

# Giving Voice to the Forgotten Victims of the 1908 Springfield Race Riot: The Bessie Black Story

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On the morning of August 14, 1908, Mabel Hallam accused George Richardson of having raped her the night before.



Mabel Hallam (21; wife of streetcar motorman William Hallam)



George Richardson (36; construction laborer)

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Although Mrs. Hallam was later to recant her story, absolving Mr. Richardson of any wrong-doing, her actions unleashed a fury of violent activity that was to wreak havoc with the City of Springfield.

# The Illinois State Journal

SEVENTY-SEVENTH YEAR      SPRINGFIELD ILLINOIS SATURDAY AUGUST 15 1908—10 PAGES      PRICE 3 CENTS

## Frenzied Mob Sweeps City, Wreaking Bloody Vengeance For Negro's Heinous Crime.

### MOB WRECKS LOPER'S CAFE DURING RIOT

Throng Attacks Restaurant  
Owned by Man Who Took  
Suspect Away.

PLACE TOTALLY BURNED

FURNITURE, CHAIRS, TABLES AND  
OTHER VALUABLES BURNED  
IN THE STREET.

AUTHORITIES HELPLESS

VICTIM OF NEGRO ASSAULT.



MRS. J. L. HALLAM.

### NEGROES REMOVED TO BLOOMINGTON

OFFICERS FEAR VIOLENCE AND  
SPIRIT FUGITIVE AWAY!

Street Abandoned From Twenty Feet by  
Fate Alone of Five White Deputies  
Barred from Moving into  
Automobile and Leave City—Police  
as They Near Breach.

### THE CASUALTIES

DEAD.

W. J. AGOSTO, slain by mob bullet.  
EDWIN JOHNSON, 100 East Riverside street, shot through the abdomen.

INJURED.

ALBERT OVERLINE, 410 South First street, shot through the left hip during street rioting.  
GEORGE STUBBS, 401 North Third street, shot through the left eye during street rioting.  
ANDREW ALDRANAKIS, 101 East Jackson street, shot through the right arm during rioting.  
HARRY D. PARKING, 101 1/2 South Sixth street, member of fighting mob section of First company, shot in the head while attacking Loper's restaurant.  
WALTER W. WINTERS, shot in one leg.  
E. P. BRIDGEMAN, struck in one head with brick.  
DEAN DANIELS, 108 Columbia street, struck in one head with brick during rioting at Loper's.  
JESSE M. CAMPBELL, police policeman, shot in back and hip with brick.  
ROBERT DANFORTH, colored barber, shot in one hand during rioting.  
DAVID HALEY, struck on head with brick.  
WALTER WINTERS, policeman, struck with brick.  
WILL STUART, Chicago & St. Louis transfer agent, struck on neck with brick.  
THOMAS REAVEL, of market, shot on right arm by mob.  
CLAUDE ANAPU, white man, struck by stone brick.  
JOHN BROWNELL, milkman, one hand badly lacerated.  
WALTER BROWN, struck on head with brick.  
ROBERT LAMBSON, 20 North Seventh street, badly lacerated and wounded.  
EUGENE W. CHAPIN, prohibition candidate for governor, was shot in forehead.  
JESSE W. INGLE, prohibition candidate for representative, left hand badly cut.  
R. S. STURGEON, 101 East Adams street, struck in back by mob bullet during rioting.  
HARRY BURNER, 100 East Adams street, shot below the eye, probably will die.

### TWO ARE KILLED AND MANY HURT AS MOB WORNS

Springfield Helpless as  
Hordes of Thousands of  
Frenzied Citizens.

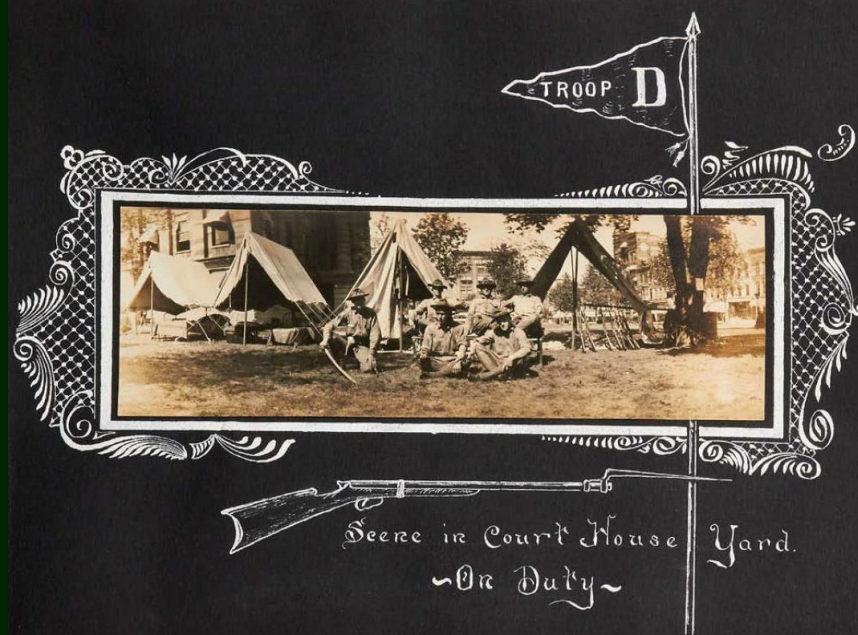
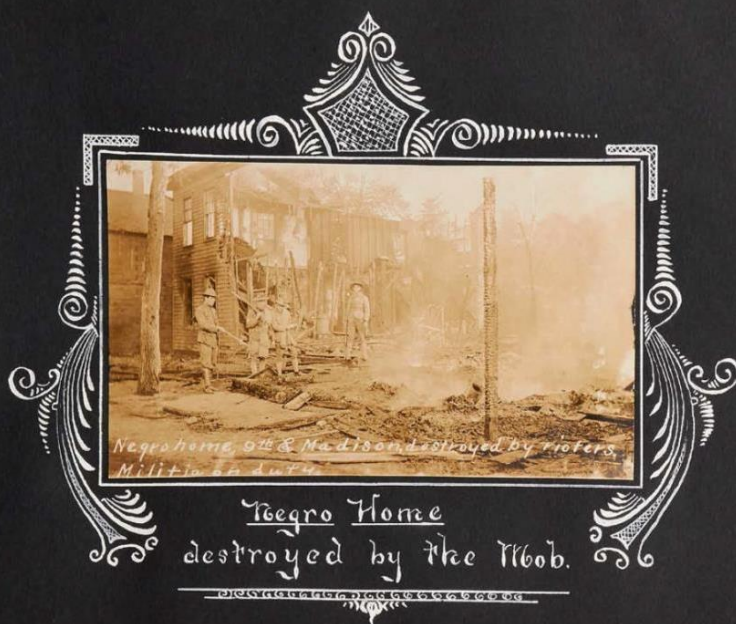
ASSAULT INCITES  
Mobs

State War Follows the Act  
Made by Negro Open  
Local Woman.

RESTAURANT IN RUIN



On that Friday evening of August 14<sup>th</sup>, the City of Springfield erupted in racially motivated mob violence that lasted for several days, and which resulted in the lynching of two African-American citizens, as well as the destruction of numerous houses and businesses within the city. Much of the violence was centered on the commercial district known as “the Levee” and residential area then-known as the “Badlands.” The violence was subdued through the efforts of the Illinois National Guard.

