

able to care for children. HRS officials have described Charles and Mary as loving parents and said foster parents have preference over strangers in adoptions. With proper care, a child would not face any health problems from infected parents. For the adoption, HRS required Charles and Mary to give up wills and appoint a guardian willing to take charge of the child if they should die or become too ill to care for her. Charles' parents and Mary's sister volunteered.

Confidential information
Social workers have said laws protecting confidentiality of information with AIDS precluded disclosure from disclosing the condition to the judge. The attorney deleted the information from papers she presented to the judge, describing the couple as healthy nonsmokers. She later said HRS should have informed the judge in a session. The HRS policy on cases has since changed, and workers are required to disclose whether prospective adoptees have AIDS or any other terminal illness, Towey said. "This is about a child. If these people have cancer, it should be disclosed. This is a case about the best permanent home for a child."

...the budget cuts will affect programs from drug treatment centers to emergency housing assistance.

...and law enforcement for undocumented immigrants. But agency officials said the cuts were in place more than a week ago, before the judge's decision was made.

...The cuts will come from \$1.3 billion that the department has for undocumented immigrants "squeezes the care for our other children."

Florida's programs for helping battered and sexually abused children, moving drug offenders from jail to treatment or job training, and providing housing assistance for families could be sharply reduced or abolished.

Rosewood massacre survivors to collect on the rest of compensation from state

Associated Press
TALLAHASSEE — The state of Florida is ready to send checks to nine survivors of the racial violence that destroyed the black community of Rosewood almost 72 years ago.

The elderly survivors, who were children when a white mob drove their families from the community near Gainesville, have received \$50,000 each from the state and will get another \$100,000 apiece in January, officials said Wednesday.

"We're winding it down," said Guy David Robinson, an assistant attorney general handling the compensation plan. Last spring, lawmakers passed a \$2 million compensation plan, including \$150,000 each for anyone who could prove they fled the violence.

On New Year's Day 1923, a group of whites went on a rampage after an unsuccessful search for a black man accused of assaulting a white woman. A mob burned almost every home and building in the community of about 120 people nine miles east of Cedar Key.

At least six blacks and two

Last spring, lawmakers passed a \$2 million compensation plan, including \$150,000 each for anyone who could prove they fled the violence.

whites died. The state received 21 applications from people who claimed to be survivors, but only nine have proved they lived in Rosewood during the violence, said Robinson, who is handling the payment plan with Greg Durden, chief of the attorney general's civil rights office.

The deadline for applying for compensation is Dec. 31. The Legislature awarded compensation to Minnie Lee Langley, 81; Arnett Goins, 80; Wilson Hall, 79; and Willie Evans, who turns 87 on Christmas Day, after they testified at hearings and proved they were present during the racial violence.

Five others proved to state officials that they were driven from the community along with their families. They include Mary Hall Daniels, 75; Robie

Martin, 79; Dorothy Goins Hosey, who turns 76 New Year's Day; Lonnie Carrier Carrol, who turns 84 Christmas Day; and Margie Hall Johnson, who turns 86 on Friday.

Martin was the only survivor who wasn't known to officials after the legislation passed. She said she learned about the compensation after reading about it in a newspaper.

She was 8 years old at the time of the violence and remembered her father loading the family on a train to escape the mob. The whites burned her family's home and lynched her uncle. It was two years before she was reunited with her father.

"It renews my faith in my government," Martin said at a news conference earlier this month when she accepted her first \$50,000 check.

Found \$75,000 tapestry in N.Y. bus station locker

...ZSA Writer
...00 tapestry stripped from room wall and stolen from exclusive Breakers hotel. Each has been found in a tiny suitcase and taken to a locker at a New York City station.

Albany N.Y., FBI agent Michael O'Brien said.

"It was crunched up pretty good," O'Brien said.

Neither the FBI nor Palm Beach police would release any more details. Nobody has been arrested, and it looks as if nobody will get the \$15,000 reward offered by the hotel. "The reward was..."

...more than 20 feet off the floor was removed from an intricate system of pulleys and wires. When it was taken down for cleaning last year, three men had to carry it.

It's a special rug, woven in the 1770s by Flemish artists as part of a series of 13 tapestries designed by artist Jan Verelst.

the tapestry, but The Breakers is pleased to have it back.

"Right now, there's a bare wall where it was," Carlson said. "We're looking forward to returning it home."

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NOTICE TO AT&T PRO WATS CUSTOMERS

AT&T filed tariff revisions with the Federal Communications Commission on December 20, 1994 to remove international calling card and international operator services. These changes will remove a 3% basic discount for customers in the U.S. Mainland, 10% basic discount for customers in the U.S. Possessions, and a 10% discount on international operator handled calls. These revisions are scheduled to become effective January 1, 1995.

METRO-DADE

NOTICE OF SOLICITATION OF NOMINATIONS TO THE ACQUISITION SELECTION COMMITTEE

The Environmentally Endangered Lands Program of the Metro-Dade Office of the County Manager is seeking nominations for committee appointments to the Acquisition Selection Committee. Preference will be given to candidates who have a record of service in public or civic affairs in Dade County. For more information regarding qualifications and timetable of application, call (305) 375-3614. Send two (2) typewritten cover letters stating reason for nomination, biographical letters of recommendations, and a resume to the Metro-Dade Office of the County Manager, 1000 Biscayne Blvd., Miami, FL 33132.

