

Historical Context Committee Monthly Report

When did we last meet? Tuesday, August 27, 2019 from 12:00pm – 1:00pm

Share Your Story – Online Submissions Monthly Read

We welcome any submissions pertaining the investigation sites, any oral histories, articles, photographs, or other items that will help fill in gaps around the events of the 1921 Race Massacre.

This oral story I hope will help bring closure to the 1921 tragedy. My Uncle Arlie Williamson, while in route to Wichita, Kansas had he and his truck commandeered by men with guns just as he started to cross a river bridge (which one he did not recount) coming into Tulsa from Wagoner, hauling a Bessemer engine from an oil field in Wagoner to Wichita. He was working for Bell gas at the time. The men told my Uncle that they needed his truck and that he was going to drive down thru colored town in Tulsa and that they were going to wipe it clean. My Uncle refused to be a part of it and they held him at gun point and forced him to drive. When they got into town, men boarded the truck, using the Bessemer engine as cover in order to kill people as they drove through the district. My Uncle Arlie said that they were piling up negro bodies along beside the Arkansas river in mass graves and burying them with bull dozers. As I remember it was the east side of the river, not far from down town. My Uncle was a good man and I know it bothered him having not tried to do something to prevent the use of his truck, but when you have a Winchester Carbine pointed at your head, it is hard to refuse. He had a wife and 3 children at the time. Uncle Arlie passed away a number of years ago, with wife Thelma . I sincerely hope that this oral history from my Uncle Arlie can help shed some light as to the possible burial place of hundred of people who were slain out of hate and anger, just because they were black and doing well in Tulsa. I hope and pray that this helps. – KRW

"BEHIND Rolling Oaks Cemetery (Formerly Booker T. Washington Cemetery) in the trees and overgrown brush is an abandoned Black and Black-Creek Cemetery. The only name I could come up with is that at one time it was possibly called Lincoln Cemetery. It IS on older ISGS maps, but it is not on new ones. There are various headstones, broken stones, natural stone markers and large depressions in the ground, it looks as if the area is much larger than where the most obvious headstones are easily seen. My son & I did locate a few additional natural stone markers and a few broken headstones mixed in with the brush and trees. Has anyone thought to check in this abandoned cemetery? This Cemetery could, at some time been mistaken to be part of Booker T. Washington Cemetery...both were Black only. I can show you everything I've spoke about. It's a disgrace that this abandoned cemetery is sandwiched in between two cemeteries and neither of them could mow it?...it would take 10 minutes. Someone should take care of it, there are war vets buried there. –S.S.

How might the Historical Context Committee contribute to research for this endeavor?

Dr. Scott Ellsworth sent Mechelle Brown of the Greenwood Cultural Center family information about massacre victims buried at Oaklawn Cemetery.

There are 13 named Black massacre victims (there are other unidentified victims buried there). We currently do not know exactly where the 13 individuals are buried in the cemetery. Two of the victims—Reuben Everett and Eddie Lockard—have headstones, but we do not know whether their remains were buried near where the headstones are located.

Our committee will engage in research through some of our institutions (Tulsa Library's Genealogical Center, for example) and other tools to find out more about these victims including any living descendants and other family tree information.

The thirteen individuals--and some information about each-- are:

1. **Ed Adams.** Age 32. Died June 1, 1921.
2. **Greg Alexander.** About 35 years old. Worked as a laborer. Died June 1, 1921.
3. **Reuben Everett.** Born September 24, 1878. Died June 1, 1921. The *1921 Tulsa City Directory* listed Everett as a laborer who lived with his wife, Jane, at 610 E. Archer.
4. **Ed Howard.** Died June 1, 1921. There are multiple candidates here. 1) The *1921 Tulsa City Directory* listed an Edward G. Howard, who operated a tailor shop at 107 1/2 N. Greenwood Avenue. He lived at 224 N. Greenwood Avenue with his wife, Mary, who worked at the Safety First Loan Company. 2) The 1920 U.S. Federal Manuscript

Census listed an Ed Howard who lived at 311 N. Frankfort. Single, he worked as a laborer in a lumber yard. Age about 21. 3) The U.S. World War I Draft Registration Cards database, available at Ancestry.com, listed an Ed Howard who was born in Porter, Oklahoma on September 17, 1895. A taxi driver, he lived at 308 N. Exeter Place. 4) The U.S. World War I Draft Registration Cards database also listed an Edd Howard who had been born in Louisiana on May 27, 1980. Single, he worked as a laborer in West Tulsa.

