

Year 1 Report

National Geographic Society
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Archaeology of Greenwood: Bearing Witness to a Century of Resilience
Active June 2022 through May 2024

Grant Awardee: Alicia Odewale
Lead Project Collaborator: Parker VanValkenburgh

Report written by
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Thanks to our Azimuth grant funding from the National Geographic Society, our research team for *Mapping Historical Trauma in Tulsa from 1921-2021* (MHTT) was able to complete the following activities from June 2022 to March 2023:

- From June 6-26, 2022, we completed an archaeological field school at B.S. Roberts Park in the Historic Greenwood District of Tulsa, Oklahoma. This field school led by the Grantee, Alicia Odewale and Lead Project Collaborator, Parker VanValkenburgh was conducted in collaboration with 5 paid student field leaders and 12 high school and college volunteers from institutions across Oklahoma. While the final results of this survey are in progress, a preliminary report was submitted to both The Historic District Main Street Board and the Tulsa City-County Libraries Director, based on the divided land ownership between B.S. Roberts Park and the northern extension. Upon request, a copy of both reports can be made available to NGS with permission from the land owners.
- Friday, September 23-24, 2022 Dr. Alexandra Jones and Sydney Pickens from Archaeology in the Community (AIRC) visit Tulsa, OK to learn more about our research project to better inform the Greenwood Archaeology Curriculum they are building. Over two days the team visited the sites under investigation in Greenwood, took a tour of the Historic Greenwood District, and took time to view the recovered artifacts currently being housed within the Historical Archaeology and Heritage Studies Laboratory at The University of Tulsa.
- From October 25-28, 2022, we completed a geophysical survey of B.S. Roberts Park in the Historic Greenwood District of Tulsa, Oklahoma. This geophysical survey was led by Scott Hammerstedt, Senior Researcher of the Oklahoma Archaeological Survey (OAS) alongside the Grantee and Lead Project Collaborator. During this survey, OAS conducted geophysical testing in the form of ground penetrating radar and gradiometer. Soil resistivity and magnetometer were not included in this survey plan but may be included in future surveys. This survey method allowed us to examine the potential cultural resources that may exist underground and which areas across the park and northern extension might be the best candidates for more invasive survey testing as we prepare for our summer 2023 field season. Upon request, a copy of the GPR and gradiometer data can be made available to NGS.
- January 3-7, 2023 Both the grantee and the lead project collaborator traveled to Lisbon, Portugal to deliver a conference paper at the Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA). The conference paper was titled, “A Black Space Elevated on a Hill: An Archaeology of Hate and Racial Violence in Black Wall Street’s Most Affluent Neighborhood”. Upon request, a copy of this conference paper and associated powerpoint slides can be made available to NGS with permission from the co-authors.
- February 3-6, 2023 we completed a second geophysical survey of the Historic Greenwood District of Tulsa, Oklahoma. This low-altitude aerial LiDAR Survey was led by Archaeo-Geophysical Associates, LLC and specifically conducted by Chet Walker alongside the Lead Project Collaborator. During this LiDAR survey, a drone device

mounted on top of an SUV was used to take an aerial image of a large section of the district that included all the sites we have investigated thus far as well as areas of the district that remain inaccessible due to dense vegetation and hazardous conditions. This LiDAR survey was essential to give our team an overall picture of the landscape of Greenwood with the ability to digitally remove any dense vegetation and hazards. The resulting LiDAR scan reveals a geo-spatial layer through which depressions, foundations, structures, mounds, and older roadways become more visible across the entire district. Which allowed us to reach beyond our previous single-site survey approach, but also layer this more comprehensive LiDAR data on top of the mapping, pedestrian, GPR, and gradiometer surveys that we have conducted thus far as we prepare for our summer 2023 field season. Upon request, a copy of this LiDAR data can be made available to NGS.

- March 12, 2023 Community Meeting
- March 24, 2023 Received request from the Historic Greenwood Black Wall Street Coalition to use our archaeological reports to aid in the designation of the Historic Greenwood National Monument
- March 27, 2023 Received first draft of curriculum plan from AITC. Upon request, a copy of this first curriculum plan can be made available to NGS with permission from AITC.

