

VIOLENT OPPOSITION

UNUSUALLY HOT FOR SEPTEMBER

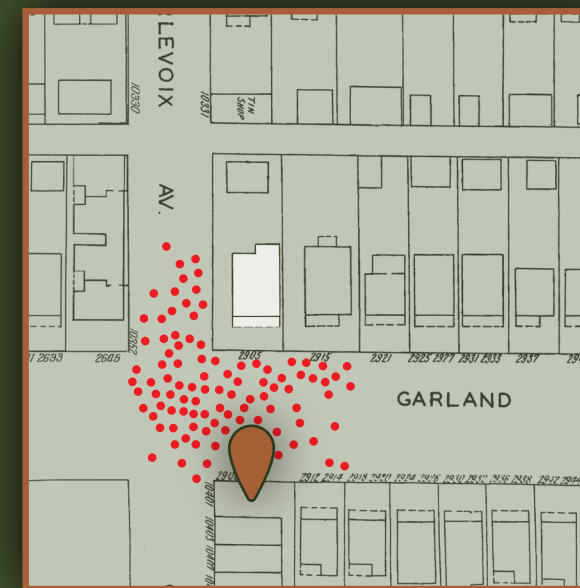
DRAFT

In Detroit in the 1920s — as in cities all over the United States — white people expected immigrants and people of color to live only in the neighborhoods designated for them. Many white people feared integration.

For many people of color — even after succeeding in an American economic system stacked against them — the promise of liberty, including the right to purchase and live in a nice house, in an area of your own choosing, remained elusive.

In fact, many Black families, including Gladys Sweet's parents, already lived peacefully in otherwise white neighborhoods in Detroit. But white supremacy surged in the 1920s. The KKK grew into a powerful political force. At least four times in the first seven months of 1925, mobs of white people terrorized Black families who dared to move into mostly-white neighborhoods. In every case, the goal was to terrorize the new Black neighbors into moving somewhere else.

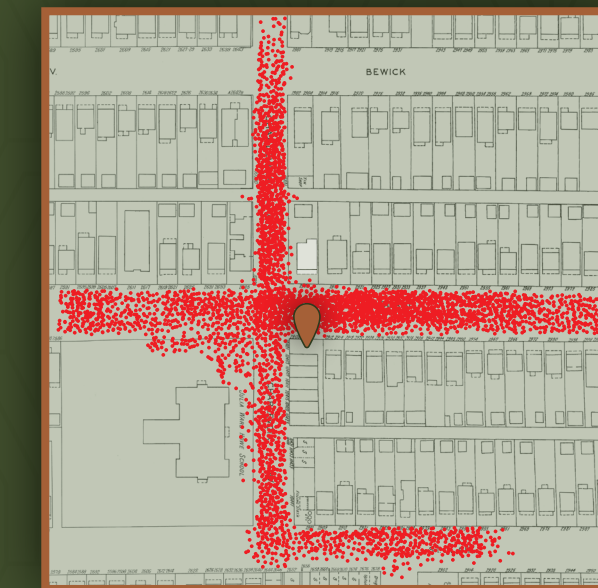
When Dr. Ossian and Gladys Sweet moved into their new house, across the street, at 2905 Garland Street, in what was a mostly-white neighborhood at the time, they recruited nine people to help them defend their property.



On September 8, 1925, their first night in their new home, a large mob formed outside. Morning arrived without incident.

Relieved, the couple spent the next day shopping for furniture for their new home. However, when they returned, Ossian's brother, Henry, said a policeman had warned him, "The crowd is coming back tonight, double force."

By the time the sun went down on September 9, 1925, the crowd outside the house was at least as large as it had been the night before.



The size of the mob continued to grow, long after the Sweets and their companions had been arrested. By midnight, a reported 5,000 people filled the streets.

The police closed Garland to traffic, a block on either side of the house. People gathered on lawns and porches.

Somebody in the crowd threw the first stone.

Soon, rocks and coal were flying over the crowds, hitting the house, smashing windows, and terrorizing a family whose only crime was the pursuit of happiness.

