

Interview with Chloe Tidwell by Ruth Avery.

Tulsa Historical Society & Museum

Avery                    You were going to tells about what happened the day of the Riot, you left out.

Tidwell                 Oh, yeah, uh huh. Well, I went to town and Colonel Douglas was there, oh he was in a dither. There was shooting, you know and carrying on. You were there.

Unknown Person     Oh, yes I was there

Tidwell                 Well, I went out there, it didn't scare me. I had never heard of a race riot before. And I went on up to the office. And oh he was carrying on, you know how he walked when he was excited. And my sister, she came downtown to do some shopping. She, we, didn't know anything about a race riot, and you couldn't hear anything, you know, until you got downtown. And she went downtown and there wasn't anybody in the stores and everything was funny, so she came up to the office.

Avery                    What time was this?

Tidwell                 In the, you mean the....?

Avery                    What time of day?

Tidwell                 It was in the forenoon.

Avery                    In the forenoon?

Tidwell                 In the forenoon. And so she came up there. And Colonel Douglas, he wouldn't let her leave, he made her stay, he made us stay in that building all day long. And he sent someone across the street to the Y, the YMCA, to get us something to eat. He did let us climb up on top and watch the Reserves come. They parked in the lot next to the \_\_\_\_\_ building. He let us get up there and watch them, but he made us stay there all day long. And then when it came time to go home, course the streetcar went past the park where they had some of them stowed away, you know the ballpark?

Unknown Person     Yes

Tidwell                 Well he debated a long time whether that was safe, but he finally decided that it was and we finally got on the streetcar. But, oh, he was so excited.

Avery                    What time was this then when you were allowed to leave?

Tidwell                 In the evening.

Unknown                What was the "I Told 'Em Club"?

Tidwell Well, that was a thing, that was another one of his publicity things, you know. It was a club that they organized after the Riot, you know there was so much adverse publicity, and so on, so they organized this club. And people were asked to write an article and send it to their home paper, telling all how wonderful Tulsa was, and don't mention the Race Riot, just tell about one. And if they got it, I don't remember if they had to have it published or not, but anyway they got a button that said "I Told 'Em" on it. And I guess we did get some pretty good publicity out of that. Cause a lot of people, influential people, that caught on with them and they wrote to their home papers.

Unknown Well, Ms. Chloe, I can tell you something you don't know. Talking about the Race Riot, Ruth is writing a book about the Race Riot called what, "The Fifth Horseman?"

Avery uhhum

Unknown And she is dig into all the details and the book will be out and you and I will have to read it.

Tidwell I would like to read it. I would like to read it because actually you know, no one knows the real truth about that thing. You know there was so much publicity and so many mixed up affairs on it that I don't think anyone really knows what happened.

Avery Well, I have been researching it for five years and have been using Colonel Douglas' on one of my illustrations.

Tidwell So, I...that'll be... get that all together and maybe understand everything. It never...I wasn't scared.

Unknown Ruth said she has been using Colonel Douglas' histories. Ruth, this girl wrote those histories.

Avery You remember where it tells about all of those different blocks that were burned out, I've taken that information and used it to cross hatch the diagram of Tulsa as it was in 1921 to show what portion the city was burned and the relationship as to how the city has grown now. I will show it to you before we leave.

Tidwell It was a... it was something. But I never was scared. I guess I should have been.

Unknown I was.

Tidwell And then after the Riots, you know they had the Examining Committee, or whatever it was, you know, Judge Martin. He was a tough old guy, wasn't he.

Unknown Yeah, he was a tough old guy.

Tidwell He asked the Sheriff....

Unknown

Let me tell you about something. I wanted to get married and they, Judge Martin sent me over in the burned-out district to put Black men to work. I had a one hard time getting through to get to my wedding on time.

Tidwell

Yeah, You had to wait until after the Race Riot to get married, I remember that.