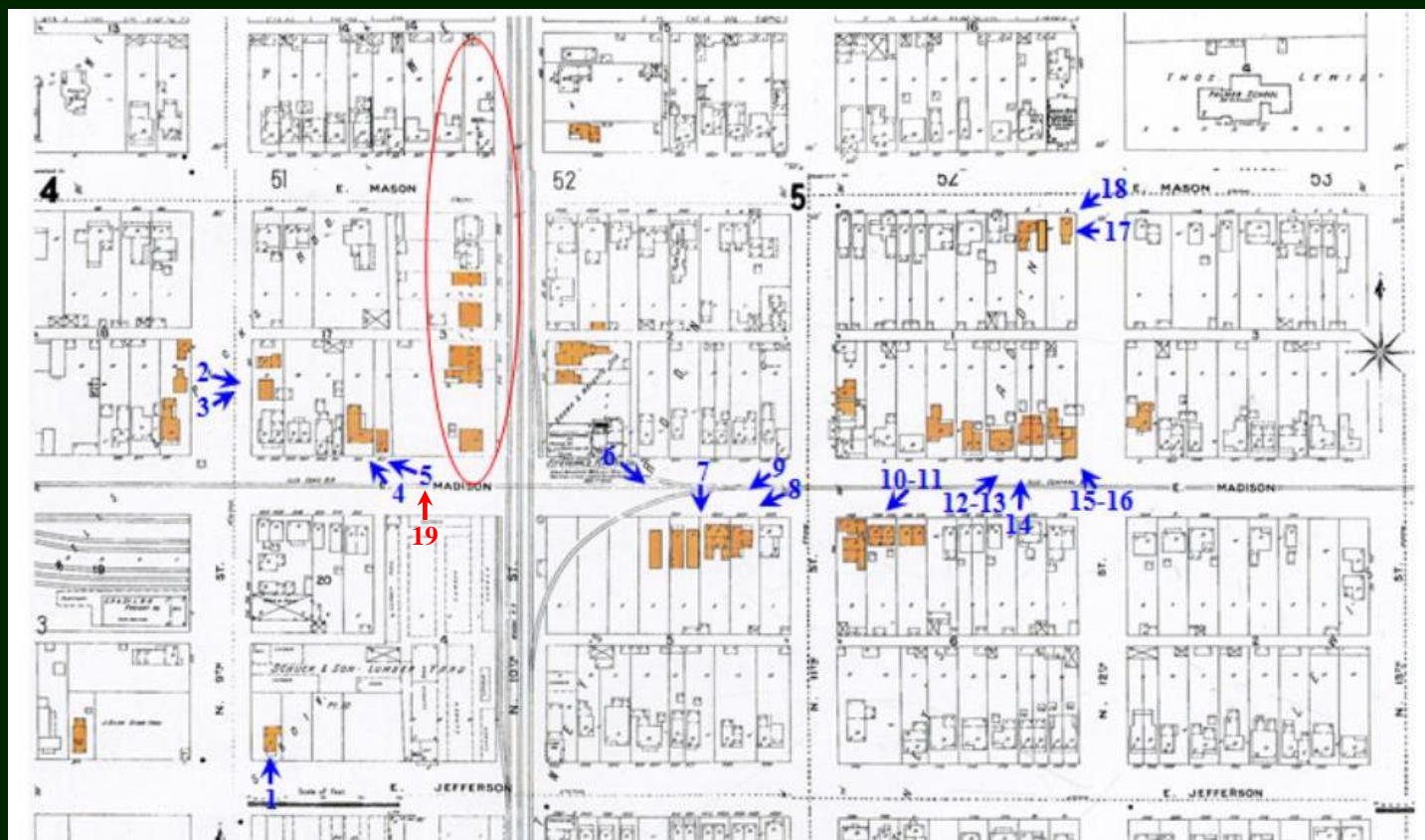




Photographs of East Madison Street, and National Guard in Springfield (August 1908).

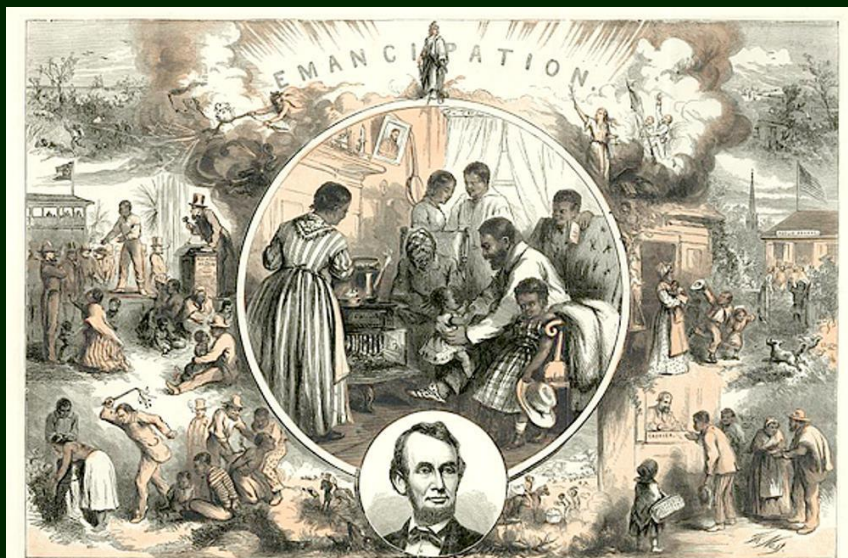


Over 40 homes and businesses were destroyed in Springfield's "Badlands" during the that August weekend. This map depicts the location of the houses and businesses destroyed by fire during the riots. The current project area is circled in red. The blue arrows indicate the perspective view of historic images of the aftermath of the event. Only one historic photograph has been located depicting the houses in the existing project area (number 19, in red).

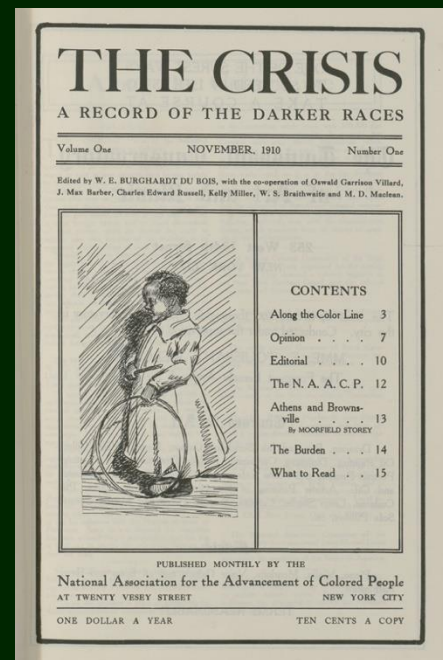




The Springfield Race Riot of August 1908 was one of the catalysts that resulted in the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). On February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1909 (in conjunction with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lincoln's birth), the organization was formed. As quoted in the NAACP's webpage, "The NAACP was formed partly in response to the continuing horrific practice of lynching and the 1908 race riot in Springfield, the capital of Illinois and resting place of President Abraham Lincoln."



"Emancipation." A wood engraving by illustrator Thomas Nast from 1865, celebrating the emancipation of Southern slaves at the end of the Civil War. (Library of Congress)



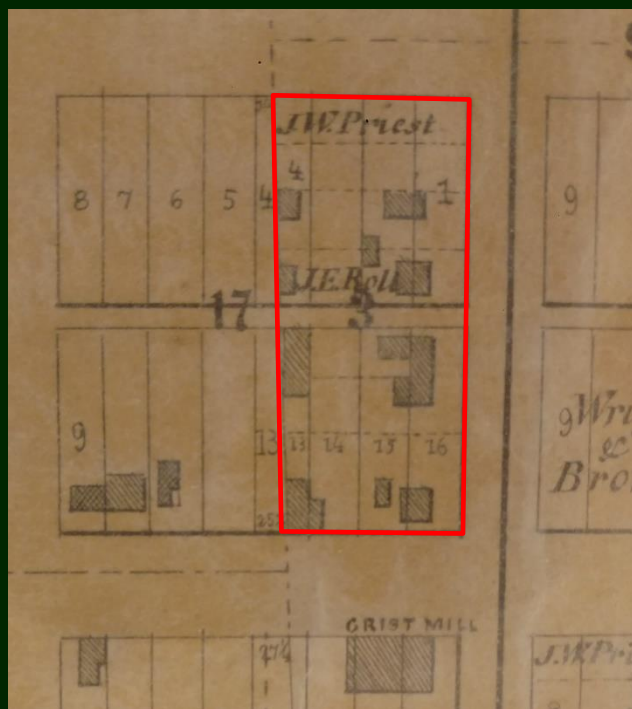


Phase II archaeological investigations on the Carpenter Street Underpass Project (the first component of the Springfield Rail Improvements Project) was undertaken in 2014.

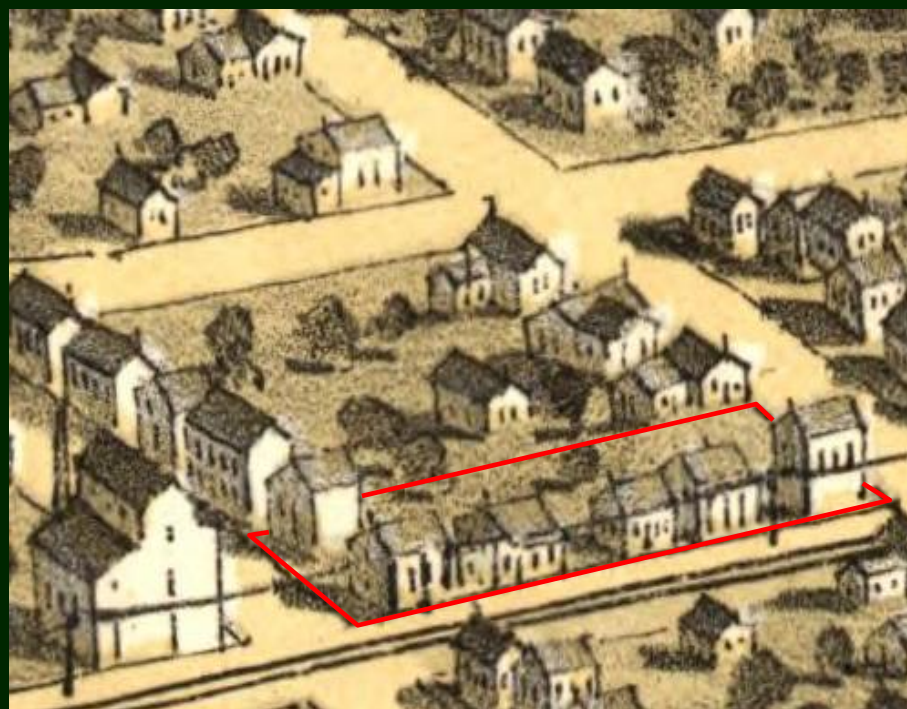


|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <br>160 0 160 320 | <br>© Copyright Hanson Professional Services Inc. 2013 | <b>CARPENTER STREET UNDERPASS</b>                        |
|  |   | SANGAMON COUNTY<br>SPRINGFIELD RAIL IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT |
|  |   | EXHIBIT 1  |

The well preserved remains of five houses constructed in the 1840s were uncovered during these investigations. They were built on lots re-oriented to face Tenth Street, along which the Great Western Railroad ran through Springfield. The homes initially were occupied by white families. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the residences were predominately occupied by African Americans tenants.