LIFESTYLE

Sun-Sentinel, Sunday, February 21, 1993 Section E

Voices from a Florida town that died in a racial firestorm 70 years ago rise from the ashes, asking for justice.

Owed to Rosewood



Staff photo/ROBERT DUYOS

Survivor Lee Ruth Davis was 7 when her father hustled her to safety after a white mob began a week-long rampage in Rosewood.

By MARGO HARAKAS
Staff Writer

Lee Ruth Davis awoke in the dark to her father's voice. "C'mon," he said. "I'm going to take ya to Mr. Wright's house. You stay there till I come back."

Wrapping blankets around his children, he hustled Davis, two of her brothers and a sister out the door.

Davis, 7, sensed something ominous in the air. She pulled the blanket closer as they walked the half mile through the frosty night, her father strangely silent.

"John Wright was a Yankee fellow, a white man,"

Davis says. He owned a two-story house and the general store in the predominantly black town of Rosewood. "That's where you bought everythin', unless you went to Gainesville," some 40 miles or more to the northeast.

But it was not shopping her daddy was intent on this night.

A frenzied, heavily armed and liquored-up white mob had descended on Rosewood. They had hanged and shot one black man, and reportedly dragged another black man three miles behind a car. *More white men were coming — from Perry, Jacksonville and Georgia.* And the word was spreading: Everything breathing in Rosewood was going to get dead.

The first week of January 1923 was as sordid and shameful as any in Florida's history. The whirlwind of racial hatred unleashed by an accusation of black-on-white assault turned a thriving and pleasant town into a heap of cinders. At least seven people were killed. Three churches, a school and every house in the small town (except for the Wrights) was torched.

When the embers cooled and the smoke lifted, the whites began assiduously burying the shocking truth of the Rosewood massacre.

Details are scarce. Most of what is known is gleaned from conflicting anecdotal stories and a few not necessarily unbiased newspaper accounts. (The *Florida Times Union* reported,

"Young Wife Assaulted by Negro Brute." An editorial in the *Gainesville Daily Sun* talked about the good men who belonged to the Ku Klux Klan, and applauded the Klan's espoused opposition to gambling and its defense of womanhood.)

Even the estimates of the number of dead vary, from six or seven to as many as 150. Some say the bloodletting began on New Year's Day, others indicate it began a day or so later. Some accounts list the number of houses destroyed as 18. Survivors say it had to be more like 40 or 50.

Yet there is one essential truth, a point of convergence that remains clear and undisputed: A white mob went mad in Rosewood that first week of 1923 and committed unspeakable atrocities.

Now, 70 years after the orgy of violence, state

**BLACK
HISTORY
MONTH**

Rep. Miguel DeGrandy, R-Miami, is pressing the state to acknowledge the wrong done in Rosewood, and he's asking for compensation for the remaining survivors and for establishment of a memorial to honor those who fell and those who tried to save them.

Also, to assure that the tragedy never again is dismissed or forgotten, film producer/writer Michael O'McCarthy has signed a contract with Multimedia Motion Pictures to co-produce a TV movie on the sad demise of once proud Rosewood. It was an outraged O'McCarthy who two years ago located the survivors, put them in touch with Holland & Knight and initiated the action for compensation.

Why is the call for justice finally being heard now, 10 years after a *St. Petersburg Times* reporter reminded the world of the chilling dark secret of Rosewood?

"I think the public is more sensitive to these types of issues today, more outraged by them," says Manuel L. Dobrinsky, with the Miami law firm of Holland & Knight. Dobrinsky is representing without charge Davis and her cousin Minnie Lee Langley of Jacksonville.

State Rep. Miguel DeGrandy, R-Miami, is pressing the state to acknowledge the wrong done in Rosewood and raise a memorial to those who died.

PLEASE SEE ROSEWOOD / 4E

FROM PAGE 1E

Remembering Rosewood's reign of terror

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"It was a time," says Davis, setting the stage, "when if you seen a white person, you better know your place. If you seen a white child, and that white child want your seat, you better get up no matter how old you are."

It was a time when racial tensions flared white hot. A time when a 7-year-old child could outlive her birthplace.

"The Rosewood massacre was not the only racial massacre in Florida," says Ted Hemmingway, professor of history at Florida A&M. Between 1882 and 1968 Florida had 282 lynchings, a record exceeded only by Mississippi, 591; Georgia, 531; Texas, 493; Alabama, 347; and Arkansas, 284, he says.

"Even as early as 1912 when Booker T. Washington toured the state, five people were lynched in one day in Lake City."

What set rural Rosewood apart was that the violence inflicted there all but wiped a town from the map.

"It's a dreadful, dreadful story," says Davis, now 77 and living in Miami. Davis, her cousin Langley, now 88, and Margie Hall Johnson, Wilson Hall and Mary Hall Daniels, all living outside Jacksonville, share the experience of the bloody white rage, and of being the only Rosewood victims known to be alive today.