To summarize our activities this year, we have focused our attention first on conducting geophysical surveys within the Historic Greenwood District as a non-invasive method of investigation to determine the existence of intact structural features and cultural material connected to Greenwood's rich history. The results of this first year of work has already led to new interpretations within the Greenwood district changing the narrative about what survived the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, what was rebuilt in the 1940s, and how the landscape and surrounding communities were impacted by the violence of urban renewal in the 1960s and 1970s.

What we are looking for are signs of life within the Greenwood community, looking for what has survived, what stuff remains to tell this story that's over a century in the making, and evidence Black community resiliency in the aftermath of the massacre, long story short... we want to find the stuff and the structures connected to who built Greenwood in the first place .

Using the non-invasive archaeological surveying methods of high resolution GPS mapping and pedestrian survey, we completed 86 transects covering both B.S. Roberts Park and a northern land extension of the park that before land clearing was once a neighborhood. We identified 45 collection areas (areas densely packed with archaeological material), 23 structural features, and collected over 1,000 artifacts laying exposed on the ground surface. While we are still working to analyze and process the cultural resources uncovered in this initial survey of the park, our results thus far indicate that partially intact foundations exist within this park landscape for multiple structures connected to Greenwood's history before the urban renewal period in the late 1960s and 1970s. The two structural foundations that are the most intact and can be confidently

tied to named structures that once existed in this historic neighborhood are the Auto repair shop at E. Latimer and Greenwood Avenue and the Church of the Living God next door.

SOURCE MATERIAL TO DRAW FROM COMMUNITY MEETING PRESENTATION AND REPORTS

While this short paper does not allow us to share all of the single story narratives that we have been able to challenge with this project, we want to end our time today by presenting a case study in how we used archaeology to expand the narrative history around one single site in Greenwood, Standpipe Hill. Standpipe Hill is an elevated mound overlooking a portion of downtown Tulsa, named for a columnar reservoir that stored drinking water for Greenwood and surrounding districts of Tulsa between 1904 and 1924 (Gerkin 2012; Madigan 2001). While this site now holds a brick tower created by Oklahoma State University, it also has its own history within the Greenwood District. Before we started this project the single narrative about this space was as a site of violence. Outside of its function for both water storage and brick manufacture (Johnson 1998), most stories about Standpipe Hill during the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre have marked this area as a site where many sources indicate that a machine gun was perched on the hill by the National Guard to establish a battle line and seal off Greenwood from Detroit Avenue (Madigan 2001). However, there were also reports of machine guns being used from this same hill to launch an assault on Mount Zion Baptist Church before the church was burned down (Madigan 2001). What we knew going into this project was that at this one location we have a historically Black-owned space that was physically separate from and geographically elevated above the rest of Tulsa. And it was on this hill space that Greenwood's wealth was on full display even before the 1920s. For those who think the attack on Greenwood came out of nowhere in the heat of the moment, when you are up on that hill and looking down on the rest of Tulsa you can just imagine the jealousy and hatred and anger that must have been brewing for years every time white actors but especially Tulsa klan members looked up at this hill. But at some point in its history, public sentiment shifted so that this hill space would no longer be considered part of Greenwood, but was somehow rebranded to be part of downtown Tulsa and the predominantly white historic neighborhood of "the Heights". So this was one space where we could not only explore what lies beneath the established narrative for this site, but also dive into this question of how Black heritage becomes systemically erased and absorbed into a single narrative of whiteness. And it also happened to be the perfect place to explore where the boundary points of this historic district lie.

I especially want to thank the students who have been working with us on this project toiling in the hot sun hacking through the woods with me and getting their hands dirty all to see if we can uncover something we didn't know about Greenwood before.

What we are looking for are signs of life within the Greenwood community, looking for what has survived, what stuff remains to tell this story that's over a century in the making, and evidence

Black community resiliency in the aftermath of the massacre, long story short... we want to find the stuff and the structures connected to who built Greenwood in the first place .