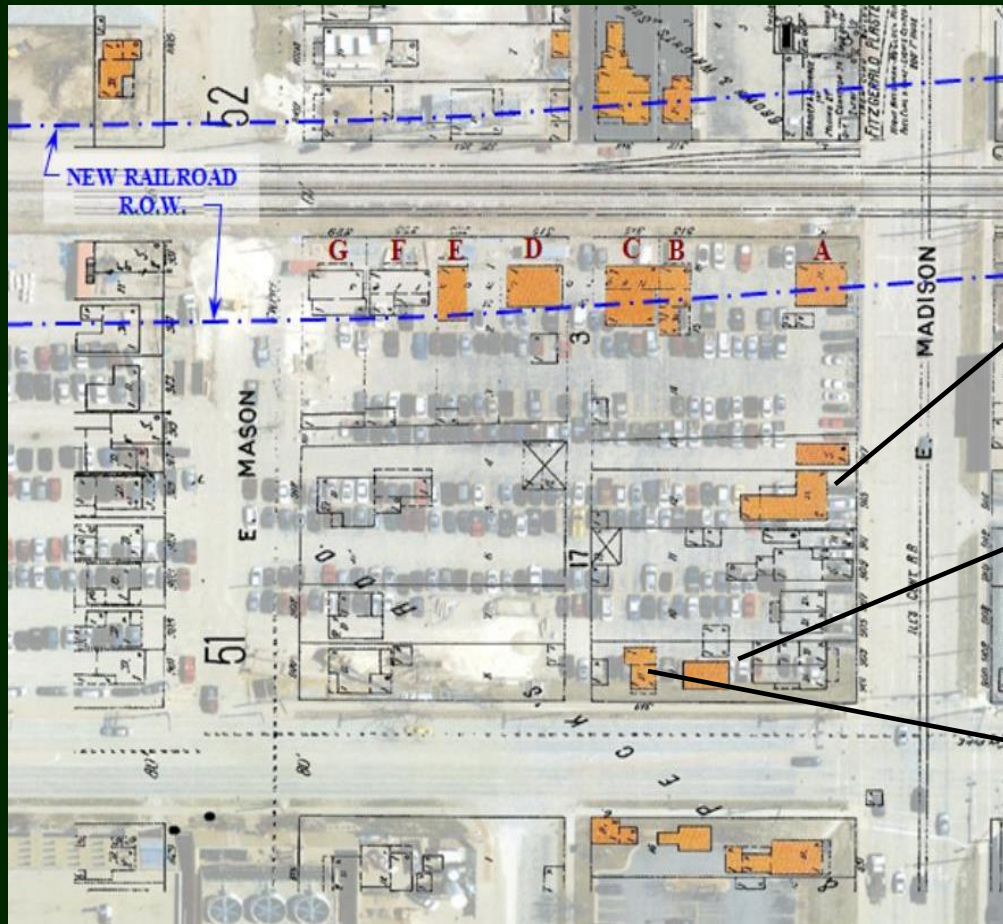
*1854 City of Springfield map*



*1867 Bird's Eye View of Springfield*



Location of burned (A-E) and unburned (F and G) houses in the Tenth Street Corridor, overlain on existing aerial view. Buildings highlighted in orange were destroyed by fire in the August 1908 Springfield riot. The railroad right-of-way depicted here was the original proposed right-of-way as envisioned in 2014.





Two views of House E during Phase II testing (2014). This house was occupied by the Isaac Smith family from circa 1845 through 1875. Although one local newspaper reported that a single white man named “H. Stoutmeyer” occupied House E at the time of the riot, research strongly suggests that Bessie Black, a young African-American woman recently estranged from her husband may have been the home’s last resident.

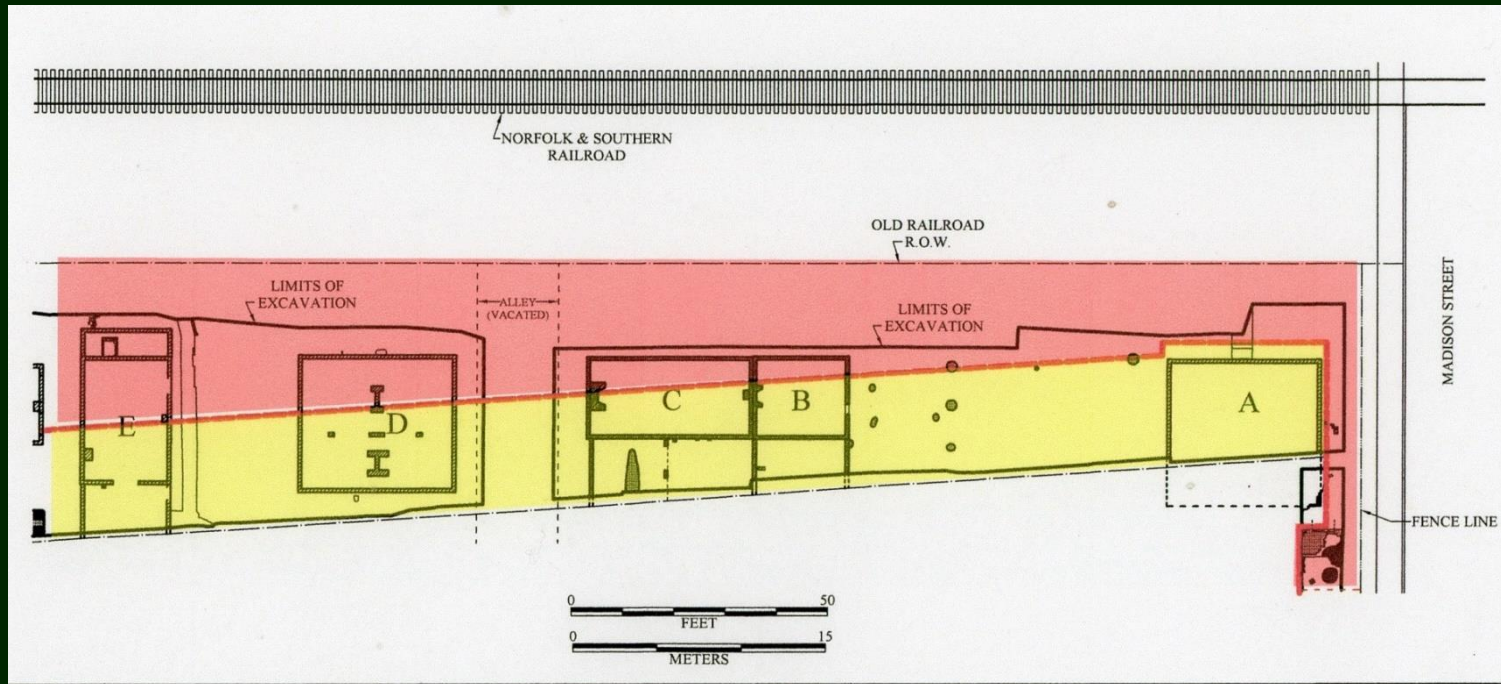


Looking west



Looking south

After four years of coordination with various state and federal agencies, and the community (“Consulting Parties”), the decision was made to 1) shift the railroad right-of-way 22’ to the east to preserve in place those areas of Houses A through E outlined in yellow, and 2) completely excavate those areas within the new right-of-way that could not be preserved in place (those areas outlined in red).





Beginning in mid-April 2019, we began the mitigation of the Race Riot Site, with work being initiated at House E. Excavations continued through the summer and early fall of 2019.





# Excavations proceeding on House E (and excavation of units on a checkerboard grid).





## First half of House E checkerboard nearing completion





A key aspect of the archaeological excavations was understanding the depositional sequence within the houses and the different contexts in which the artifacts were recovered (i.e. Pre-Fire; Fire; and Post-Fire). A distinct “fire zone” associated with the house’s destruction in 1908 was readily observable. The top and bottom of the fire zone is marked by the red lines, left. Burned floor boards and floor joist are exposed, on right.