"Rosewood was a nice town," Davis says, "a lovely little place. Everybody owned their own homes. And they were nice homes, too. Weren't no shacks."

The town was a stop on Florida's first cross-state railroad, connecting Jacksonville on the Atlantic Coast to Cedar Key on the Gulf Coast. The deep woods surrounding the area made for a thriving turpentine and timber industry.

Most men in town worked either at the local turpentine still or at the sawmill in nearby Sumner. Davis' father, John Bradley, fell trees. Langley's family survived by selling game and fur trapped in the same woods.

Rosewood's hardworking residents thought they had built stability into their town in the form of a school, churches, a baseball diamond and train station.

Yet in a wink, it was gone, brought down by the incendiary accusation of one Fannie Taylor, a white woman living in Sumner, three miles away.

"We knowed what happened," says Davis, piecing together what she remembers and what she's been told.

Aunt Sarah and my cousin were working in Fannie Taylor's back yard that day." They'd gone to Sumner, Davis says, to do Taylor's washing, just like always.

"This man come, stepped over the fence and went into the house."

Davis doesn't know the man's name, only that he was white and worked as an engineer on the train. Aunt Sarah had seen him come to the house before.

When he left, Davis says, "Mrs. Taylor was all abused up. When her husband come home, what she gonna say?"

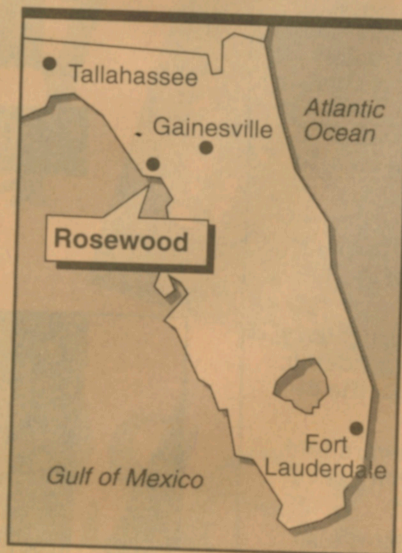
Certainly not that Taylor had an abusive lover, as Davis and other blacks at the time believed. Instead, Taylor screamed that a black man had attacked her. Some reports say Taylor was robbed, others say raped. Some accounts say three black men were sought in connection with the attack. Other accounts name only one suspect, Jesse Hunter, an escapee from a chain gang.

In any case, a hastily assembled posse set off from Sumner with a pack of yelping bloodhounds. The dogs led the posse to Aaron Carrier's house in nearby Rosewood, and then to wagon tracks that disappeared at a river.



Talking about the massacre is an emotional experience for Lee Ruth Davis.

Staff photo/JUDY SLOAN REICH



Staff graphic

ment official to try to stop the bloodletting. Many say those sworn to uphold the peace were among the mob. According to a summary of events prepared by Holland & Knight, "the sheriff of Rosewood left town when the mob told him to leave, the governor of Florida went hunting, and Rosewood burned."

A black man named Sam Carter faced perhaps the most savage attack. The posse suspected him of providing the wagon used in the alleged attacker's getaway. "They took Sam Carter and hanged him to a tree behind Sylvester's house and they shot him all to pieces," Davis says.

In some accounts, Carter was tortured for two days, with the rabid mob cutting off his fingers and ears before finally killing him with a rifle shot to the face.

Davis also tells of Sylvester Carrier, a young black musician who was down at the depot when the mob rode by. "Sundown better not find you here," the men warned him.

Sylvester understood the threat.

"Those crackers are coming back to my house tonight," he told John Bradley, Davis' father.

Bradley sheltered his younger children at Wright's house, told his older boys to run for it and joined Sylvester to hold off the mob, in what became the biggest battle of the weeklong melee. A dozen or so relatives had taken refuge at Sylvester's home that night, including Langley and Aunt Sarah.

The first shot that rang out killed Aunt Sarah, says Langley. Hit her square in the head.

Then a barrage let loose. Langley, crouched down in the woodbin next to Sylvester, remembers white men storming the front door, and each being blasted away by Sylvester's rifle.

It seemed the firing went on forever. But eventually it stopped when the mob ran out of ammunition. The men retreated, planning to return the next morning.

As the whites withdrew, everyone in the house fled to the nearby woods.

"We stayed out there in the woods for four days," Langley says. "We didn't have no food, no water, no clothes [they were dressed only in thin nightclothes], no coat, no shoes. Nothing. Lordy, it was cold."

Either that night or the next, the fires began. "We could see it from the woods," Langley

Davis says at one point she had a vision. "I said let's go home, I see a train coming to take us out."

Knowing Davis often seemed to sense things others did not, the hideaways crawled through the woods and underbrush back to the Wrights' house. At one point, a white man on horseback spotted them and tried to flush them from the bush. "Come on out," he hollered. "Nobody's goin' to hurt ya."

"We didn't move," Davis said.

The man finally tired of the game and went on his way.

