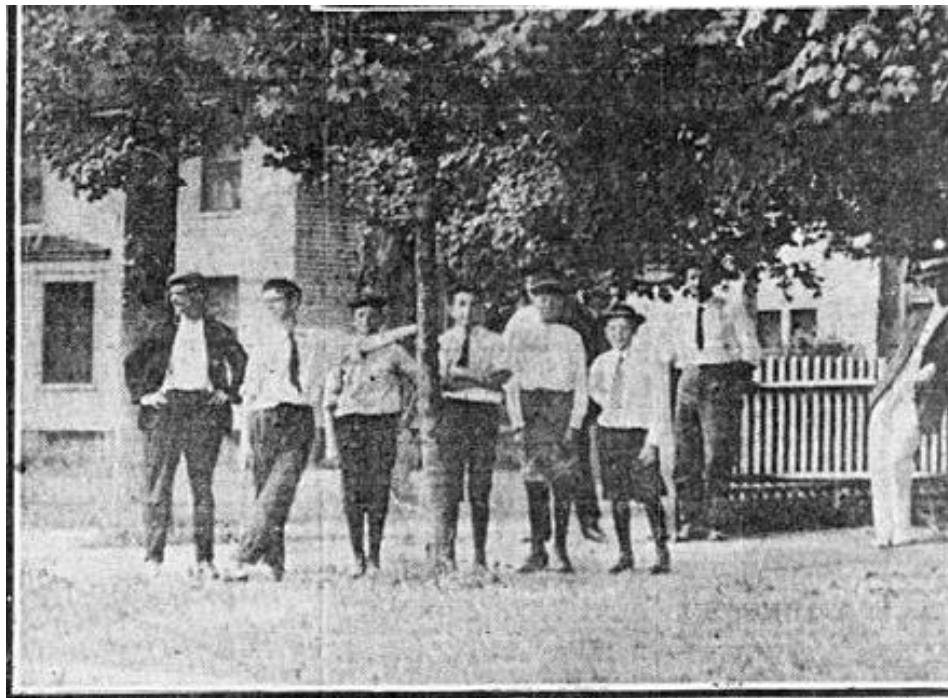


Figure 14. View of the Donnigan House, August 1908 (Sangamon Valley Collection 90-386A009, 90-387B006, and 90-387C002).



Home of Donegan, 80 Year Old Negro, Friend of Abraham Lincoln. Hanged By Mob, To Tree In Front Of His House.

Figure 15. Two views of the Donnigan House, August 1908. Top: Sangamon Valley Collection 90-385007, 90-387001, and 90-387C003. Bottom: *Chicago Tribune*, 17 August 1908, p. 1).



Figure 16. View of the Donegan family consisting of his widow (Sarah), her son (William, Jr.), three grandchildren, and two unidentified neighbors (*Chicago Tribune*, 17 August 1908, p. 1).



MRS. MARY LEE, HER DAUGHTER, MRS. CARRIE HAMILTON, AND LATTER'S SON.
SPRINGFIELD REFUGEES IN CHICAGO, RELATIVES OF THE COLORED OCTOGENARIAN,
WILLIAM DONNEGAN, WHO WAS LYNCHED.

[From a photograph by a staff artist of 'The Daily News.']

Figure 17. View of William Donegan's family, refugees in Chicago (*Chicago Daily News*, 18 August 1908, p. 3). Mary Lee [nee Mary Belle King] was the wife of Peter and Caroline's son, John Samuel David Lee (1832-1909). Carrie, or Caroline (1811-1892) was William's older sister—the oldest of Leanna's children. In 1908, Mary would have been about 67 years of age. Her daughter Carrie (a school teacher) was about 31 years of age in 1908.



Figure 18. Prior to relocating to 118 West Edwards Street, William Donnegan resided for many years at 811 East Jefferson Street. This view of the *City of Springfield* map (Potter 1854) illustrates the location of William Donnegan’s house. The Donegan residence was located only three blocks northeast of the Public Square and the central business district. In 1857, the West ½, Lot 6, Block 30 (which appears to have had two houses constructed on it) was owned by his mother, Leanna Knox [cf. *Illinois State Register*, 19 February 1857, p. 3 which listed her as delinquent in her property taxes for the previous year.] he 1866 Springfield City Directory suggested that William’s house was on the north side of Jefferson Street, three doors east of Seventh Street—which corresponds to the western of the two houses located on the W1/2, Lot 6 (SCD 1860). The *Illinois State Journal* (7 February 1860, p. 3) also suggests that William K. Donnegan owned of the East ½, West ½, Lot 2, Bock 12, Old Town Plat (located closer to the central business district (and adjacent to Simeon Francis’ residence on Jefferson Street).