After completing the first half of the checkerboard, the second half was excavated. House E after completion of the first half of the checkerboard (left), and after completion of the fieldwork (right).





The investigations yielded insights into the character of the 1840s housing constructed in the neighborhood. Two of the more common house forms in the project area included: 1) single-pile, 1½-story frame dwellings with shed-roof rear service wings (left), and 2) larger double-pile, 1½-story frame dwellings with rear service wing integrated under a single gable roof (right).



Left: Detail of early twentieth century postcard illustrating Governor Deneen being escorted to Camp Lincoln from downtown rail depot.

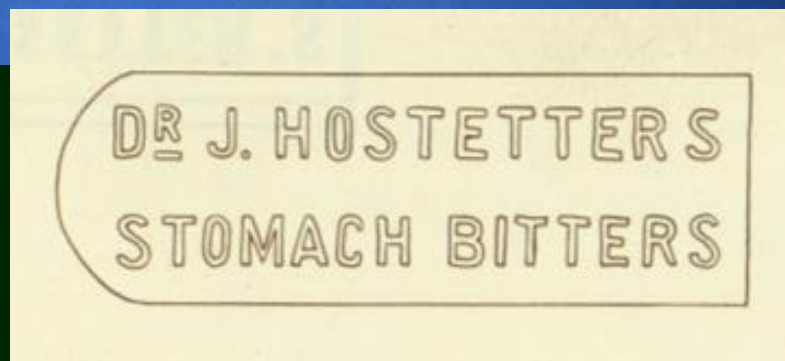
Right: Detail of circa 1872 picture of the new State Capitol under construction with houses in foreground. Often house form was a double house.

With the fieldwork completed by early summer 2020, the focus had shifted to the processing of the artifacts and report production. All artifacts have now been washed, inventoried, and the report is progressing.





A wide range of artifacts dating from the 1830s through August 1908 were recovered, Pre-Fire deposits were generally subdivided into Early, Middle, and Late components. This image documents the *primary vessels* from the Early-Middle Pre-Fire context of House E deposited (circa 1845-1870) by the widow Smith and her family.



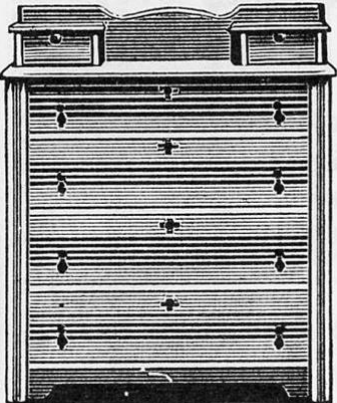
But the most significant assemblages recovered from these investigations in terms of our research goals are those associated with the Late Pre-Fire and Fire assemblages. These assemblages give us new insights into the lifeways of the Black occupants living in the neighborhood just prior to, and during, the riots—such as this table setting recovered from House B.



This table setting was recovered from House B, and it depicts a typical ceramic table setting for a working class family of the period—whether White or Black.



Of special interest to our research was the Fire deposits of House E. It was in House E that the charred and burned remains of both a dresser and a trunk were uncovered, and their contents have been of great interpretive value—giving voice to the young Bessie Black.



7250s

**Bureaus and Dressers.**

72550 Bureau, antique finish, four drawers, no mirror; height, 3 ft. 7 in.; width, 3 ft. 1 in.; weight, about 75 pounds. Price, complete. ....\$5.00

A good line of dressers to go with iron beds.

**Canvas Covered Trunks.**



**No. 21631**

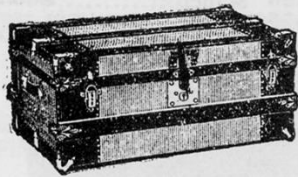
**No. 21631 An Unquestionable Bargain. Square Trunk, with heavy iron bottom. Painted canvas covering, heavy and strong, as well as neat in appearance. This trunk has hardwood slats on top and body, and is protected with heavy malleable iron clamps and bumpers.**

|              |        |              |        |
|--------------|--------|--------------|--------|
| 28 inch..... | \$2.50 | 32 inch..... | \$2.95 |
| 30 inch..... | 2.75   | 34 inch..... | 3.25   |



The contents of the trunk included a wide range of small finds (jewelry, dominoes, poker chips, rubber balls, hair combs, slate writing styluses), clothing, and even printed material.

### Canvas Covered Stateroom Trunks



**No. 21633 Iron center band, steel trimmings.** Made to go under berth of any steamship. This is a very convenient trunk for short journeys; japanned iron trimmed; bumpers, clamps, and corner shoes; large flat steel key, lock, side

**No. 21633**

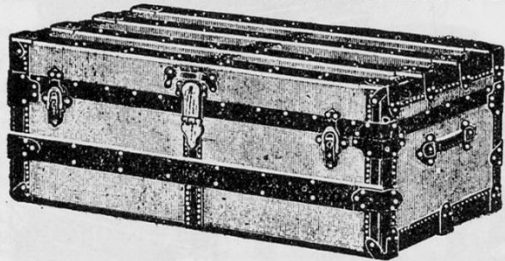
pockets, and set up tray.

28 inch.....\$3.00

30 inch..... 3.25

32 inch.....\$3.50

34 inch... .. 3.75



**No. 21635 Leather bound brass excelsior lock steel trimmings, covered tray.** Cheapest leather bound trunk made, canvas duck covered, edges bound with heavy leather, and leather center band, best steel bumpers, clamps, corner shoes, valance clamps, hinges, etc., excelsior lock, full covered tray, linen lined throughout

30-inch.....\$6.25

34-inch.....\$7.25

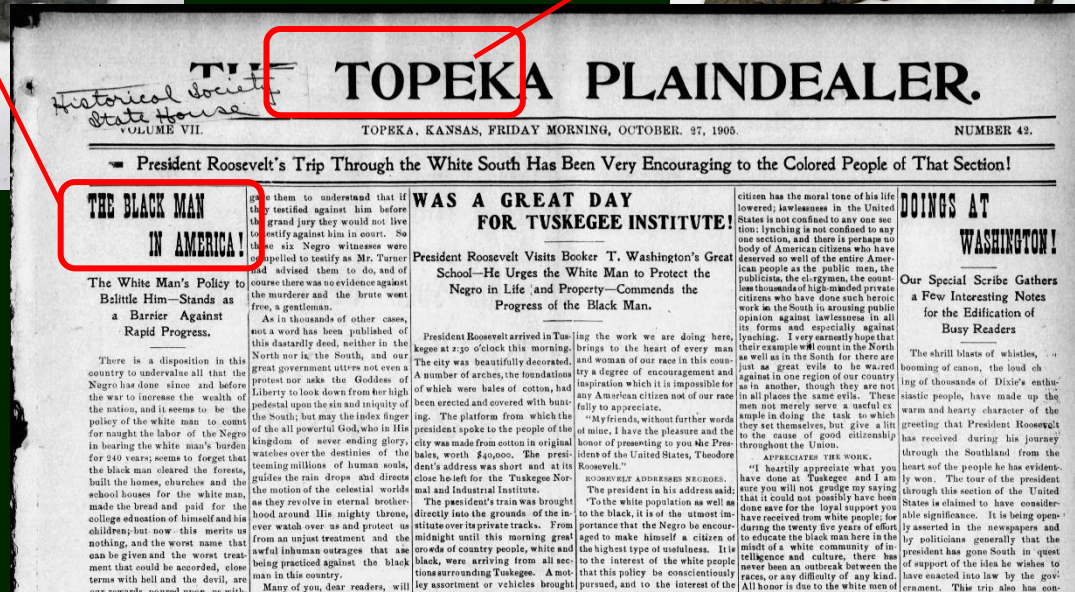
32-inch..... 6.75

36-inch..... 7.75

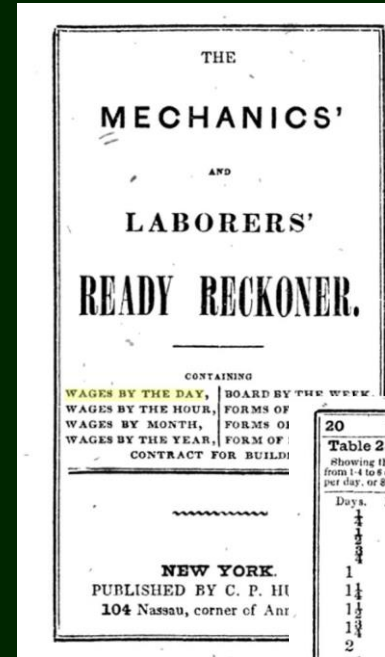




Few, if any, artifacts by themselves indicate race. Although the implication was that the occupants of the houses burned were Black, the archival record was unclear as to the race of the house occupants. Historic records suggested the occupant of this house may have been a single White man. The recovery from within the trunk of the October 17, 1905 issue of *The Topeka Plaindealer*—a Black edited newspaper dedicated to a Black readership helped confirm the occupant of this House was indeed Black, literate, and actively engaged in issues relating to her Black identity.