5. **George Jeffrey.** Died June 1, 1921. The *1917 Tulsa City Directory* listed a George Jeffrey, a laborer, who lived with his wife Sarah at 503 E. Williams.

6. **Lewis.** Male. No other names listed. Uncertain whether this is a first or last name. Died June 1, 1921. The *1921 Tulsa City Directory* listed 46 African American adults with the surname Lewis.

7. **Ed Lockard.** Born December 10, 1888. Died June 1, 1921.

8. **Joe Miller.** Age about 35 years old. Died June 1, 1921. The *1921 Tulsa City Directory* listed a Joseph Miller who was a chauffeur. He lived with his wife Allie at 626 E. Hill. The U.S. World War I Draft Registration Cards database listed a Joe Miller, a married day laborer, who had been born on January 7, 1890 in Tennessee.

9. **Sam Ree.** Died June 1, 1921.

10. **William Turner.** Married. Died June 2, 1921. The *1921 Tulsa City Directory* listed a William Turner who was a laborer. He lived with his wife Theresa at 134 Oak in Sand Springs.

11. **Curly Walker.** Laborer. Age about 30. Died June 1, 1921. The U.S. World War I Draft Cards database listed a Curly Nevesters Walker, who had been born on September 23, 1899 in Sevier County, Arkansas. A hod carrier for G. M. Kemp, contractor, he was married and lived at 307 1/2 N. Elgin. The *1919 Tulsa City Directory* listed Walker's wife's name as Myrtle.

12. **Henry Walker.** Age about 40. Died June 1, 1921. There are several candidates here as well. 1) The *1921 Tulsa City Directory* listed a Henry Walker who worked as a janitor at the Wright Building. He lived with his wife, Helen, at 522 N. Exeter Avenue. The 1920 U.S. Federal Manuscript Census recorded Walker's age at 35, while that of his wife, Helen B., at 18. They lived at 709 Bullette. 2) The *1921 Tulsa City Directory* also listed a Henry Walker who boarded at 712 N. Lansing Avenue. 3) The U.S. Federal Manuscript Census listed a Missouri-born Henry Walker, age 39, who worked as a laborer at a lumber yard. He lived at 199 N. Kenosha with his wife, Lucindy, age 27, and their two sons, Nathan, age 12, and Clayton, age 8. 4) Finally, the *1921 Tulsa City Directory* listed a Henry Walker who worked as a caster for Percy J. Prosser, a white sculptor. This Henry Walker apparently roomed at 524 S. Kenosha, where Prosser lived and had his studio.

13. **John Wheeler.** Bank porter. Aged about 63. The *1921 Tulsa City Directory* listed a John Wheeler who worked as a porter at the First National Bank, 323 S. Main Street, downtown. Roomed at 405 N. Elgin. Died June 1, 1921. The 1920 U.S. Federal Manuscript Census listed Wheeler's age as 47.

Information provided by Dr. Scott Ellsworth – September 2019

Our Immediate Priorities (following up from last month's questions from the Public Oversight Comm.

The top three areas we decided we can focus on now are:

1. Meaningfully/responsibly preserving and sharing the oral histories. (ex. Digital preservation, sharing at meetings, posting online as relevant)
2. Starting preliminary genealogical research of what we already know.
3. Following up on our action items pertaining to collecting and preserving stories. (ex. Library drop box, Greenwood Cultural Center, social media, etc.)

For next month's meeting, we would like to discuss how we might ensure young people are engaged in this process. Another topic for next month is how might we make it safe to share stories? In the future, we will have to examine how we are documenting each process of this investigation not only for our community but for other communities.

FYI: Community Call-In Line established at Greenwood Cultural Center

Community members have used the cityoftulsa.org/1921graves site and others have expressed a desire to call and speak with a person. Committee member Mechelle Brown and the Greenwood Cultural Center established a line at 918-596-1024 for anyone to call in and share their story. We have already received a few calls and have either transcribed messages or set up time to meet with callers.