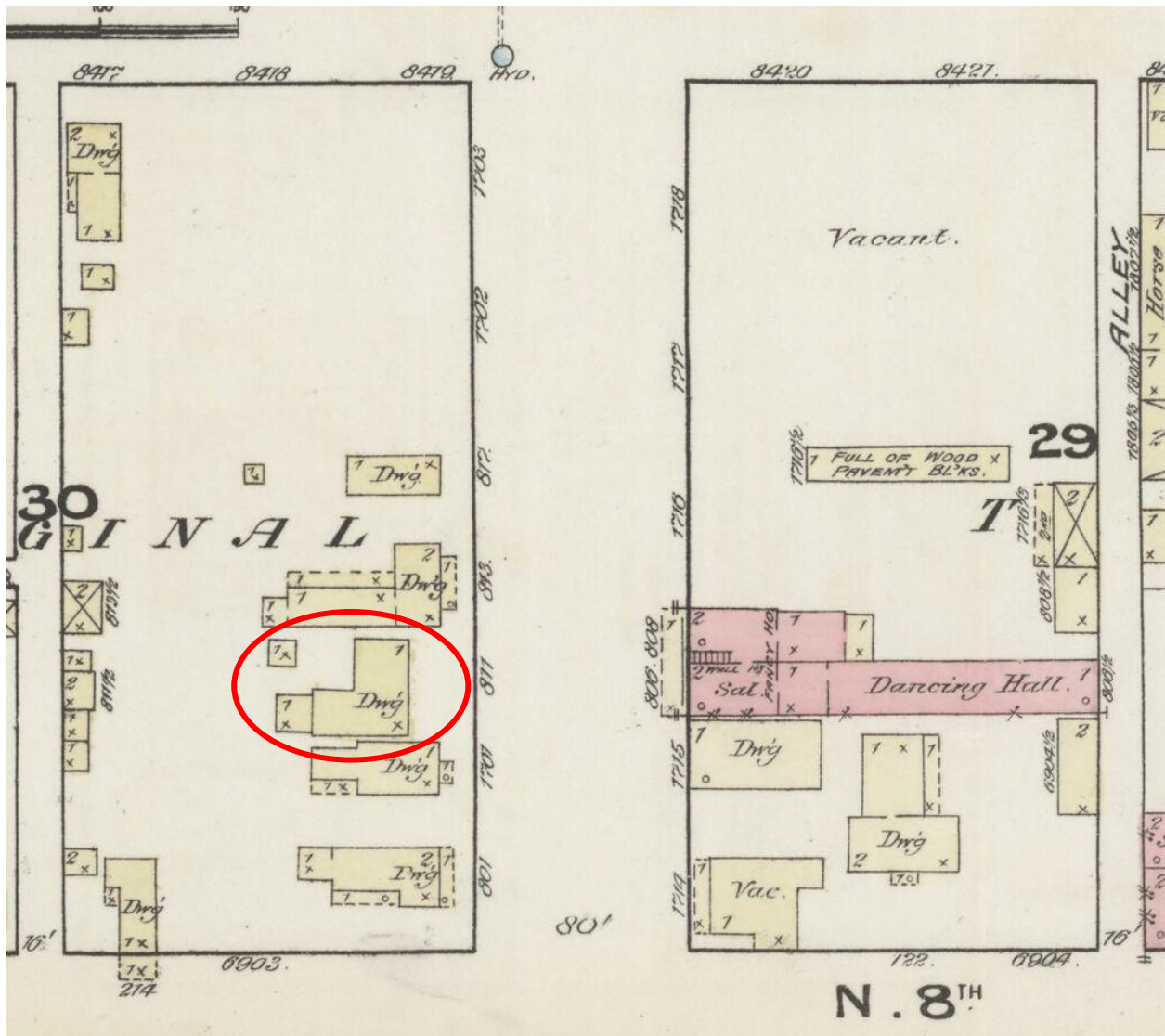


Figure 19. The early Donnegan residence as depicted on the 1884 Sanborn fire insurance map of Springfield (Sanborn 1884). During the 1850s, Donnegan was involved in the Underground Railroad while residing at this location. He remained at 811 East Jefferson Street, with his mother, from the 1850s up through 1879. Houses each side of the Donnegan residence (at 801 and 187 East Jefferson Street) both operated as houses of prostitution. Similarly, the properties located across the street to the south of Donnegan's house included the infamous Mag Brown house of prostitution (122 South Eighth Street), and W. Longnecker's Dancing Hall and Saloon (806-808 Jefferson Street; which also operated as a house of prostitution). To the west of Eighth Street (at the northwest corner of the Eighth and Jefferson Street intersection) was the infamous resort of Madam Jessie Brownie—one of the more upscale and long-running houses of prostitution to have operated in Springfield. Being located within the heart of this vice district, most likely drove Leanna and her family from this neighborhood.