The Wrights, panic-stricken at the absence of Davis and her brothers and sisters, were searching for them everywhere. Mrs. Wright screamed with relief when they appeared.

"There were 150 or more women and children in the Wright's yard," Davis says.

Just as Davis had foreseen, a train was coming. It rolled slowly through the swamp and woods, stopping to rescue Rosewood's survivors.

If there were any white heroes or heroines in the sad and sinister story, they were the Wrights and the brothers John and William Bryce, Northerners who had come south to run a railroad.

"Capt. Bryce, he was so good to us," Langley recalls. "He had food and clothes for us. Everything we wanted, he gave to us on that train."

The *New York Times* said seven people died — five blacks and two whites — in the week-long orgy of violence. One of those reported shot to death was Sylvester Carrier. Sylvester, Davis says, actually escaped to Texas, where he changed his name to Lewis.

Among those who died at the hands of the mob was James Carrier, kin to both Langley and Davis. A stroke victim, paralyzed on one side, Carrier went looking for his daughter instead of fleeing when he could. When the mob pursued him, he sought protection from W.H. Pillsbury at the mill.

According to a *New York Times* story of Jan. 7, "Pillsbury locked him in a house in the negro quarter. Later, however, when a new clash became imminent the negro was turned over to 25 or 30 men."

The men, says Langley, forced James Carrier to dig his own grave, then shot him in it. For nothing, for being black.

Langley says that until recently, she never told anyone of the terrible things that happened in Rosewood in 1923, though it has worried her mind all these years.

Margie Hall Johnson, 83, now living in Hilliard, near Jacksonville, says even today she's scared to go back to Rosewood. "Oh, Lord," she says. "I wouldn't go back there."

Davis did return to the area a couple of times, though there's nothing really there now.

DeGrandy's bill makes the point that the state knew, or should have known, of the imminent danger facing the residents of Rosewood and it did nothing to protect them or their property. Furthermore, no one

ee Ruth Davis awoke in the dark to her father's voice. "C'mon," he said. "I'm going to take ya to Mr. Wright's house. You stay there till I come back."

Wrapping blankets around his children away by Sylvester's rifle.

an abusive lover, as Davis and other blacks at the time believed. Instead, Taylor screamed that a black man had attacked her. Some reports say Taylor was robbed, others say raped. Some accounts say three black men were sought in connection with the attack. Other accounts name only one suspect, Jesse Hunter, an escapee from a chain gang.

In any case, a hastily assembled posse set off from Sumner with a pack of yelping bloodhounds. The dogs led the posse to Aaron Carrier's house in nearby Rosewood, and then to wagon tracks that disappeared at a river. Convinced Carrier had helped Taylor's "attacker" to escape, they tied Carrier to the back of a car and dragged him to Sumner.

Langley doesn't remember Carrier being dragged. They came on horseback, "along the railroad track, as far as you could see." A hundred or more men in cowboy hats lusting for a lynching.

"They tied Aaron with the rope to hang him. Right there behind his own house. . . . They were hollerin', talkin' about bring me the rope, bring me the rope," Langley says.

At the last moment, the son of the white sawmill owner, W.H. Pillsbury, stepped in. "He took Aaron away from those white people," says Langley, "and carried him to Sumner and then on to Gainesville for safekeeping."

Davis says it was the sheriff from Bronson who freed Carrier's neck from the noose. If it was, he was the only law enforce-

It seemed the firing went on forever. But eventually it stopped when the mob ran out of ammunition. The men retreated, planning to return the next morning.

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Either that night or the next, the fires began. "We could see it from the woods," Langley says.

One woman, described by Davis as a white woman and by newspapers as black, was shot as she tried to escape her burning house.

Davis, meanwhile, secreted away at the Wright house, knew nothing of the carnage going on outside.

Not till the next day, when she ignored Mrs. Wright's warnings to stay in the yard and instead wandered up the road to a nearby town and an older brother's house, did Davis learn why she was in hiding.

"They're going to kill all the black people from Rosewood," said her sister-in-law, visibly shaken. "Go. Go to the hammock and hide."

"We went way down into the hammock," Davis recalls. "There were about seven or eight of us kids. And we sat there on a big log with our feet in the water. It was so cold. We didn't have food or water."

editorial in the Gainesville Daily Sun talked the good men who belonged to the Ku Klux and applauded the Klan's espoused opposition to gambling and its defense of womanhood.)

Even the estimates of the number of deaths were as high as 150.

Rosewood in 1923, though it has worried her mind all these years.

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Davis did return to the area a couple of times, though there's nothing really there now.

DeGrandy's bill makes the point that the state knew, or should have known, of the imminent danger facing the residents of Rosewood and it did nothing to protect them or their property. Furthermore, no one was ever prosecuted for the murders, the kidnappings, the arson, the theft of property. Besides asking for compensation for the victims, his bill calls for a memorial to be erected to honor those who died as well as those who tried to shelter and protect the victims of Rosewood.

For those who experienced it, talking about the massacre brings tears. Strangely though, the racial hatred did not beget more racial hatred.