So what did we find in the park?

First I want to reiterate that this was a surface survey only, so everything that was uncovered was already at the surface level, no invasive excavations have taken place yet. However, even with this being a surface survey we recovered over 1,000 artifacts, which gives us a good idea of the sheer massive volume of cultural material we may encounter once we actually do start digging. We were so overwhelmed with cultural material just sitting in plain sight we had to completely shift our sampling strategy from years 1 and 2. And start labeling collection areas, areas that had so much cultural material exposed that we documented what the pile of artifacts looked like, assigned GPS coordinates and then took a sample of the artifacts contained in that space. Because it was impossible to try to collect everything. And just we say at Standpipe Hill, the same pattern of finding these collection areas around trees held true at B.S. Roberts park as the tree roots in each of water were pushing artifacts and structural features up to the surface for us to find. So again shout out to the trees that have been our partners in this since day one.

So what did we find in the park?

The most abundant artifacts represented in this surface collection were glass and clay based objects, a lot of glass bottle fragments, and brick fragments that are all mingled together in a mixed context on the surface so we have yet to try to get an estimated date range for any of this material. And we cant say whether any of these objects might connect to anything that took place in 1921. But most of the objects we collected seem to be more recent in date but our hope is that some of these objects might connect to a time when this space was a whole and intact neighborhood, before imminent domain and the forced destruction of this Greenwood neighborhood, and possibly before the park was built. And these objects could tell us what was here before.

Now let me show you some pictures of a few things we've found so far that will give you an idea of the range of different materials we are working with.

Out of all the glass finds we made note of **bottles that had lettering, embossing, and makers marks** that will further aid us in identifying these artifacts and estimating time of manufacture. But also made note of medicine bottles and window glass that could speak to just how much access people living in this neighborhood had to health treatments or if they had homes with frosted windows that could speak to a level of affluence.

Another thing we made note of whenever we came across it was **evidence of burning**. The reason for this was because we want to be on the lookout for any artifacts that could be connected to mass-destruction events but especially connected to the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and the destruction of urban renewal. Objects that are burned can be identified by how each material type (glass, clay, metal, etc. acts when under extreme heat conditions. And

as you can see from this image we recovered a number of objects that showed evidence of burning like this glass shard that after coming in contact with fire after it was originally created it then melted and twisted itself this unrecognizable shape. And we have other objects that show similar signs of heat stress.

A third category we created were **objects connected to the presence of children**. As I mentioned our goal is to find out more about the Greenwood community and the neighborhoods that were built and then rebuilt, and its often children that get overlooked when researchers are trying to get a deeper understanding of history. Parker and I are both parents and we set out to intentionally pull out and make visible the presence of children whenever we can. Finding little marbles, little toy tea cup fragments, or doll parts was part of that mention to try to make the children who were part of this neighborhood more visible as well.

But alongside the objects we are finding connected to children, we also recovered **artifacts connected to violence**. Bullet casings, fragments of knife blades, barbed wire, etc. are part of this story as well that shouldnt be overlooked even though it completely shocked me that we actually found shell casings close to where we found the little toy tea cup.

And then another big category I we sampled was **architectural material**, brick and mortar fragments and other architectural material were scattered all over the site. And while we couldnt possibly collect all the brick scatter that was out there, the samples we took from those large collection areas some of those **brick fragments contained lettering** on the outside which was really important for us to pay attention to since we have consistent oral testimony of the city and other companies blocking access to brick and lumbar in the aftermath of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. The thousands who stayed and rebuilt Greenwood, where did all that building material come from and where is it now? What was shocking in this case is that the acme brick plant was literally located across the street from this neighborhood and yet we were still finding bricks stamped with makers marks from other cities - coffeyville Kansas, St. Louis MO, Fulton, MO. The brick fragment Im showing you in the central image was only one of 2 bricks we found that were stamped Tulsa, every other brick that we have found with lettering has come from out of state, which could bring critical evidence to bear on what survivors have testified to for decades.