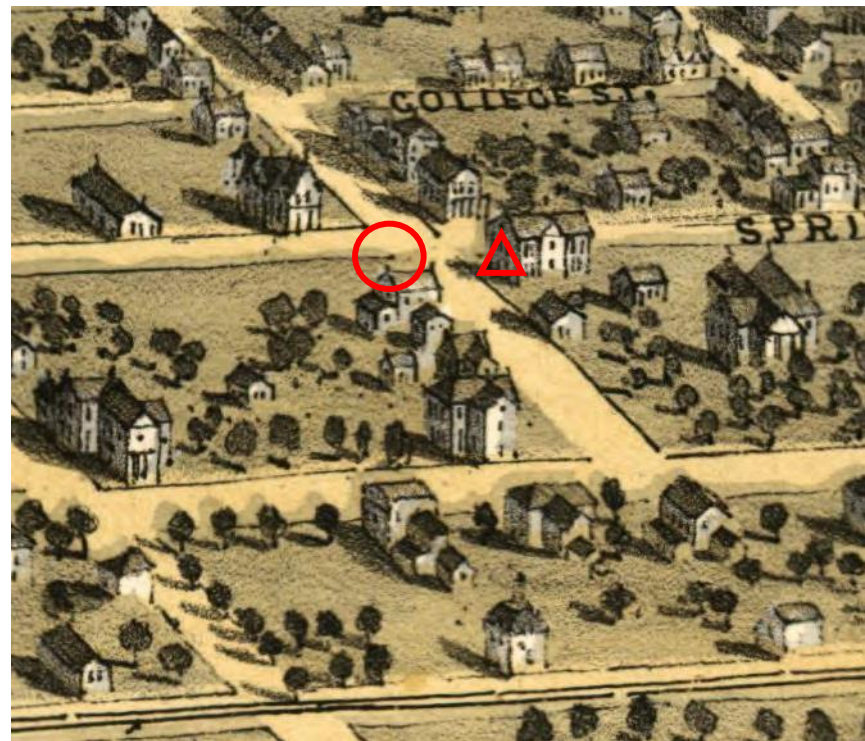


Figure 20. Details of the 1858 *Map of Springfield* (Sides 1858, left) and 1867 *Bird's Eye view of Springfield* (Ruger 1867, left). The red circle indicates the location of the Donnegan residence, which was not yet present at this time. The red triangle marks the location of the Edwards School, where William Donnegan was lynched in 1908.

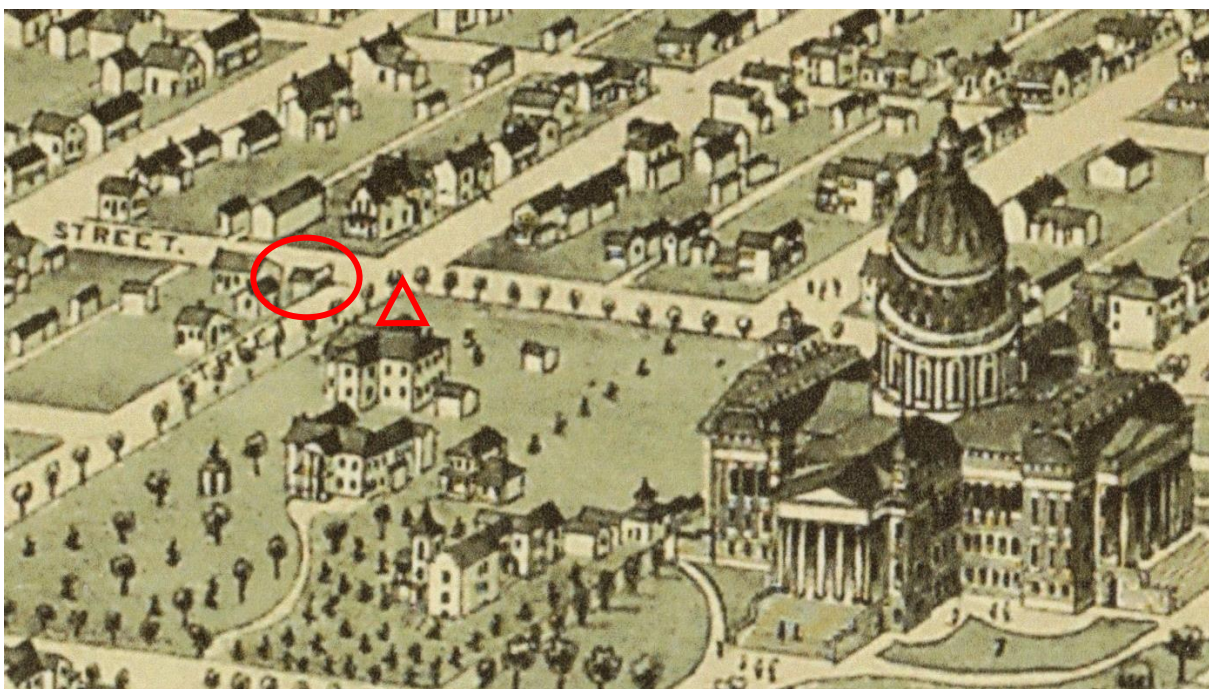


Figure 21. Detail of the 1873 bird's-eye view of Springfield (Koch 1873). The Donnegan house lot appears to be improved by this date, with the construction of a small, one-story building (potentially having a false front?). The present State Capitol was still under construction at this time.

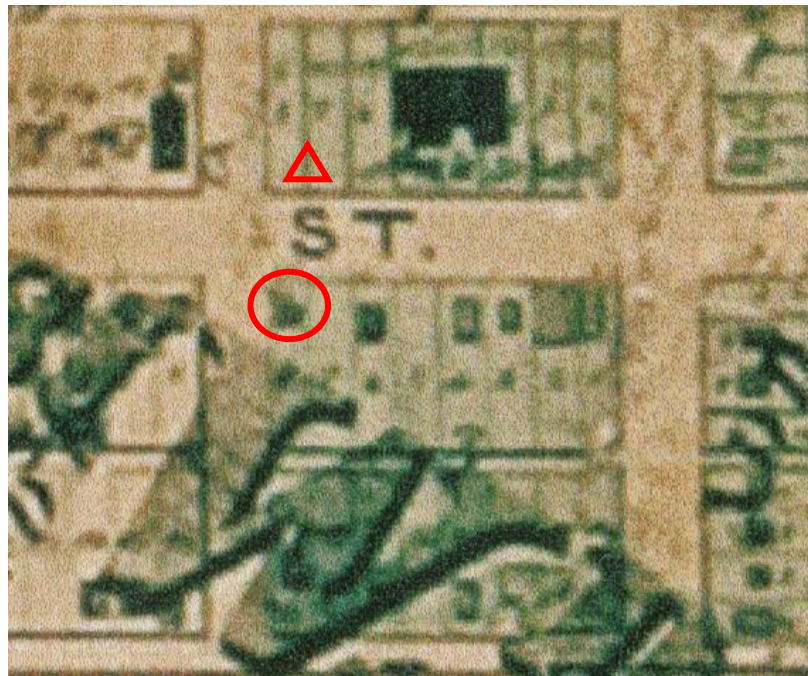


Figure 22. Detail of the 1876 *Map of Springfield* (Bird 1876). The red circle depicts the location of the Donnegan residence, and the red triangle depicts the location of the tree in which he was lynched.