"I don't hate, but let me tell you what I feel about white people," Langley says. "I ain't never had any use for them any more. There some good ones and some bad ones, but you don't know how to mix them out."

A gentle-voiced Davis wearily tells a white visitor, "Why would I blame you when you weren't even born yet? I can't blame people for what somebody else do. I don't even hate them that did it. "I can't hate. If I hate I can't get to heaven."

Seminole Tribal Fair/Pow wow
February 11-14, 1993
Hollywood, Florida

Brighton Field Day
February 19-21, 1993
Brighton Reservation

Discover Native America Pow wow
.....pages 9-12

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Number 14

"THE NATIVE'S VOICE"

January 15, 1993

The Rosewood Massacre of 1923

By Peter B. Gallagher and Charles Flowers

Once upon a time there was a town called Rosewood. It was located about nine miles east of Cedar Key, not far from the southern terminus of the "Trail of Tears," where 19th Century Seminole Indians were herded on steamboats to be deported west. Rosewood had three churches and a railroad depot, a few dozen well-kept homes and a population of perhaps 200.

But that was before the shooting started.

The town of Rosewood, Florida is no more. It has fallen into a black hole of history that neither the victims nor the perpetrators of a week of racial savagery are quick to remember. The January 1923 "Massacre," which destroyed an entire community and set off violence across North Florida is not taught in public schools and is not included in any Levy County history book.

But there is no doubt that it did happen.

The history of Native Americans, particularly that of the Seminole Indians, is filled with events of similar pain and suffering -- armed invaders, wanton killing and burning, destruction of community, loss of home and property. Just as the Indians were pursued by the calvary, the black folk of Rosewood were hunted like animals through the same thick Gulf Hammock forests. Like the Indians, some of their bodies were mutilated, others cast into mass



graves as if they were less than human.

The atrocities of Rosewood, however, occurred more than a half century after the end of the Third (and last) Seminole War.

Now, 70 years later, survivors of the Rosewood Massacre are demanding the cover-up be exposed; they and their families want reparation and a memorial to the victims and heroes of one of this country's most savage hate crimes.

Here in a special Seminole Tribune series -- gleaned from more than 100 sources, including news accounts, interviews with survivors, witnesses and historians, as well as research never before made public -- is the story of the Massacre at Rosewood . . . yesterday and today.

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ROSEWOOD -- When Leonard Reynolds purchased 40 acres of Levy County rural pineland a few years ago, the realtor didn't mention that the last blacks to live on this land were murdered, mutilated, burned out, hunted and chased forever from their homes.

Reynolds, a retired black Washington, D.C. cop, had no idea he was moving onto the landscape of one of the largest racial hate crimes in this country's history.

"I had never heard of the Rosewood Massacre. But I knew something was odd up here. We kept running into a lot of odd incidents," says Reynolds, whose wife, daughter, and grandchildren are trying to establish roots in an area where non-whites have historically been non-welcome.

Three hundred dollars an acre is the reason why the Reynolds' family

invested in Rosewood. When a neighbor filled him in, Reynolds couldn't believe his ears:

"Once I found out I asked the local sheriff, 'Are we gonna see white sheets comin' up the driveway?' He said, 'We don't do that anymore.'"

No, in fact, Levy County, Florida has been spared any major Ku Klux Klan rallies in the past 70 years. Few blatant racial incidents have broken the quiet of this sparsely-populated Gulf Coast county. Not since the first week in January, 1923 when a demon of racial hatred rose up from the tiny black sawmill community of Rosewood and wreaked a shocking havoc of violence stretching across North Florida.

"They were hunting us down like we was rabbits," recalls Lee Ruth Davis, 77, a Rosewood survivor who now lives in

Miami. "I don't know why those people did us that way."



The Seminole Tribe of Florida color guard leads the grand entry to Discover Native America 1993. The Central Florida Fairgrounds in Orlando was the site for this spectacular powwow hosted by the Seminole Tribe. For more photos and the powwow story see the special section inside.

Photo by Twila Perkins



Above: Minnie Lee Langley, 80 says she witnessed the shooting from between her Cousin Sylvester's legs: "Everyone who came up to the door, he got 'em. Below: Lee Ruth Davis, 77, one of two known survivors of the massacre: "I think the state should pay us for the loss we had."

Photos by Charles Flowers

When the shooting and burning had stopped, an estimated 200 black men, women and children had lost their homes and, in many cases, fee title to their properties. The entire thriving community of Rosewood, including three churches, several graveyards and about 50 two-story woodframe houses, was burned to the ground by a deranged posse of white males.

Estimates of the dead, including white and black, range from six to several dozen. As many more may have been killed in other parts of North Florida, victims of a hysteria fueled by the racial hatred of Rosewood.

If not in history books, the massacre lives on . . . in the whispered tales of mutilated body parts saved in mason jars, horrific lynchings from trees that still stand and unfound mass graves hidden in the Gulf Hammock swamps.

Black Thumb In A Jar

"It went on and on, for days and days, white men hunting black men all through the Gulf Hammock forests," says one resident of Bronson, the county seat. "It finally stopped after about a week when they just shot an old black man leaning against a tree minding his own

business. They stuck him head first into a vat of pinetar and there he stayed for all to see. After a couple of days it made everyone so sick and disgusted, the whole thing just went away."