Charred remains of several books were also found in the trunk. This is a fragment of the book entitled *The Mechanics' and Laborers' Ready Reckoner* (which was originally published in 1847).



CONTAINING  
**WAGES BY THE DAY,** BOARD BY THE WEEK  
**WAGES BY THE HOUR,** FORMS OF  
**WAGES BY MONTH,** FORMS OF  
**WAGES BY THE YEAR,** FORM OF  
**CONTRACT FOR BUILDING**

**20 WAGES BY THE DAY.**  
**Table 23,—\$1,62½.**  
 Showing the rate of wages from 1-4 to 6 days, at \$1,62½ per day, or \$9.75 per week.

| Days. | Dols. | Cts. |
|-------|-------|------|
| ½     | 40½   |      |
| ¾     | 81½   |      |
| 1     | 1 21½ |      |
| 1½    | 1 62½ |      |
| 2     | 2 03  |      |
| 2½    | 2 43¾ |      |
| 3     | 2 84½ |      |
| 3½    | 3 25  |      |
| 4     | 3 65½ |      |
| 4½    | 4 06½ |      |
| 5     | 4 46¾ |      |
| 5½    | 4 87½ |      |
| 6     | 5 28  |      |
| 6½    | 5 68¾ |      |
| 7     | 6 09½ |      |
| 7½    | 6 50  |      |
| 8     | 6 90½ |      |
| 8½    | 7 31½ |      |
| 9     | 7 71¾ |      |
| 9½    | 8 12½ |      |
| 10    | 8 53  |      |
| 10½   | 8 93¾ |      |
| 11    | 9 34½ |      |
| 11½   | 9 75  |      |

**Table 24,—\$1,68¼.**  
 Showing the rate of wages from 1-4 to 6 days, at \$1,68¼ per day, or \$10.12½ per week.

| Days. | Dols.  | Cts. |
|-------|--------|------|
| ½     | 42½    |      |
| ¾     | 84½    |      |
| 1     | 1 26½  |      |
| 1½    | 1 68½  |      |
| 2     | 2 11   |      |
| 2½    | 2 53½  |      |
| 3     | 2 95½  |      |
| 3½    | 3 37½  |      |
| 4     | 3 79½  |      |
| 4½    | 4 22   |      |
| 5     | 4 64   |      |
| 5½    | 5 06½  |      |
| 6     | 5 48½  |      |
| 6½    | 5 90½  |      |
| 7     | 6 32½  |      |
| 7½    | 6 75   |      |
| 8     | 7 17½  |      |
| 8½    | 7 59½  |      |
| 9     | 8 01½  |      |
| 9½    | 8 43½  |      |
| 10    | 8 86   |      |
| 10½   | 9 28½  |      |
| 11    | 9 70½  |      |
| 11½   | 10 12½ |      |



This is the remains of three similarly sized books with identical covers—potentially suggesting a three-volume set. Unfortunately the subject matter of these three books is unknown.



Written material also attests to the potential religious conviction of the house occupants. This is one of many small fragments of a nearly complete book from the trunk. Based on the limited text transcribed to date, several references to Christ, Noah, and various biblical texts (including book, chapter, and verse) suggests that the book probably was a Christian devotional text.



This scrap references Christ, and the book of Acts.

...from the beginning...  
...should give Him loving...  
...for by His very loving...  
...obedience...  
...In His image...  
...condemned...  
...abhorrent...  
...he never...

Transcribed fragment of text



Besides this religious text, additional artifacts from House E (and adjacent House D) were recovered that raises questions as to the continuation of older African spiritual traditions. These items include a large calcite crystal from the Late Pre-Fire deposits of House E (left), as well as a smaller quartz crystal, a broken soapstone amulet with a “crossed line” motif, and a cowrie shell recovered from the Late Pre-Fire deposits of House D (center and right). Tenets of these non-Christian traditions are that artifacts such as these have spiritual powers that create connections to one’s ancestral past, and their presence may hint at the juxtaposition of Christian faith with Old World African beliefs in ritual and magic by the house occupants (and their neighbors).



Another unexpected artifact from the trunk was the burned remains of a life insurance policy issued by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. This policy was relatively new in August 1908 (note printed 1907 date on fragment). It is unfortunate that we were not able to identify the name of the insured individual on the policy.



Metropolitan Life Insurance Company

OFFICE: NEW YORK CITY.

**In Consideration** of the payment of the premium mentioned in the schedule below, on or before each Monday, **Doth** We **herby** Agree, subject to the conditions below and on page 2 hereof, each of which is hereby made a part of this contract and contracted by the insured and every person entitled to claim hereunder to be a part hereof, and with the privileges and concessions in policy schedules on pages 2 and 3 hereof, which are hereby made part of this contract, to pay as an Endowment, on the anniversary of this Policy next after the insured shall have passed the age of seventy-five years, notwithstanding of this Policy and the Premium Receipt Book, the amount stipulated in said schedule; And **Doth** Further Agree, subject to the conditions aforesaid, if the insured shall die prior to the date of the maturity of the Endowment, to pay upon receipt of proofs of the death of the insured made in the manner, to the extent and upon the blanks required herein, and upon surrender of this Policy and the Premium Receipt Book, the amount stipulated in said schedule. (Provided, however, that no obligation is assumed by the Company prior to the date hereof, nor unless on such date the insured is alive and in sound health, but should the proposed insured not be alive or not be in sound health on said date, any amount paid to the Company as premiums hereon shall be returned. The Company may make any payment or grant any non-forfeiture privilege provided herein to the insured, the executor or administrator, husband or wife, or any relative by blood or connection by marriage of the insured, or to any other person appearing to said Company to be equitably entitled to the same by reason of having incurred expense on behalf of the insured, or for his or her burial; and the production of a receipt signed by either of said persons, or of other proof of such payment or grant of such privilege to either of them, shall be conclusive evidence that all claims under this Policy have been satisfied.)

**SCHEDULE ABOVE REFERRED TO.**

|                   |                |   |
|-------------------|----------------|---|
| Number of Policy  | Date           | Name of the Insured   |
| 52872947          | JAN 18, 1916   | MARY ANTHEY.  |
| Age next birthday | Weekly premium | Amount payable at end of Endowment period or in the event of death after six months |
| 20 years          | 1.00           | \$180-  |

One-half only of the above sum payable if death occur within six calendar months from date.

**In Witness Whereof**, the said Metropolitan Life Insurance Company has, by its President and Secretary, signed and delivered this Policy on the date named in the said schedule.

Adult Endowment Policy, payable on date of Policy after age 75.  
Partial Death Benefit: Payouts from six months.  
Distribution of Surplus Fifth Year and thereafter Annually.  
Form 120-B — 1915 — 1-1-1916. 2-1-16  
Age 18 to 65 2-6-11-1916

James Roberts Secretary

Example of similar policy, albeit dated 1916.



Among the items in the trunk was this finely-made, bone china demitasse cup and saucer, manufactured by the Rosenthal Company of Bavaria (Germany) sometime between 1896 and 1907—perhaps representing a commemorative family keepsake.



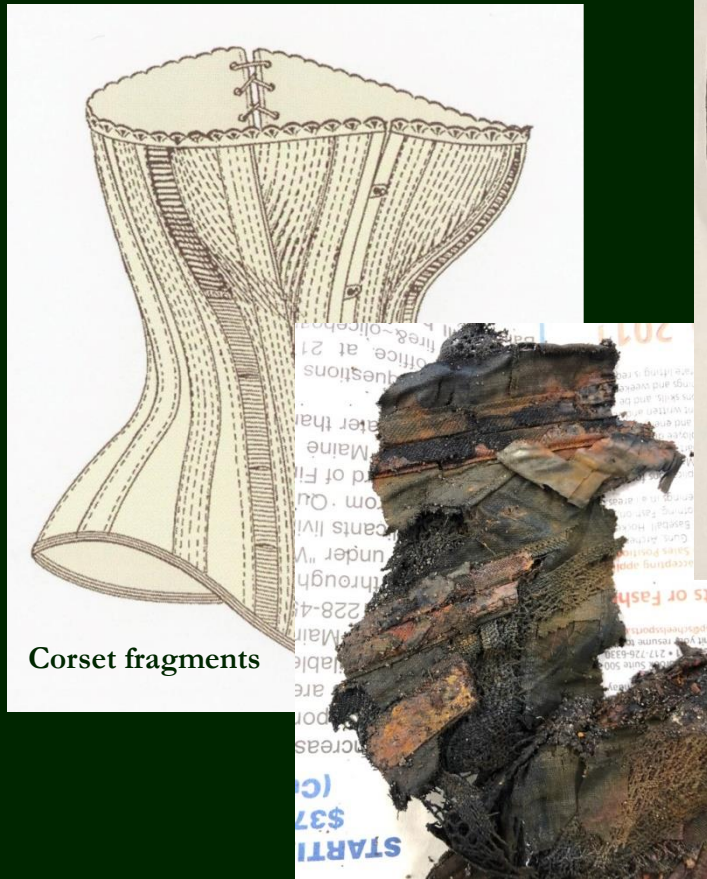
Toys recovered from within the trunk included small pressed wood dominoes, and three small rubber balls.