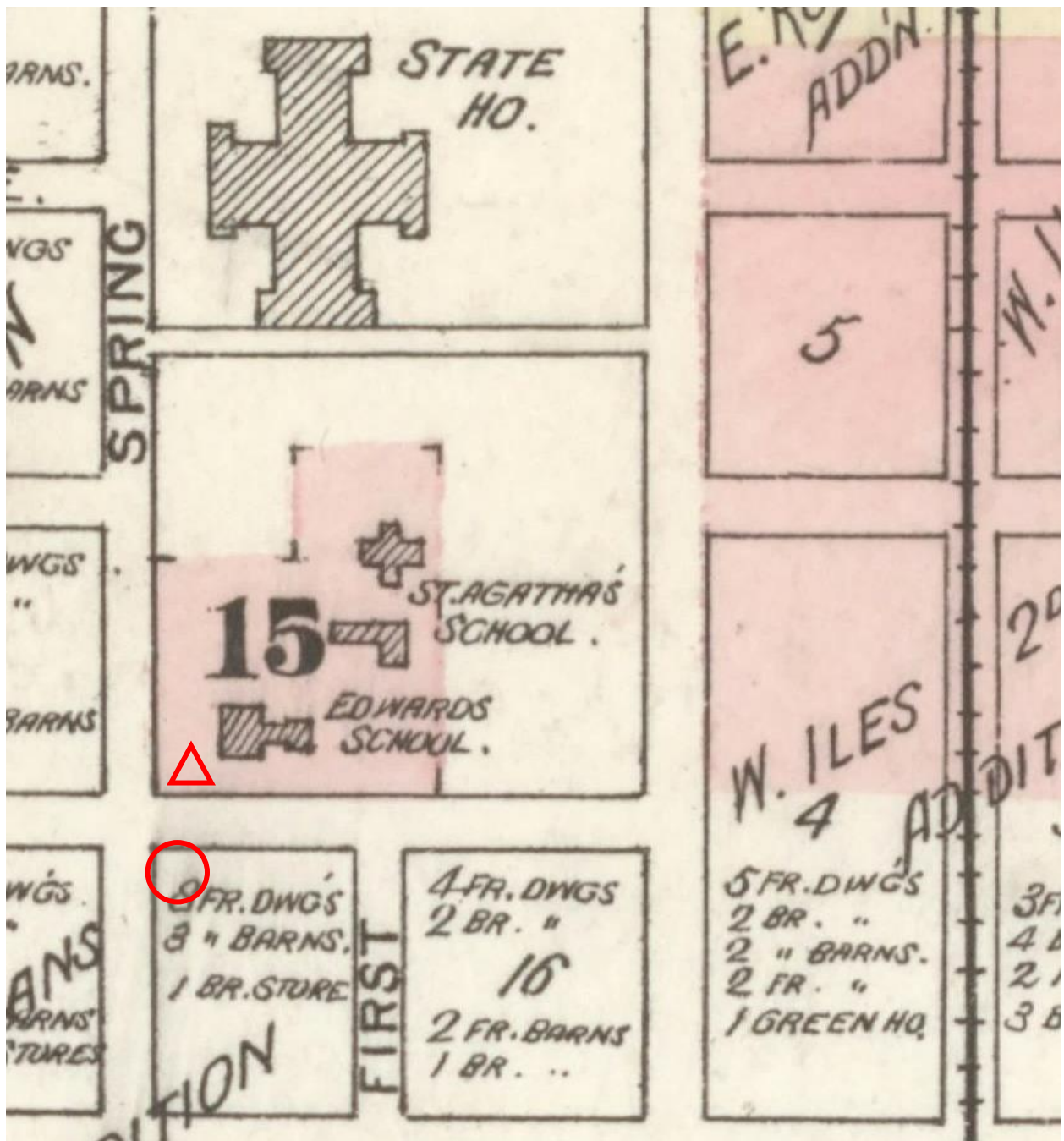


Figure 23. Location of the Donnegan residence (circled in red) and the site of his lynching (red triangle) as depicted on the 1884 Sanborn fire insurance map (Sanborn 1884).