The Bronson resident would speak only if his name was not revealed. He claims he first found out about the incident 38 years ago, while hanging out at a local gas station.

"This man walked up holding a jar with a human thumb in it. He said it was from a black man named Fats that was killed at Rosewood. He said they cut off this thumbs, ears and tallywacker for souvenirs."

That hatred still exists today in this county, only it is more controlled. My wife would lose her job and I'd be run out of town if anyone found out I talked about these things."

There are only two known survivors of the Jan 1-7 massacre: Lee Ruth Davis of Miami and Minnie Lee Langley of Jacksonville. Another man, E.M. Blocker of Sarasota was sent out of town by his father never to return just as the lynching began. Though the Blockers lived in

Continued on page 2

See story and photos on pages 9-12

Massacre At Rosewood

nearby Wylie, they owned 40 acres in Rosewood -- land which was taken and sold.

The families of these people, and the descendants of others who once lived in Rosewood, number in the hundreds. In an unprecedented move this February, the Florida Legislature will consider a bill designed to compensate the survivors of Rosewood, and create a memorial to honor both the victims of the massacre and the "heroes" who helped shelter black women and children from the marauding posse.

A Bill For Reparation

The state's largest law firm, Holland & Knight, has researched the massacre and is preparing a draft of this bill. It will be introduced by Miguel De Grandy (R-Miami) who heads the legislature's Cuban-American coalition.

"Our basic purpose is to create a collective memory of Rosewood and retain it," said De Grandy, who will ask his colleagues to decide how much Lee Ruth Davis, Minnie Lee Langley, *et. al.* should receive.

This marks the first time in American history a state government has been asked to pay reparation for racial crimes by and against its own citizens, says Steven Hanlon of Tallahassee, who heads the Holland & Knight "pro bono" team.

"Land is just a piece of it. They wiped out an entire community," says Hanlon, who says his firm will accept no fee or commission -- not even expenses -- for its work on this case. "How many Sunday church services were wiped out? They burned down every church in town. How much is that worth? The quality of life was ruined for these people. How do you put a price tag on that?"

"Our research shows this was not some depressed ghetto community that was burned. This was a thriving area -- everyone had jobs, and they were good jobs. They lived in nice houses, some of them two-story mansions. And this was removed from them. Their community was destroyed.

"In my opinion, the Holocaust is the only thing you could compare Rosewood to."

Some survivors are certain no more

higher on the black side. Former St. Petersburg *Times* reporter Gary Moore, who looked into the case in 1982, put the death toll between 17 and 20, although he noted "there are persuasive eyewitness reports of seeing an open mass grave."

Others say the incident "unleashed a demon" that led to racial murders (of both white and black) in towns and cities all over North Florida. Clearly, armed vigilantes rumbled into Levy County from many different parts of Florida, bent on quelling what they were told was a "Negro uprising."

For hundreds of miles in all directions, any innocent black person walking along the side of the road was risking injury or death.

"They were literally going 'coon' hunting," says Hanlon, a University of Missouri graduate who specializes in controversial cases. "Where was the local sheriff? Where were the police? Where was the National Guard? Not a single person was ever prosecuted for these unspeakable crimes."

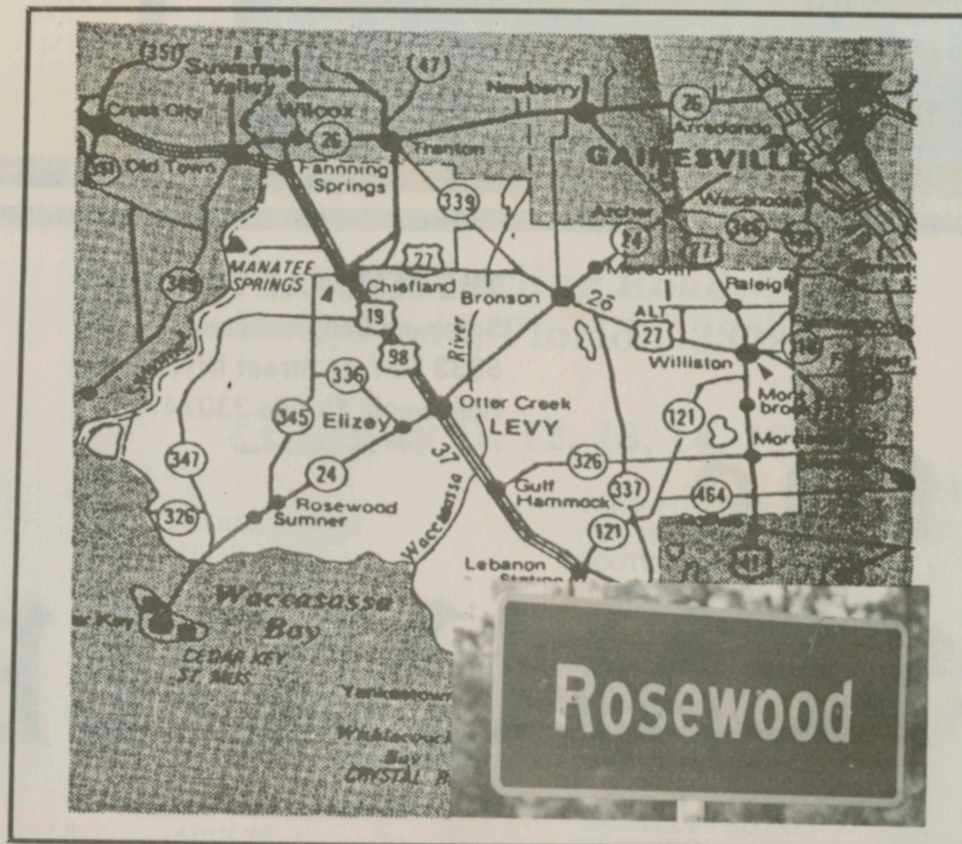
the next sawmill. In 1923, single males, white and black, lived in a barracks "camp" society much like the "migrant camps" of agricultural South Florida.