Enlarged to illustrate pressed design on backside of dominoes.



In the trunk was a wide variety of clothing and shoe fragments, as well as buttons—representing numerous clothing-related items.



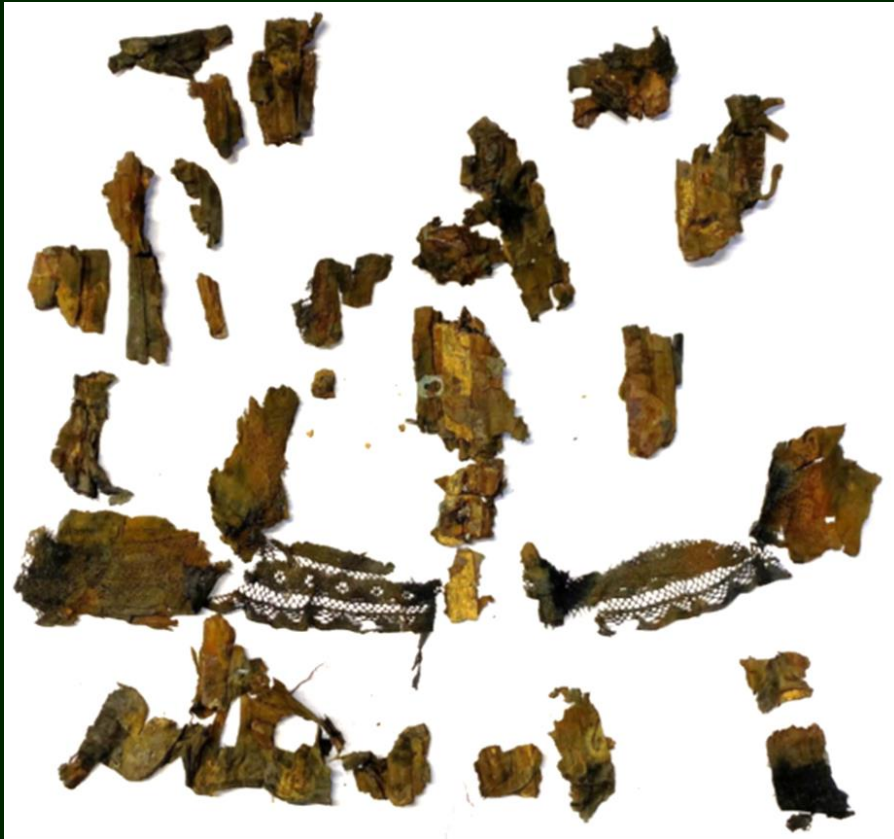
Corset fragments



Remnants of a shoe



Fragments of a corset (Textile 29) recovered from the trunk.





Fragments of an older style, silk taffeta skirt with horsehair braid trim (Textile 22) recovered from the trunk.



Fragment of a duster (Textile 19) recovered from the trunk.





Fragments of a wool suit vest (Textile 24) recovered from the trunk.



Other non-clothing items in the trunk included fragments of a handkerchief (Textile 37; left), a patchwork quilt (Textile 39; right), and a hand towel (not shown). The quilt appears to have been unfinished (lacked a backing).



1012 SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO., CHICAGO, ILL. CATALOGUE No. 117.

### LADIES' HANDKERCHIEFS

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Ladies' Fancy Cambric Handkerchiefs</b><br/>No. 189500<br/>Ladies' Fine Cambric Handkerchiefs, with hemstitched black border. Regular 25-cent value. Our price, each. (Postage extra, 1c) . . . 19c</p> | <p><b>Ladies' Pure Linen Hemstitched Handkerchiefs</b><br/>No. 189501<br/>Ladies' Pure Linen Hemstitched Handkerchiefs, with plain black border. Regular 25-cent value. Our price, each. (Postage extra, 1c) . . . 19c</p> | <p><b>Ladies' Embroidered Handkerchiefs</b><br/>No. 189502<br/>Ladies' Embroidered Handkerchiefs, with plain black border. Regular 25-cent value. Our price, each. (Postage extra, 1c) . . . 19c</p> | <p><b>Ladies' Fine Imported Mourning Handkerchiefs</b><br/>No. 189503<br/>Ladies' Fine Imported Mourning Handkerchiefs, with hemstitched black border. Regular 25-cent value. Our price, each. (Postage extra, 1c) . . . 19c</p> |
|---|--|--|--|

**Ladies' Mourning Handkerchiefs.**  
No. 18K9503  
Ladies' Fine Imported Mourning Handkerchiefs, with hemstitched black border. Regular 25-cent value. Our price, each. (Postage extra, 1c) . . . 19c

**No. 18K9505 Ladies' All Pure Linen Hemstitched Mourning Handkerchiefs, with plain black border. Regular 25-cent value. Our price, each. (Postage extra, 1c) . . . 19c**





Aside from the clothing, a wide range of jewelry and personal adornment items were also recovered with the textiles within the trunk. These included multiple brooches (many of the distinctive Limoges design), collar studs, cufflinks, and a 14-carat gold wedding ring (which had been tucked away in the trunk)—all items that suggest a middle class lifestyle.

Cufflinks



Oval and round brooches,  
all of same style



The contents of a small marble-topped dresser were also recovered from the Fire deposits of House E.



72503

**Bureaus and Dressers.**

72550 Bureau, antique finish, four drawers, no mirror; height, 3 ft. 7 in.; width, 3 ft. 1 in.; weight, about 75 pounds. Price, complete. ....\$5.00

A good line of dressers to go with iron beds.

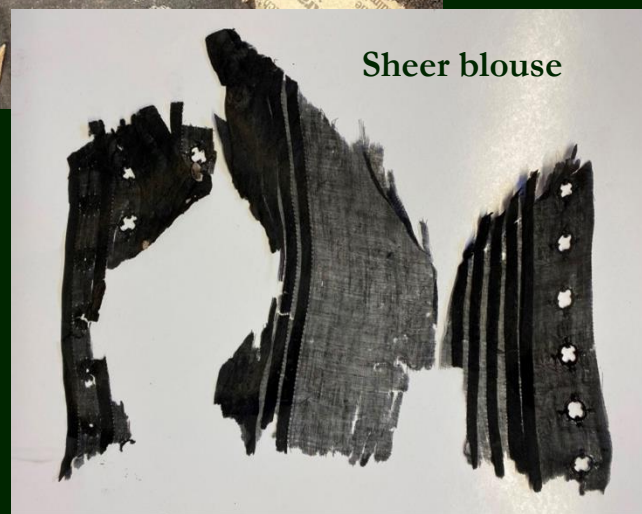
A black and white line drawing of a bureau. It has a decorative top with a central arched panel and two smaller panels on either side. Below the top are four drawers, each with a small handle. The bureau is shown from a three-quarter perspective.



Unlike the trunk, the artifacts within the dresser consisted predominately of the remains of fabric garments—garments that appear to represent solely women’s clothing.



Embroidered blouse



Sheer blouse

Example of a bodice (Textile 16) recovered from the dresser.





Example of a sheer shirtwaist (Textile 5) from the dresser.



A nearly whole stocking (Textile 15) from the dresser.

**63c FOR 3 PAIRS**  
**ALLOVER LACE LISLE STOCKINGS, EXTRA VALUE.**



**No. 16K2432**  
This stocking is an allover lace stocking, made from the very finest lisle. The sole, heel and toe are extra reinforced. The stocking is lace to within about 5 inches of the top, so that you do not have to fasten the garter into the lace of the stocking but have a good firm top to fasten it to. Sizes, 8½, 9, 9½ and 10.  
Do not forget to state size wanted.  
Price, 3 pairs for **63c**  
If by mail, postage extra, per pair, 5 cents.





Fragments of a vest and drawers (Textile 30) from the dresser.



**STS.**

**46c FOR 2 GARMENTS**

**EXTRA SIZE VEST, FOR LARGE OR STOUT WOMEN, LONG SLEEVE AND HIGH NECK.**

No. 166052 This vest is made from good cotton, fine and light in weight. It is worn by a great many women at all seasons of the year. Very elastic and fashioned at the waist so that it will fit snugly. long sleeves which are shaped at the wrist to fit properly. Buttons part way down the front with a three-button effect, finished at the neck with mercerized tape. Color, pure white. Sizes, 7, 8 and 9, to fit bust from 42 to 45 inches.