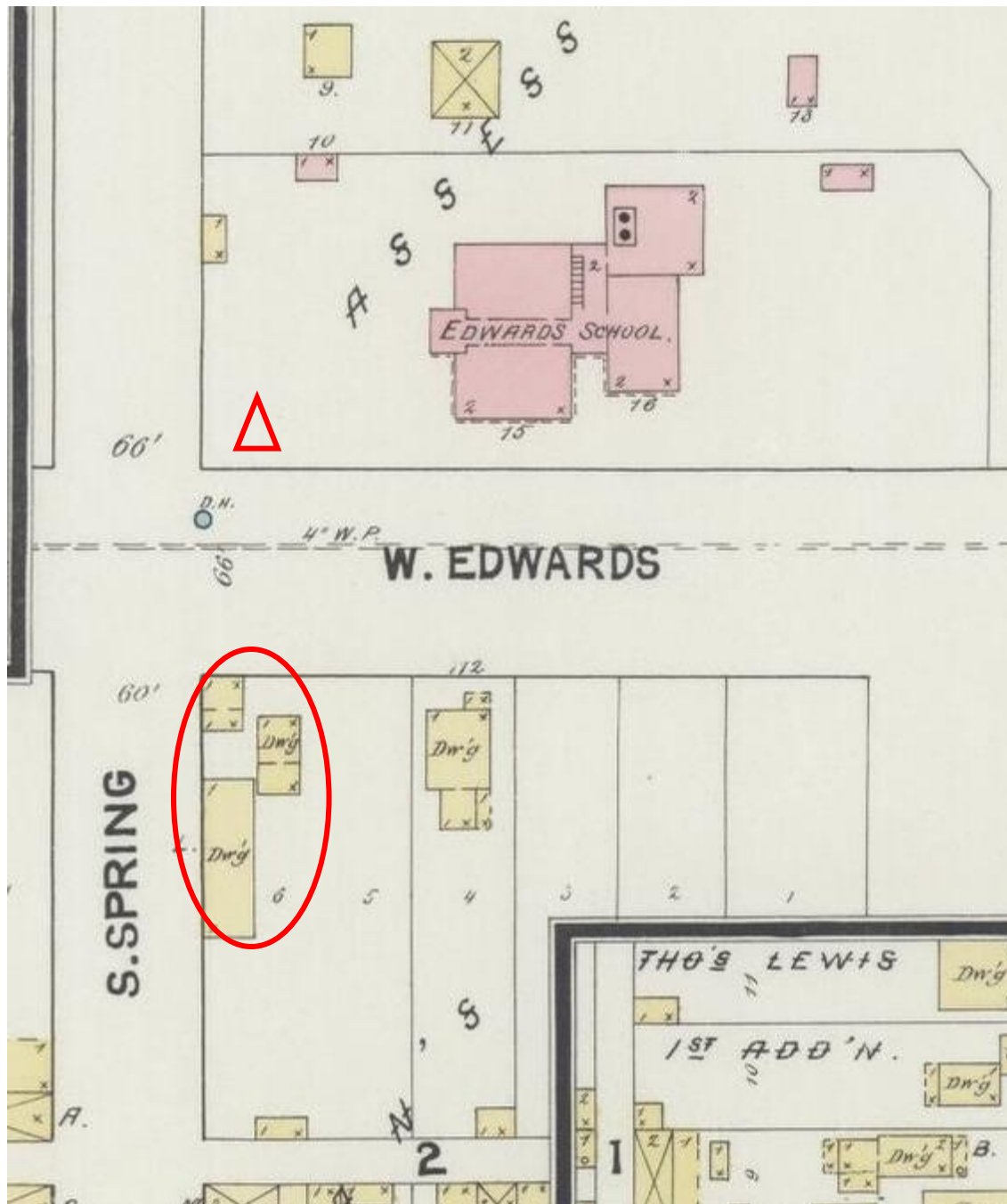


Figure 24. Location of the Donnegan residence (circled in red) and the site of his lynching (red triangle) as depicted on the 1890 Sanborn fire insurance map (Sanborn-Perris 1890:23).