And lastly there were things we found during the course of our survey that we left at the site because they held great importance being there at the park than they ever would in a lab. For example in one of the largest collection areas, the same one we recovered the bullets in, one of the students found **2 red feathers**, and when they found it we all kind of stopped for a minute to reflect and remembered what Kristi said at the start on the first day we opened the site for investigation --- to look out for the red birds. We left those feathers on the site where we found them but that moment is something I will never forget.

So when people ask me what did you find? My usual response is.... how much time do you have?



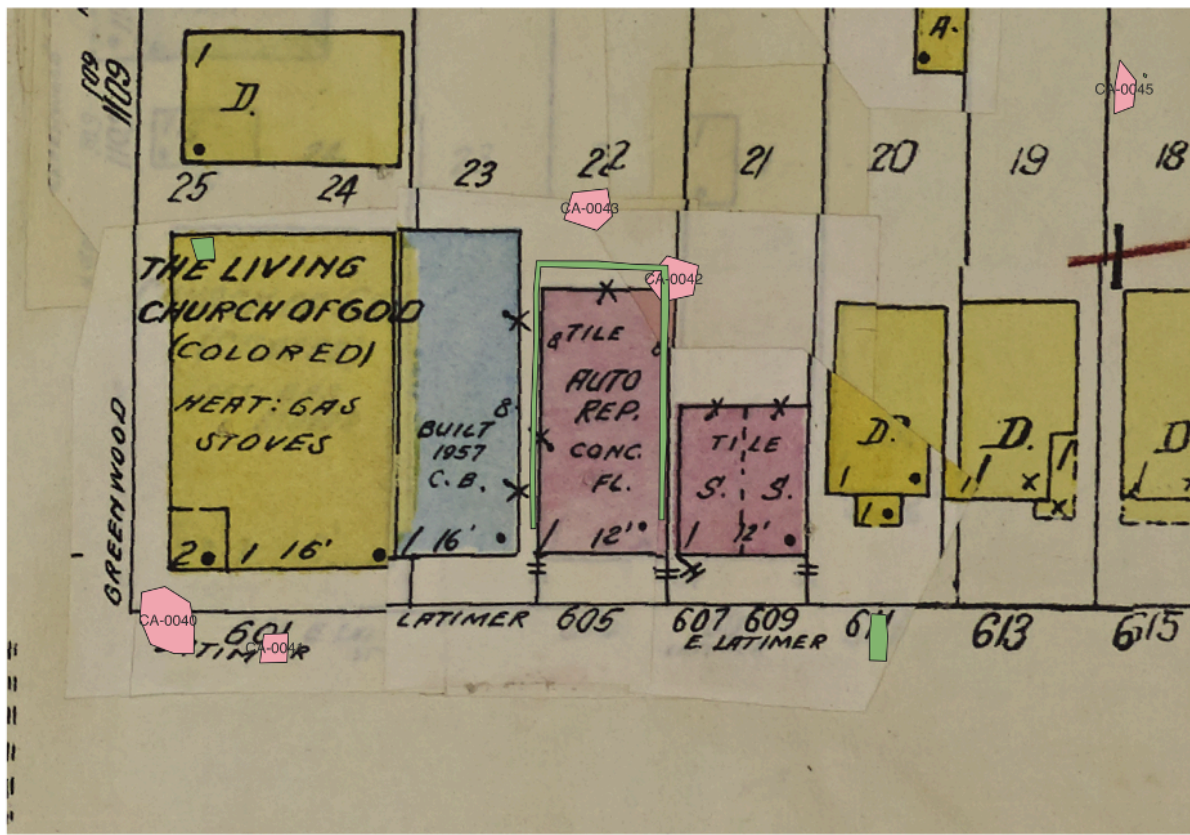
But we didnt just find objects even though that was already a huge discovery in itself. But I mentioned that we recorded over 100 structural features between Standpipe Hill and BS Roberts Park.

