

DR. OSSIAN SWEET MEMORIAL

BLACK HOME OWNERSHIP AND A HISTORY OF RACIAL VIOLENCE

On the night of September 9, 1925, a racist mob attacked the new home of Dr. Ossian and Gladys Sweet, next door, at 2905 Garland Street.

The newlywed Sweets had been worried about how their new neighbors were going to react to a Black family moving into an all-white neighborhood. They enlisted the help of nine friends and associates to help protect their property. As the group watched from inside the house, the mob grew in size, shouting, chanting, and throwing stones and trash. Windows shattered and tensions rose. If police on the scene could help, they did not. Hundreds — perhaps thousands — of people filled the streets outside the house.

When somebody inside the house fired a gun and somebody in the mob fell dead, everyone in the house was arrested and charged with first degree murder.

The trials that followed attracted national attention. The defendants faced all-white juries at a time when white supremacy was surging and justice was frequently denied to Black people. With the help of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Sweets and their nine friends succeeded in court, and justice prevailed.

The Sweet story changed America by affirming the universal right of self defense — and defense of one's property — regardless of race.

The Sweet House at 2905 Garland is currently owned by the Dr. Ossian H. Sweet Foundation.

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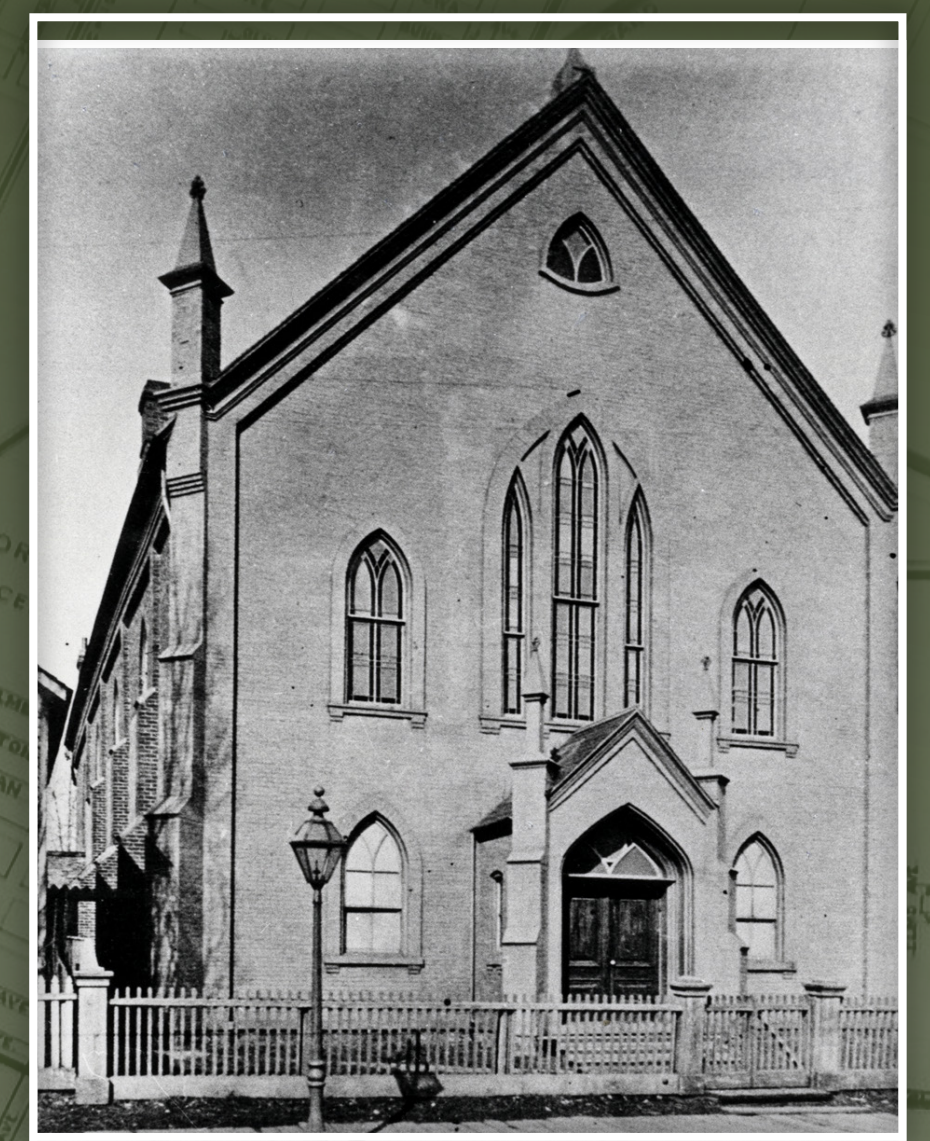


Dunbar Memorial Hospital, 580 Frederick Street

In 1918, the Allied Medical Society, led by Dr. James Ames, established the first Black non-profit hospital in Detroit, Dunbar Hospital, at the corner of Frederick and St. Antoine. Dr. Ossian Sweet was affiliated with and occasionally worked at the hospital.

Second Baptist Church, 441 Monroe Street

The Second Baptist Church is the oldest African-American church in the Midwest. Before the Civil War, the building served as one of the last stations on the Underground Railroad. It was designated a Michigan State Historic Site in 1974, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.



Orsel and Minnie McGhee House, 4626 Seebaldt Street

Orsel and Minnie McGhee purchased their house in 1944, in defiance of a racist restrictive neighborhood covenant. A neighbor sued and the case, *Sipes v. McGhee (1947)*, along with three similar cases, was argued before the U.S. Supreme Court by NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall. In the combined 1948 landmark decision known as *Shelley v. Kraemer*, restrictive housing covenants were deemed illegal.

Sojourner Truth Homes, 4801 Nevada Avenue

In 1941, the Sojourner Truth Housing Project was created by the Detroit Housing Commission and U.S. Housing Authority to alleviate a housing shortage affecting Black veterans and workers. When Black families started moving in, more than a thousand Black supporters and white opponents started crowding the streets. Violence erupted into what is now known as the "Sojourner Truth Riot."