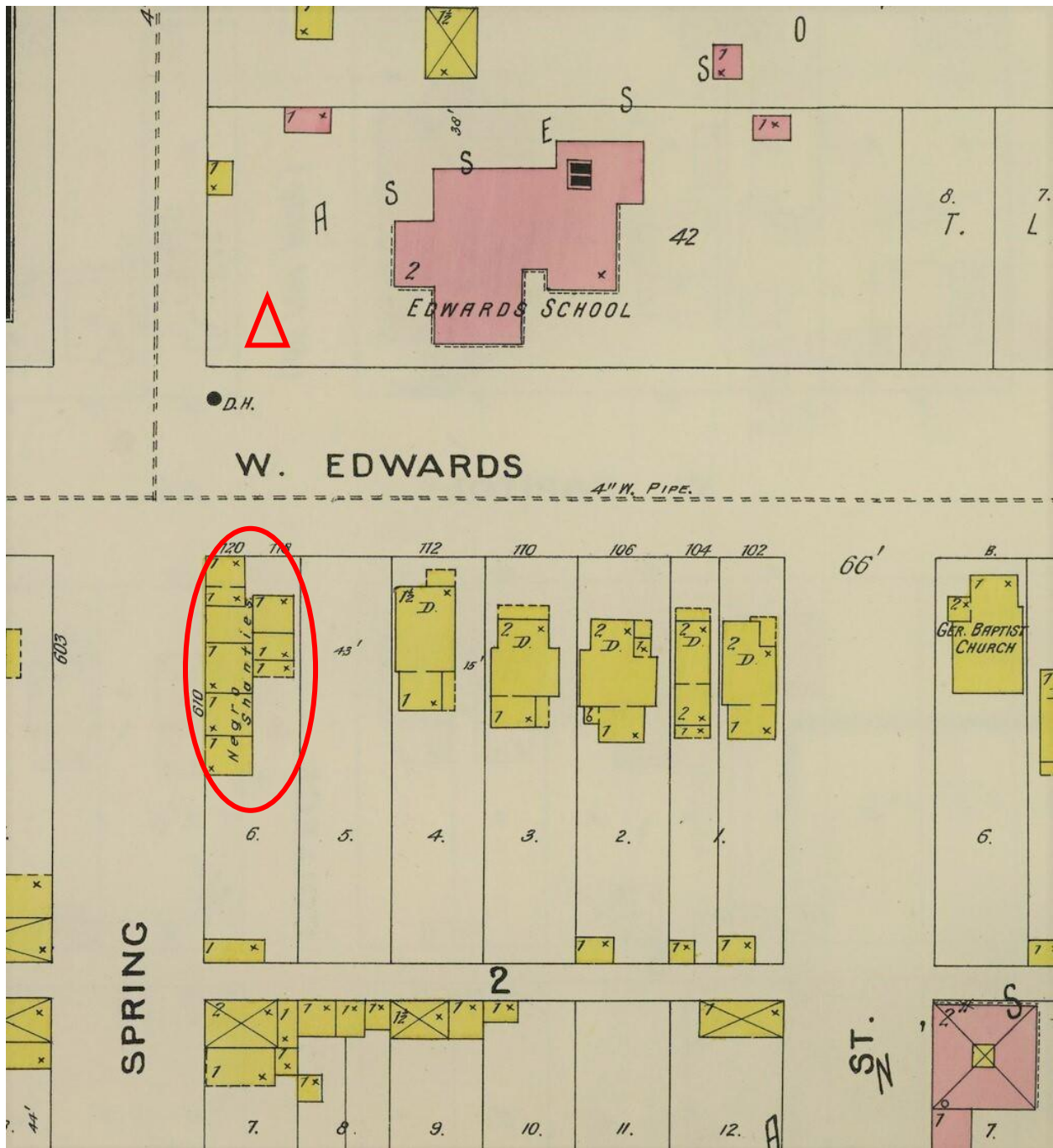


Figure 25. Location of the Donnegan residence (circled in red) and the site of his lynching (red triangle) as depicted on the 1896 Sanborn fire insurance map (Sanborn-Perris 1896:39).

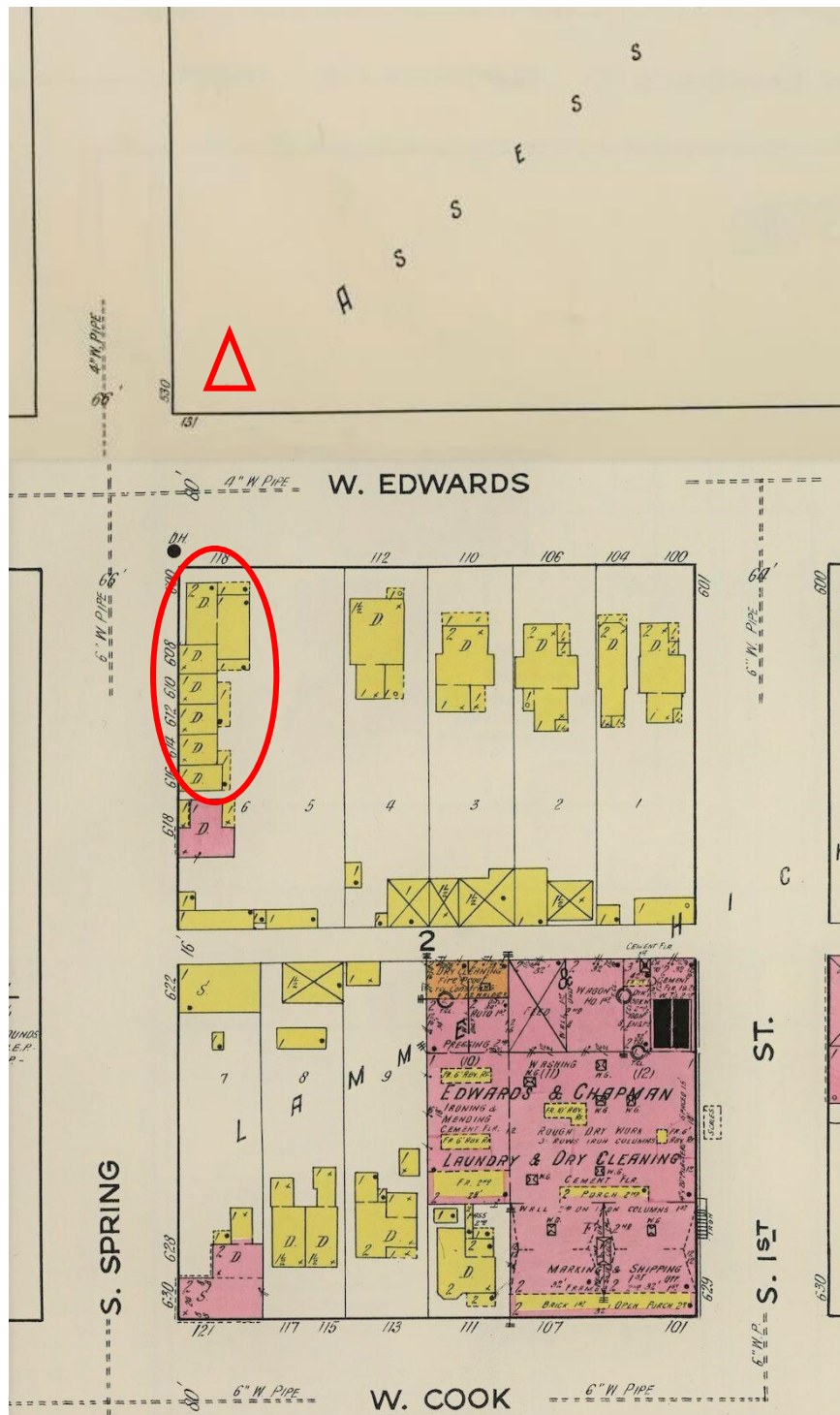


Figure 26. Location of the Donnegan residence (circled in red) and the site of his lynching (red triangle) as depicted on the 1917 Sanborn fire insurance map (Sanborn 1917:152, 154).