Everything these men needed, from food and lodging to whiskey and prostitutes, was provided within the locked gates of the camp. When the Rosewood lynchings began, the black workers in camp were guarded . . . except for one.

According to newspaper reports, a "mob of 25-30 men," confronted Cummer supervisor W. H. Pillsbury and demanded he release one black man they believed had actually shot back at white marauders who threatened him.

Pillsbury handed the pleading 60-year-old man over to the mob, which "then riddled the negro with bullets" over the fresh graves of other blacks killed the day before.

While Pillsbury sought to protect the rest of his black workers -- fully half of his mill work force, he permitted white



Rosewood lies on SR 24 about 9 miles northeast of Cedar Key.

When my mother heard about the first lynching, she told my father, "Those Crackers bad. Get me and my children out of here."

-- E. M. Blocker

Right To Bear Arms

Rosewood was a town where the First Amendment met the Second, and the Second won. The "right of the people to keep and bear Arms" was never more self-evident than in that first week of 1923. The 14th Amendment, which guarantees "life, liberty, and property" and "due process of law" proved no match for the gun, the knife and the torch.

"The utter breakdown of the law is admitted," reported the *New York World*, a defunct newspaper which had earned a reputation for crusading against the Ku Klux Klan two years earlier.

In fact, it was every man, woman and child for themselves. Many blacks took to the thick woods, still filled with black bears and rattlesnakes to this day. They became prey for baying dogs and crazed rifle-toting "coon hunters."

Rosewood, like most small towns in

employees to join the posse hunting for blacks. Poly Wilkerson, the "under-sheriff" assigned by the Levy County Sheriff to keep peace at the Cummer camp, was a leader of the pack and one of the first white men to die.

Ironically, the sawmill families -- men, women and children who lived outside the Cummer compound in the quaint Rosewood community -- suffered the greatest wrath.

Landowners, with well-kept gardens and rope swings from tall trees, some with pianos in their parlors and others with rocking chairs on wide front porches -- they were the central victims of the Rosewood Massacre.

'The County Is Aroused'

The first news of "the trouble" at Rosewood appeared Jan. 2, 1923 in the *Gainesville Sun*. The largest newspaper near Levy County reported that a young white woman, wife of a mill worker, had been assaulted by a black man on New

in Lake County, where a rumored rape of a white woman by black men sparked at least two killings and the burning of three homes in 1949.

The Ku Klux Klan was involved in both the Ocoee and Groveland incidents, Kennedy says.

For certain, Rosewood occurred during the peak of Klan popularity in the United States, Klanwatch, an Alabama-based group which monitors Klan activity, estimates 5 million Americans had paid \$10 each for white sheets and "klavern" membership by 1925.

Klan historian and University of Florida history professor David Chalmers says the number was closer to two million, but it was still a peak in the 125-year history of the organization. (An estimated 30,000 KKK members marched down Pennsylvania Avenue, in the nation's capital, on Aug. 7, 1925 -- the KKK's largest show of strength ever.)

The Cover-Up

The top officials in both the state and federal governments, at the time of Rosewood, did nothing to investigate the massacre. Florida Gov. Cary Hardee was, at the very least, sympathetic to the Klan, according to Sam Proctor, chair of

Most of Sam Carter's body was left hanging from a tree behind Sarah and Hayward Carrier's house right in the Rosewood community. To most, the lynched Sam Carter, twisting in the breeze, sent a direct message: *Get out of town and don't come back!* It was a warning that young Sylvester Carrier -- a tall Indian-looking man who lived in his parents' house with his fair-skinned wife, Gert -- refused to heed.

The lynching of Sam Carter triggered an exodus from Levy County. "When my mother heard about the first lynching, she told my father, 'Those crackers bad. Get me and my children out of here,'" says E.M. Blocker, of Sarasota, who was 16 years old and living in nearby Wylie at the time. "He told her he wasn't gonna leave the house. He got his gun and said he would shoot anybody that came up our road.

"Then he took us out and flagged down a train and we got off in Bartow. And we never came back."