Price for 2 garments, 46c

Have you given us size?

If by mail, postage extra, each, 6 cents.





Over 1,200 fragments of fabric were recovered from the trunk and dresser. These fragmentary remains have been sorted into individual fabric items representing a variety of garments, household linen, and other personal accessories (such as a handkerchief and an umbrella).





Over 42 individual fabric items were identified in the combined fabric assemblage from this house. This assemblage represents one of the more complete inventories of a young Black woman's clothing dating from the first decade of the Twentieth Century.

| Type            | Dresser | Trunk |
|-----------------|---------|-------|
| Clothing        | 17      | 18    |
| Accessory       | 0       | 3     |
| Household Linen | 0       | 3     |
| Indeterminate   | 0       | 1     |

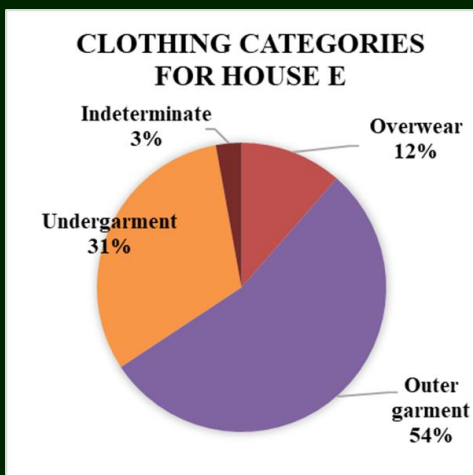
| Clothing Category | Dresser | Trunk |
|-------------------|---------|-------|
| Overwear          | 0       | 4     |
| Outer garment     | 10      | 9     |
| Undergarment      | 7       | 4     |
| Indeterminate     | 0       | 1     |



Dr. Carmen Keist (Bradley University) sorting fabric remains by individual item.

These textiles represent the wardrobe of a younger Black woman with middling-class aspirations. Seasonal winter and formal wear, along with a variety of personal belongings with sentimental and legal value, were stored in her trunk (potentially along with some of her ex-husbands clothes and possessions). Her current summer garments were neatly folded and located in her dresser. These textiles were represented by a range of Undergarments, Overwear garments, and Outerwear garments, as well as clothing accessories and household linens.

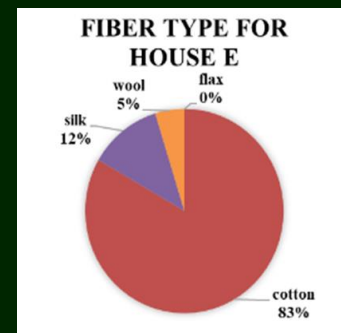
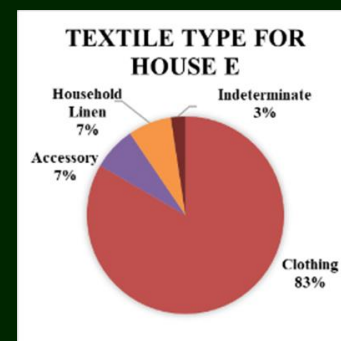
| Gender  | Dresser | Trunk |
|---------|---------|-------|
| Female  | 16      | 9     |
| Male    | 0       | 5     |
| Unknown | 1       | 6     |



| Undergarment    | Dresser | Trunk |
|-----------------|---------|-------|
| corset          | 0       | 1     |
| pantaloons      | 1       | 0     |
| petticoat       | 3       | 1     |
| stockings       | 1       | 0     |
| union suit/vest | 1       | 1     |
| vest & drawers  | 0       | 1     |
| wrapper         | 1       | 0     |

| Outer Garment | Dresser | Trunk |
|---------------|---------|-------|
| blouse        | 1       | 0     |
| bodice        | 1       | 1     |
| dress         | 1       | 0     |
| jacket        | 2       | 1     |
| sack coat     | 0       | 1     |
| shirt         | 0       | 1     |
| shirtwaist    | 2       | 0     |
| skirt         | 1       | 1     |
| suit vest     | 0       | 2     |
| indeterminate | 2       | 2     |

| Overwear      | Dresser | Trunk |
|---------------|---------|-------|
| cape          | 0       | 1     |
| duster        | 0       | 1     |
| fur collar    | 0       | 1     |
| indeterminate | 0       | 1     |





Although not recovered from House E, I would be amiss to not show these artifacts recovered from nearby House B. At least three military service medals and a collar pin were found in the Fire Deposits of House B. These service medals have been attributed to Robert Wright, a young Black man who enlisted in Company H, Eighth Illinois Regiment—the first all Black regiment in the U.S. fully under the command of Black officers. Wright served in Cuba, and continued to serve in the Illinois National Guard up through the 1908 riots.



Although the Eighth Illinois did not arrive in Cuba in time to see combat, they served with honor as part of the Army of Occupation at Santiago. These are examples of the three medals recovered from House B—one of which appears to have been issued specifically to men of Springfield's Company H. One of the medal's recovered represents the only known example of such a medal (as illustrated in the central image on the veteran's chest).



Company H, Eighth  
Regiment in Cuba, 1899



MARKSMAN  
1886

EXPERT  
1888

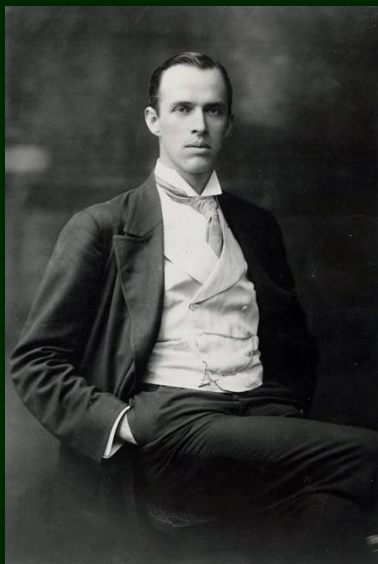
SHARPSHOOTER  
1888

SHARPSHOOTER  
1888

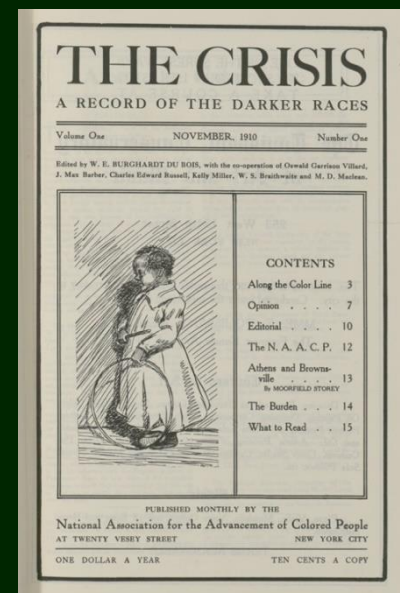




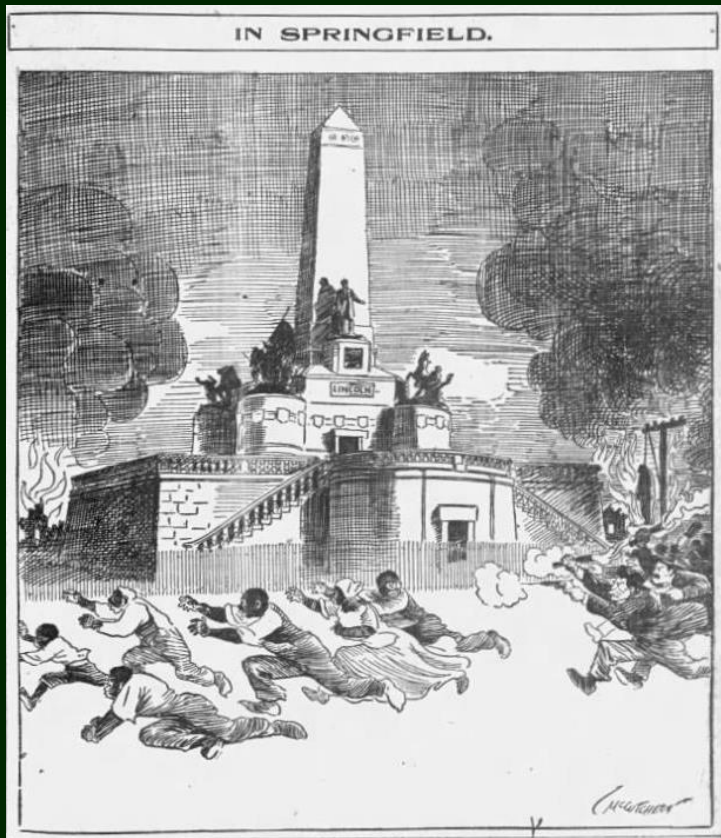
William English Walling was a labor and race activist (as well as co-founder of the NAACP in early 1909) who visited Springfield during the course of the riots and authored “The Race War in the North” which was published in the magazine *The Independent* the following month (September 1908). Walling stated that “Springfield had no shame...” and wrote of the community’s racial tension leading up to the riots—noting, in essence, that many of Springfield citizens believed it was the Blacks that brought this tragedy upon themselves.