At BS Roberts Park the most well preserved structural feature thats visible on the landscape today, we found just north of the park on land owned by the Tulsa City County Library. Can you see anything in this image?

yes you can see an entact rectangular foundation made of stone blocks and bricks popping out of the grass there. This may not look like much but finding this entact foundation is the holy grail of archaeology. And when Parker assigned GPS coordinates to this structure and did some quick georeferencing in GIS to line up the structure with what the neighborhood looked like in 1939, the foundation has the same dimensions and is sitting in the same approximate location of a mechanic shop that used to sit at the corner of Greenwood and Latimer. Finding this intact foundation opens so many possibilities for future investigations, exploring what remains of this historic Greenwood business, did this building have a basement, could more things be waiting to be found underground underneath this shop. And how cool would it be to be able to recreate this shop and bring us one step closer to recreating this entire historic neighborhood in Greenwood based on the archaeological evidence left behind.







	A	B	C	D	E
	Date	Park	Acres	Comments	Individual
1	1898	Tulsa		January 18, Tulsa incorporated as a town.	Edward E. Calkins, Mayor
2	1899	Tulsa		City Elections	R. N. Bynum, Mayor
3	1900	Tulsa		City Elections	Lewis M. Pon, Mayor
4	1901	Tulsa		Red Fork Oil Strike, City Elections	George D. Blakey, Mayor
5	1903	Tulsa		City Elections	George W. Mowbray, Sr., Mayor
6	1904	Brick Pit		January 23, 1904 Wagon full of nitroglycerine, use for shooting oil wells, explodes forming a crater which becomes a pond (later becoming Owen Park).	H. Cline, Mayor
7	1905	Tulsa		Gaspool Oil Strike, City Elections	C. L. Reader, Mayor
8	1906	Tulsa		City Elections	John O. Mitchell, Mayor
9	1907	Tulsa		Oklahoma becomes 48th state.	
10	1907	Orcutt Park		Tulsa's first amusement park, City Elections	W. E. Rhoads, Mayor
11	1909	Tulsa		Park Commission is established, Tulsa population is 9000.	J. E. Pierson, Chair
12	1909	Standpipe Hill		Land near N. Cincinnati and Woodrow improved for park use but Water Sewer maintained	John O. Mitchell, Mayor
13	1909	Owen	23.75	19.4 acres Purchased for \$13,500.	Chauncey A. Owen, pioneer businessman and hotel owner
14	1909	Woodward	33.98	Condemned Perryman's Pasture 33.64 acres and paid \$3,532 to Helen M. Woodward.	Herbert E. Woodward, pioneer postman
15	1910	Central	11.66	Purchased 11 acres for \$7,500 from L.K. Cone at E. 6th and S. Peoria	L. J. Martin, Mayor
16	1910	Owen		Officially opens with 600 roses, Greenhouse, and water lines.	John Malsenbacher, Parks Director
17	1912	Tulsa		First Park Bond issue passes, City Elections	Frank M. Wooden, Mayor
18	1913	Owen		Park Board approves Shelter, wading pool and roadway. Lake dam and stone bridge complete.	
19	1913	Central		Park Board approves and in work.	
20	1914	Admiral	2.59	Purchased 2 acres for \$4,000 from Ray and served Postoffice at E. Admiral and N. Cedar Ave.	
21	1914	Greenwood	5.05	Purchased east side of Ben Hill.	
22	1916	Tulsa		City Elections	John H. Simmons, Mayor
23	1917	Gunboat North and South	0.50	Dedicated by Louise and Adelta Berry, C.J. Hindman and V.B. Walker in Elm Park Addition.	

