



PART ONE
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ILLINOIS STA

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SPRINGFIELD SUNDAY

ANOTHER CALL FOR TROOPS LAST

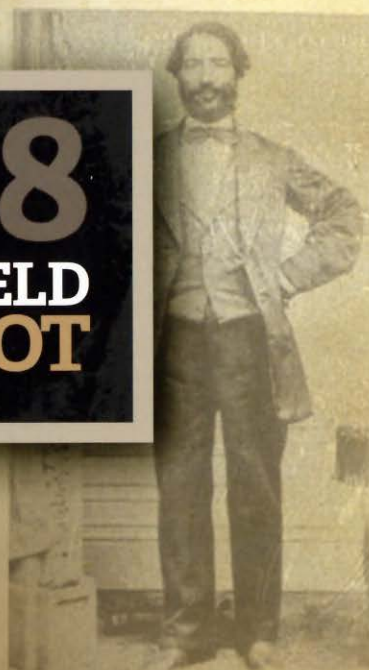
W. DONNIGAN LYNCHED

LAST NIGHT AT CORNER

SPRING

CROWDS AROUND RUIN

1908 SPRINGFIELD RACE RIOT



"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

Abraham Lincoln
From Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address,
March 4, 1865

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"That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Abraham Lincoln
From the Gettysburg Address,
November 19, 1863

In 1908, the city of Springfield, Illinois experienced an event that one contemporary said would shock Abraham Lincoln. On August 14-15 white citizens of Springfield lynched two African American men during the 1908 Springfield Race Riot. Sadly, lynching of African Americans was all too common in the United States. Thousands of African American men women and children were victims of lynching between the Civil War and World War II. To Lynch is "to put to death by mob action without legal sanction." The tragedy in Springfield garnered national attention because it occurred in the home town of the Great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln, just one year before the centennial of his birth.

A month before the riot, in July 1908, local authorities arrested Joe James, an African American man, for the murder of a white man, Clergy Ballard. On August 13, Mabel Hallam, a white woman, falsely accused George Richardson, an African American man, of rape.

On Friday, August 14, violence erupted when a crowd formed to forcibly remove the two accused men from the Sangamon County Jail. Sheriff Charles Werner distracted the mob and used a car loaned by restaurant owner Harry Loper to smuggle James and Richardson out of Springfield. News that the two men had been moved led to rioting. Rioters first destroyed Harry Loper's restaurant and the car used for the escape. The mob then targeted African American and Jewish businesses in an area known as "The Levee." After looting weapons from Fishman's Pawn Shop, they attacked an

African American neighborhood. The mob yelled such things as "Curse the day that Lincoln freed the n----rs" and "Abe Lincoln brought them to Springfield and we will drive them out."

At about this time, Eugene W. Chafin, the Prohibition Party candidate for President of the United States, was giving a speech on the east side of the Sangamon County Courthouse (now the Old State Capitol State Historic Site). An African American man fleeing the mob ran towards the candidate. Chafin stood between the African American man and the mob, put his hand in his hip pocket and told them "Stand back gentlemen, or I'll shoot every one of you who touches this man." Someone in the crowd threw a brick that hit Chafin in the head, but the African American man escaped. Chafin's bluff worked, he did not have a gun in his pocket.

Many African Americans fled Springfield or took shelter as best they could. One thirteen year old girl hid in a railroad boxcar with her older sister and younger brother and recalled that "I just prayed for an engine to come up there and back up there and pull us away." Many of the surrounding communities refused to help the African Americans fleeing the violence.

Some African Americans stayed to defend their homes and businesses or stayed because they could not flee. Late in the evening of Friday, August 14, 70 year old William Smith, who did not have the use of his legs, was dragged from his home and almost beaten to death. Local bystanders and police came to his aid. By 2:00 a.m., on Saturday, August 15, a mob confronted Scott Burton at his home, severely beat him before he was hanged from a nearby tree and died.



After a period of quiet during the day, the rioters planned to attack the Illinois State Arsenal near the Capitol Building. By this time Governor Charles S. Deneen had called the Illinois National Guard to restore order. Thousands of soldiers provided patrols and were stationed on the Sangamon County Courthouse lawn, the Illinois State Capitol and the Illinois State Arsenal. The Arsenal was also a refuge for many African American families.

The mob then attacked 84 year old William Donnegan, a prosperous African American business man who was married to a white woman. Fifty years earlier, before the Civil War, Donnegan had been an acquaintance of Abraham Lincoln and was a conductor on the Underground Railroad. The mob dragged the elderly Donnegan from his home, slit his throat and lynched him. The State Militia found

Donnegan barely alive and took him to St. John's Hospital where he died the following day.