*For the underlying motive of the mob and of that large portion of Springfield’s population that has long said that ‘something was bound to happen,’ and now approves of the riot and proposes to complete its purpose by using other means to drive as many as possible of the remaining two-thirds of the negroes out of town, was confessedly to teach the negroes their place and to warn them that too many could not obtain shelter under the favorable traditions of Lincoln’s home town. I talked to many of them the day after the massacre and found no difference of opinion on the question. ‘Why, the niggers came to think they were as good as we are!’ was the final justification offered, not once, but a dozen times....*



# THE PERCEIVED “REALITY” OF THE PRESS



In summarizing the impetus for the riots less than one month after their occurrence, Walling (1908) wrote that the feeling of the community was that “It was not the fact of the whites' hatred toward the negroes, *but of the negroes' own misconduct, general inferiority or unfitness for free institutions that were at fault.*”

The contemporary press painted a dire picture of the City's Black inhabitants and described the residential area as the *Badlands... infested by negroes... living in huts and shanties... disreputable...*



The archaeological excavations, and the variety of artifacts recovered from the houses, have provided a “voice” for the more-or-less anonymous victims of the mob action and has resulted in a *significantly different perspective* as to who these individuals were. Although silenced for a long time, these “voices” *provide a sharp contrast between the racially-driven “perceived reality” of the past, and the “actuality” of the time period.*



# THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL “REALITY”

The archaeological research at this site (and the adjacent houses) illustrates a very different picture than that presented by the contemporary historical record—a picture detailing individuals and families of color (including the young Bessie Black) trying to live in a community which was rife with racial bigotry and hatred. The archaeological record documented Bessie (and her neighbor’s) ...

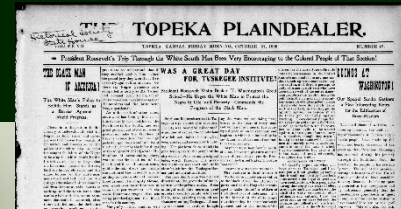
Literacy

Political Activism and/or Engagement

Service to Community and/or Country

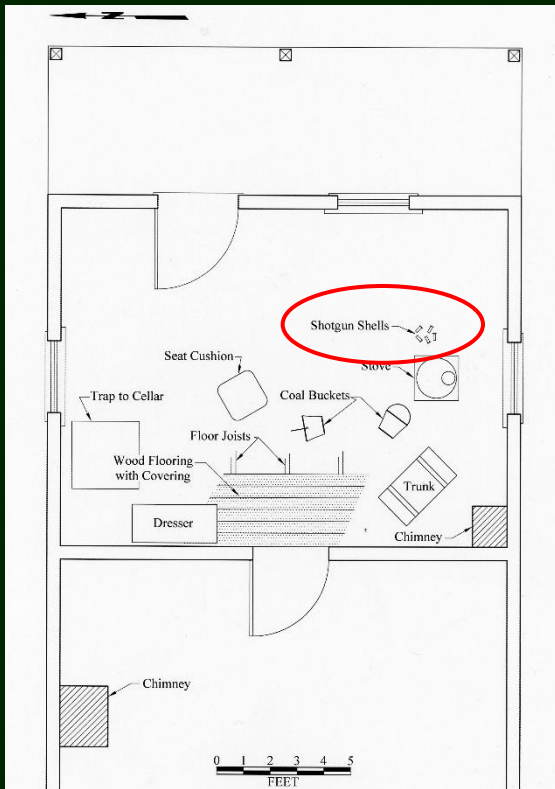
Religious Devotion and/or Conviction

Integration into Middle Class Respectability





Also, the archaeology of House E illustrates how decisions made that night by Bessie had life-changing consequences. Unfired shotgun shells lying directly on the floor of the front room of House E suggests that the occupants of this house may have been sitting at the front door with shotgun in hand waiting for the mob to enter, only to decide at the last minute to flee out the back door—and live to see another day. In contrast, only a few blocks away, Scott Burton decided to stand his ground, and was killed by the mob.



The excavation of House E resulted in the partial reconstruction of the floor plan of the front portion of this house, as it appeared on the day of the riots in August 1908.



Cluster of unfired shotgun shells were also recovered from the floor of House E



## Educational Outreach was a major component of our project...



In June 2019, we held an open house for public viewing of the excavations.





Dr. Lynn Fisher's (Department of Sociology/Anthropology; UIS) *Introduction to Archaeology* class (Left).

Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum's Summer Camp visit to the site (right).



...as was Political Outreach.

U.S. Representative Rodney Davis visiting the site.



U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth visiting the site.



In August 2020, the Race Riot Site became the 30<sup>th</sup> property listed within the African American Civil Rights Network. This network was created by the African American Civil Rights Act of 2017, and is administered by the National Park Service to “commemorate, honor, and interpret” the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.



U.S. Secretary of the Interior David L. Bernhardt in Springfield to list the Race Riot Site on African American Civil Rights Network,



Legislation has also been introduced to the U.S. Congress for the creation of the *Springfield Race Riot National Historic Monument* which would memorialize the events that transpired that fateful weekend (“Lest We Forget”) and to commemorate the formation of the NAACP.

116TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

## H. R. 139

To establish the Springfield Race Riot National Historic Monument in the State of Illinois, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 3, 2019

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

### A BILL

To establish the Springfield Race Riot National Historic Monument in the State of Illinois, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Springfield Race Riot National Historic Monument Act”.

#### SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) HISTORIC MONUMENT.—The term “Historic Monument” means the Springfield Race Riot



[Click here to view a video of one memorial proposal.](#)



As to the status of the artifacts, several local, state, and federal institutions are interested in displaying and interpreting the artifacts, which ultimately will be deposited with the Illinois State Museum. Here Teresa Haley (President, Illinois NAACP), U.S. Representative R. Davis, and Dr. Carla Hayden (Librarian of Congress) discuss the significance of the archaeological remains recovered from the initial Phase II investigations, and the potential to house some of the artifacts at the Library of Congress (the largest depository in the nation with respect to items related to the NAACP). Additionally, plans are currently being formulated for the creation of displays highlighting the results of the archaeological excavations (and their significance) within the new multi-modal transportation center being constructed in Springfield along the Tenth Street Rail corridor.



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**“Springfield had no shame. She stood for the action of the mob....” (Walling, September 1908).**

After the riots, people—both black and white—seldom spoke of the events that transpired on that horrific weekend. It was an event that was quickly “swept under the rug” and not talked about for a long time. By the 1970s many Springfield residents were not even aware of the event, let alone its significance.

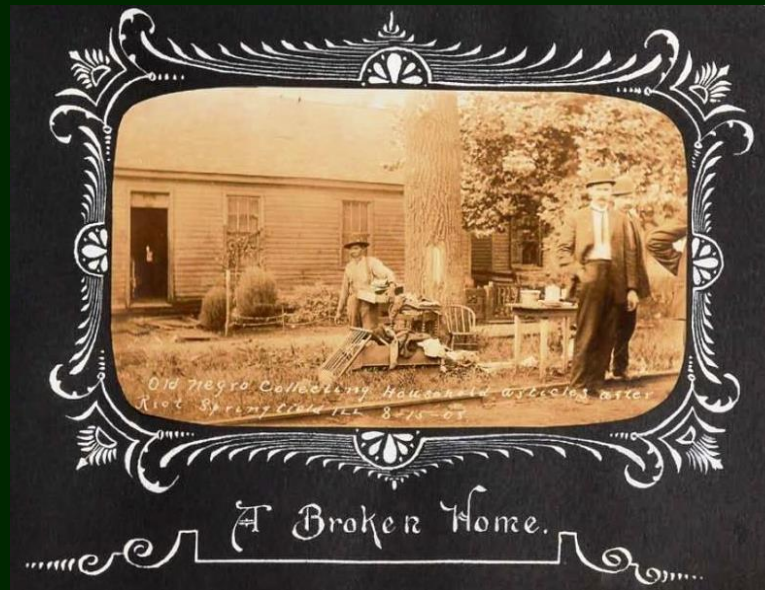
The archaeology of the Race Riot Site has given voice to the practically anonymous individuals that experienced this horrific event, and hopefully will yield a more holistic interpretation of who the people were who had the misfortune of being caught in the middle of this historical event.

History is complex, has multiple viewpoints, and must be interpreted in its proper context. Hopefully, this research will contribute to further discussion as to who we are as a society, to understand our past so that we can improve our future—LEST WE FORGET.

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# Questions Or Comments?



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Facebook Coverage of Project: [Fever River Research](#)

Reports and PowerPoint Presentations: [IllinoisArchaeology.com](#)  
[Go to "Miscellaneous Papers"]