Figure 27. View of the Donnegan residence (red circle) and location of his lynching (red triangle) as depicted on a 1939 aerial photograph (USDA 1939). By this date, the Edwards School had been demolished.

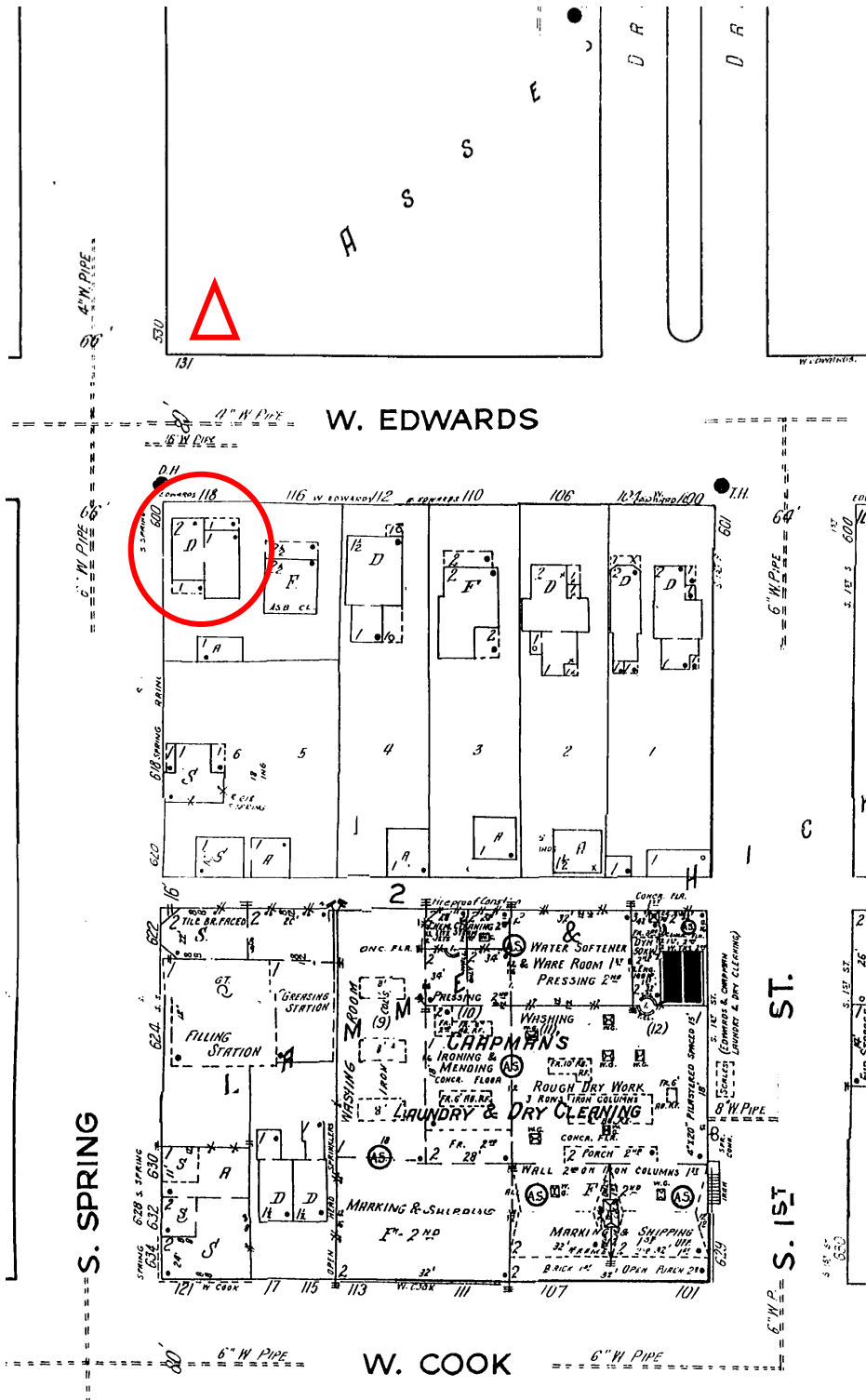


Figure 28. Location of the Donnegan residence (red circle) and of his lynching (red triangle) as depicted on the 1950 Sanborn fire insurance map (Sanborn 1950:152-154).



Figure 29. Aerial view from 1969 illustrating the location of the Donnegan residence (circled in red) (USDA 1969).