Small bands of rioters continued to terrorize African American citizens throughout Springfield for several more days. The Race Riot led to seven deaths and the destruction of dozens of homes and businesses. A total of 107 people were indicted for riot, arson, larceny and murder, but only one, Abraham Raymer, was convicted for petty larceny and a young man named Roy Young was found guilty of arson, rioting and looting. George Richardson, originally accused of rape, was released when his accuser, Mabel Hallam, admitted that she had lied. Joe James was tried and convicted for the murder of Clergy Ballard and sentenced to death. James was executed on October 23, 1908, even though he was under 18 years old and legally prohibited from the death penalty. No one was ever found guilty of the murders of Scott Burton and William Donnegan.



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ILLY-VOL. 73, NO. 220.
MOTHER CALL
DONNIGAN LYNCHED
LAST NIGHT AT CORNER
SPRINGFIELD



ER
JULY 5 1908. 137TH
JURY TODAY
LYNCHERS OF
BURTON ARE
NOT LOCATED
The Coroner's Inquest
Yesterday Proves to
Be a Fruitless
Inquiry.
THE TESTIMONY OF
THOSE EXAMINED

6 Illinois State Arsenal

Governor Deneen called in the Illinois National Guard to restore order. They were stationed on the lawn of the Sangamon County Courthouse (now the Old State Capitol State Historic Site), the Illinois State Capitol and the Illinois State Arsenal. The Arsenal was also a refuge for many African American families.



7 William Donnegan's Lynching

The mob dragged the elderly African American William Donnegan from his home, slit his throat and lynched him. National Guard troops found Donnegan barely alive and took him to St. John's Hospital where he died the following day.



Illinois State Capitol

5 Payne's Hardware Store

During the early evening of August 15, the mob stopped at Payne's Hardware Store for clothesline rope to lynch African American William Donnegan.



4 Scott Burton's Lynching

By 2:00 a.m., on Saturday, August 15, African American Scott Burton was confronted by the mob in front of his home. The mob used a clothesline rope to lynch him on a nearby tree.



3 The Levee

The mob targeted African American and Jewish businesses in an area known as "The Levee."



2 Loper's Restaurant

Rioters destroyed Harry Loper's restaurant because Loper helped the two African American men escape.

1 Sangamon County Jail

On Friday, August 14, violence erupted when a crowd formed to forcibly remove two African American men from the Sangamon County Jail.

UNION SQUARE PARK

In 2009, the centennial anniversary of the founding of the NAACP, a sculpture by Preston Jackson, titled "Acts of Intolerance" was dedicated at Union Square park to commemorate the 1908 Springfield Race Riot.



1908 SPRINGFIELD RACE RIOT

8 Sangamon County Courthouse

(Now the Old State Capitol State Historic Site)

A total of 107 people were indicted for riot, arson, larceny and murder, but only one, Abraham Raymer, was convicted for petty larceny and a young man named Roy Young was found guilty of arson, rioting and looting. George Richardson, originally accused of rape, was released when his accuser, Mabel Hallam, admitted that she had lied. Joe James was tried and convicted for the murder of Clergy Ballard and sentenced to death. James was executed on October 23, 1908, even though he was under 18 years old and legally prohibited from the death penalty. No one was ever found guilty of the murders of Scott Burton and William Donnegan.



News of the violence in Springfield mobilized social activists throughout the nation, including reformers such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mary Church Terrell, W.E.B. DuBois, and Oswald Lloyd Garrison. They and others formed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909. Villard referred to Lincoln when he said "The spread of lawless attacks upon the negro, North, South and West—even in the Springfield made famous by Lincoln—often accompanied by revolting brutalities, sparing neither sex, nor age nor youth, could not but shock the author of the sentiment that "government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

On February 12, 1909, Springfield celebrated the centennial of Lincoln's birth with a whites-only dinner at the same Arsenal where African Americans had taken shelter only months earlier. Springfield's African Americans honored the Lincoln Centennial at St. Paul's A.M.E. Church. There, African American Reverend L.H. Magee predicted that in another 100 years "The gospel of 'malice toward none and charity for all' shall have regenerated and changed the mental attitude of all towards the poor and despised on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude. The colored people shall have risen above their present level by means of education, wealth and power as a factor in our government."

Despite the national outcry denouncing the riot and the hope espoused by Reverend Magee, racial violence flared again in nearby East St. Louis in

1917 and Chicago in 1919 and in other cities as the nation grappled with racial tensions, fear and bigotry.

The tragic story of the 1908 Springfield Race Riot remained largely untold for nearly 100 years until 1991 when two elementary school students, who had researched the riot for a school project, encouraged the Springfield City Council to commemorate the event. In 1994 the city erected markers throughout downtown Springfield at key locations of the riot and at the locations of the riot victims' graves. The 2008 centennial of the riot inspired numerous events tied to reconciliation and in 2009 a sculpture by Preston Jackson, titled "Acts of Intolerance" was dedicated at Union Square park.



A mulatto man was seized in the street, chained to a tree, and actually burned to death; and all within a single hour from the time he had been a freeman, attending to his own business, and at peace with the world. Such are the effects of mob law; and such are the scenes, becoming more and more frequent in this land so lately famed for love of law and order; and the stories of which, have even now grown too familiar.

Abraham Lincoln, January 27, 1838



All historic images are courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.