Tulsa Parks and Recreation records indicate that BS Roberts Park or the Greenwood Playground is first park in Greenwood dating back to 1914

File from Steven Lassman, Parks Planner for City of Tulsa Parks and Recreation

On March 30 2023 he sent the following email

Hello Alicia,

I went through our records to see what we have on the former BS Roberts Park, I couldn't find any mention of it as "King Park", but it was listed as "Greenwood Playground" and was the area between N Hartford Ave and N Greenwood Ave, and E King St and E Latimer Pl

Tulsa Parks originally had ownership of Greenwood Playground, which seems like it was first created in 1914 as a colored playground (Our Park Board records only go as far back as 1925, so I couldn't confirm this date)

I could not find exactly when Tulsa Parks transferred ownership of Greenwood Playground, but it is listed on a map from 1969, but not on one from 1979, so I believe it was sometime in that window that ownership was transferred to another entity. There may be specific mention of the ownership transfer in our archive of Park Board minutes, but without a more specific date, that is a lot to comb through.

I would check the county's land records to see if there is any deed information on the park in that 1969-1979 window, and if you can find a narrower date, I can check those archived Park Board minutes to see if there is any mention of Greenwood Playground's ownership transfer.

I have attached an aerial photo of the park from a 1946 parks atlas, as well as the latest mention I could find with Greenwood Playground from a 1969 aerial photography atlas.



The 2 streets in view of this image in 1946 are E. Latimer Place (to the north) and E. Latimer Street (to the south)

The boundaries of Greenwood Playground at this point in 1946 lie between these 2 streets abutting the railroad running north to south and in 1946 had a small pool but no free standing playground equipment. Known locally as "Kings Park"

1969

AERIAL
BUSINESS CONTROL
ATLAS

VOLUME III

METROPOLITAN TULSA

AND

TULSA COUNTY



PHOTOMAP SERVICE, INC.

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Phone 918 / 742-3740

T U L S A P A R K S				
I-14	28.	71	GRAHAM, NEWTON R. PARK	E. 63rd St. & So. Yorktown Ave.
H-11	29.	6	GREENWOOD PLAYGROUND	E. King St. & No. Hartford Ave.
H-9	30.	30	GUNBOAT NORTH	E. 11th Pl. & So. Frankfort Ave.
H-9	31.	30	GUNBOAT SOUTH	E. 13th Pl. & So. Frankfort Ave.
K-12	32.	73	HAUSAN TRACT PAUL JOHNSON	E. 75th St. & So. Pittsburg Ave.
H-11	32.	4	HAUSAN TRACT H-13	E. 53rd St. & So. Wheeling Ave.
I-13	33.	55	HELLER, HARVEY PARK	E. 48th Street & So. Quaker
I-12	34.	55	HENTHORNE, NORRIS G. PARK	E. 33rd Place & So. Mingo Road
O-12	35.	67	HICKS, GORDON T. PARK	E. 36th Street & So. Yale Ave.
L-5	36.	52	HIGHLAND PARK	W. 25th St. & Southwest Blvd.
G-15	37.	35	HOWARD, OSCAR R. PARK	E. 60th St. & So. Madison Ave.
H-5	38.	42	JOHNSON, E. FRED PARK	E. 47th Pl. & So. Harvard Ave.
K-9	39.	57	LANGENHEIM, R. L. PARK	E. Virgin St. & No. Madison Ave.
H-12	40.	6	LINCOLN PARK	E. 29th St. & No. Yorktown Ave.
I-5	41.	9	LLOYD TRACT	E. 13th Pl. & So. Cincinnati Ave.
H-9	42.	30	LOCUST PARK	E. 19th St. & So. 108th E. Ave.
O-10	43.	61	MAGIC CIRCLE TRACT Sig Cowan	

In 1969 the Aerial Business Control Atlas in 1969 indicated that the park labeled as "Greenwood Playground" in 1969 has a much bigger footprint possibly due to the removal of homes surrounding the original park footprint. In 1969 the park is listed as having the following boundaries

The boundaries of Greenwood Playground at this point in 1969 are

N Greenwood Ave to the west – running north to south

N Hartford Ave to the east – running north to south

E Latimer Pl to the North

E King St to the South – stretching more to the south than previous aerial imagery in 1946 had indicated.

But then at some point between 1969 and 1979 the original Greenwood Playground is destroyed making way for the new reservoir that in the present day landscape now covers a large amount of acreage to the east of what is today listed as BS Roberts Park