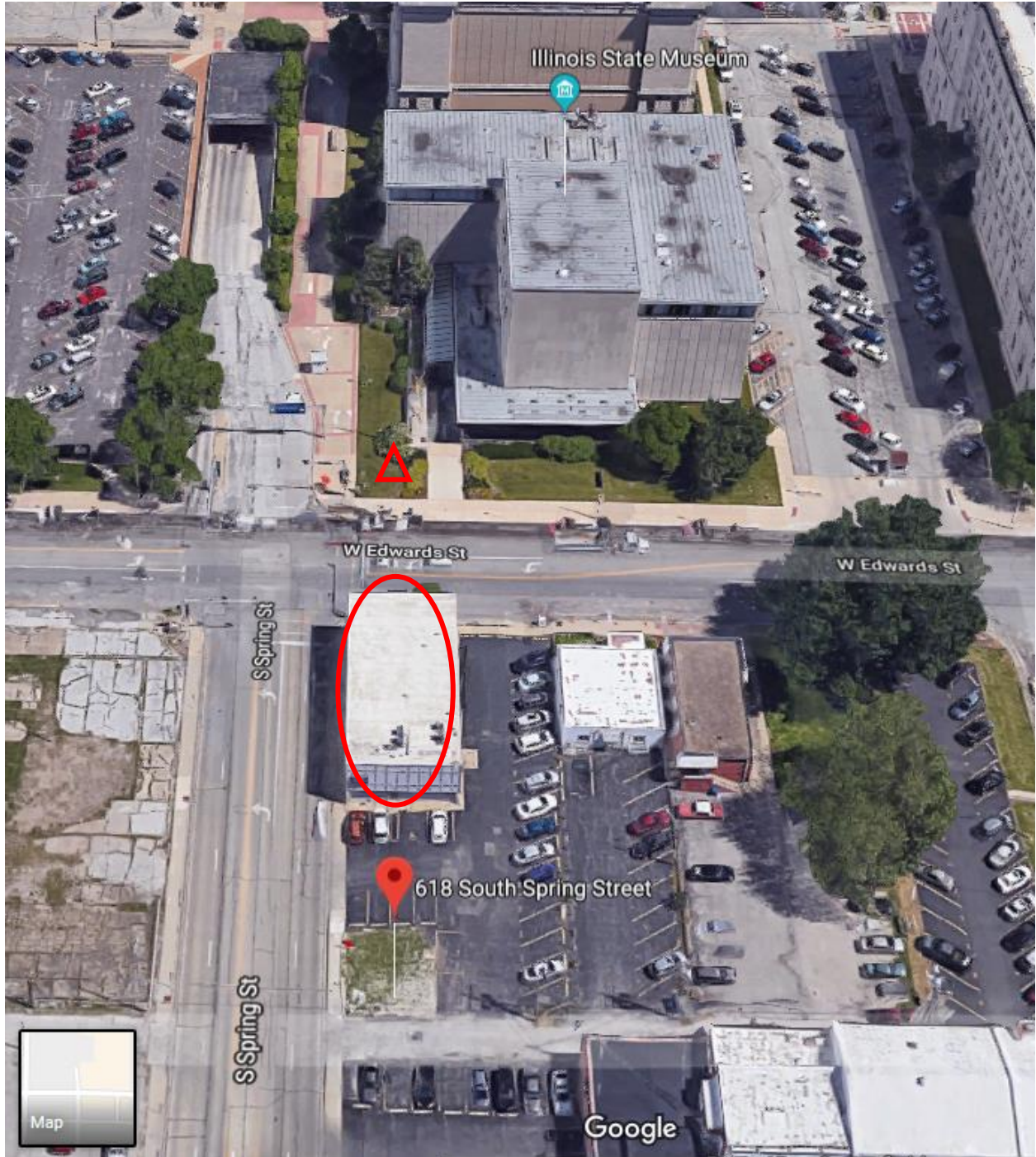


Figure 30. Aerial view illustrating the location of the Donnegan residence (circled in red) and of his lynching (red triangle), as depicted on Google Earth (Google 2019).

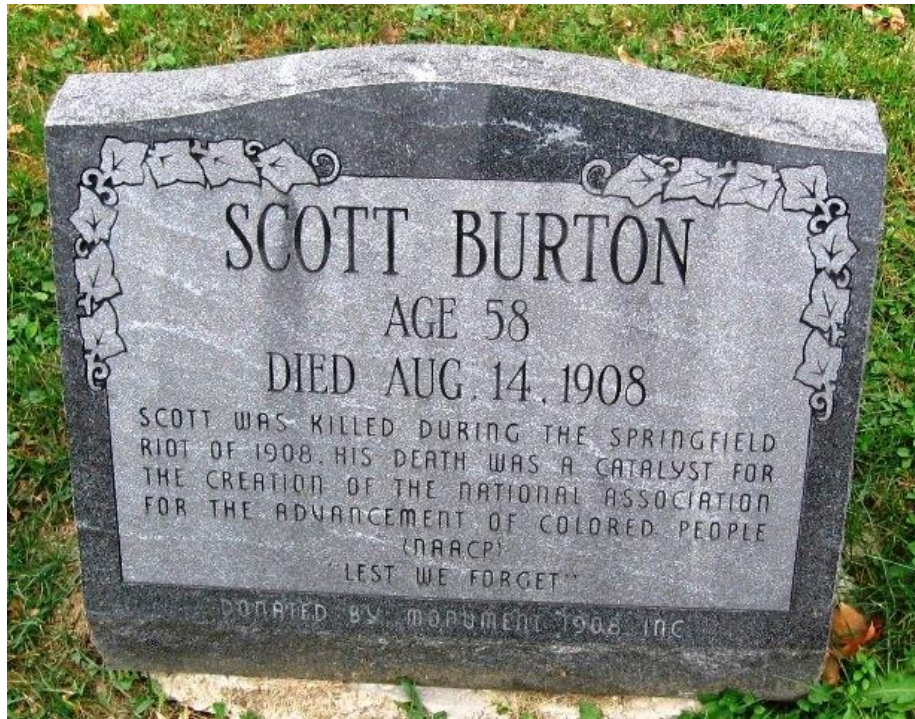


Figure 31. View of the Scott Burton (top) and William Donnegan (bottom) tombstones is Oak Ridge Cemetery. Both graves remained unmarked until 1995, when the current headstones were set. Top: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/29887546/scott-burton>. Bottom: The text at the base of the tombstone reads “William was killed during the Springfield Riot of 1908. His death was a catalyst for the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). ‘Lest We Forget’” (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/29887569/william-k.-donnegan>).