Those blacks who were unable to leave immediately hid inside their houses or took refuge in the thick Gulf Hammock woodlands. "We just stayed inside, didn't come out for more than a week," said Sam Bell, 91, who lived several miles from the Rosewood

THE SEMINOLE TRIBUNE

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Only letters which have a signed named and address can be considered for publication. Typed names will not be considered or will letters which hint of libel be published.

It should be noted that letters to the editors express the views of the writers and not necessarily the views of this newspaper.

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Year's Day in Sumner, the tiny hamlet three miles from Rosewood, where the white lumber mill families lived.

"The negro believed by many to be guilty was making for Gulf Hammock, one of the most dense forests in Florida...the entire county is aroused and virtually every able-bodied man has joined in the search," the newspaper reported.

The Sun paid less attention to a Ku Klux Klan rally on New Year's night right in Gainesville. The Florida Times-Union in Jacksonville reported more than 100 robed Klansmen marched through Gainesville bearing a flaming cross, and banners "testifying that they were against bootlegging, cheap lawyers who cheat justice and the last one read 'Don't follow us.'"

The Klansmen, according to the Times-Union story, "disappeared in the negro section of the city, and an hour later appeared on the square for a few moments. From whence they came and where they went no one knows."

In all likelihood, many of them went to Rosewood, about 40 miles west. No printed account of the Rosewood violence, however, mentioned the Klan by name, nor has the Klan ever taken public credit for quelling the "uprising." That the Klan has been left out of such a massive manifestation of what the Klan was all about is more than ironic; it is a suspicious oversight, say experts.

"How else would all those armed men get to Rosewood in such a hurry?" wonders Stetson Kennedy, a white historian who infiltrated the Klan in the 1940s and wrote *The Klan Unmasked* (Florida Atlantic University Press, 1990).

A 'Fiery Summons'

"We're a racist state, but we're not that racist. People aren't just going to drop everything because they hear there might be a black man on the loose," Kennedy says. "The Klan had its own communication network, and probably sent out a 'fiery summons' commanding members to Rosewood."

"The only way you can ignore a 'fiery summons' is if you are too sick to get out of bed. This had all the earmarks of a plainclothes Klan operation."

Kennedy who worked for the Florida Writer's Project from 1937-1942, compares Rosewood to Ocoee, a small community near Orlando which was torched on election day, 1920, with an undetermined death toll, and Groveland,

the history department at the University of Florida.

Perhaps that is why the ambivalent Hardee took the word of local Levy County officials and failed to send in the National Guard. This is verified by news accounts of the day; all records of Hardee's tenure, removed by the governor himself when he left office, have vanished.

A Klansman, on his deathbed, told Kennedy that U.S. President Warren G. Harding had been sworn into the "Invisible Empire" in a secret White House Green Room ceremony. Appeals to Harding for an investigation of the Rosewood Massacre, with blood still fresh on the "lynching trees," also fell upon deaf ears.

In this light, it is no surprise that the "cover-up" included local law enforcement. In fact, a Levy County grand jury empaneled to look into the matter failed to bring forth a single indictment for any crime. The records of those proceedings, like most such documentation of the Rosewood massacre, are lost or missing.

The Rosewood survivors have no memory of men with sheets or burning crosses. They only remember cowboy hats and trucks, carrying "people who wasn't from there. They were from Georgia and Perry, Florida," according to Ms. Davis.

Newspaper estimates of the growing mob in Rosewood ranged from 150-1,000.

Lynched, Dismembered

Sam Carter, a 45-year-old black man, was the first to die.

The mob searched the black community with bloodhounds for those responsible for the assault on Sumner housewife Fannie Taylor. Carter was shot to death, the Sun reported, "when he confessed" to having transported the alleged assailants several miles in his horse-and-wagon. One of the two wanted men was Carter's son, the newspaper reported.

More probably, Carter was lynched, tortured and dismembered. Then he was shot. Stories still circulate about Williston, Bronson, Chiefland, Otter Creek and about the backwoods of Levy County of Sam Carter's body parts being kept in jars of formaldehyde -- trophies on the mantle. "My mother-in-law grew up in Levy County. She's told us stories about the black man's ear her father kept," says one newspaper editor who reviewed this story.

Clarence Strong, a Levy County resident who lived in nearby Otter Creek at the time, says, "All I remember was a lot of traffic going by here, a lot of white men just waiting on the streets, waiting for trouble. Was no way I was going outside."

On Wednesday, an angry mob arrived at the large two-story Carrier house. They found the house barricaded. When the gunmen advanced on the residence, one black woman was shot (through a window) and two whites were shot to death. News accounts say the white posse was fired upon "without warning" by the blacks inside.

However, one of the black children inside, Minnie Lee Langley -- then nine years old -- says the white men fired first through the window, killing her Aunt Sarah. They then knocked down the door, where they were greeted inside with rifle fire from close range by her Cousin Sylvester.

Sylvester Carrier had an attitude, legend tells us. He had been warned that trouble was coming, but, like E. M. Blocker's dad in nearby Wylie and John Wesley Bradley (Lee Ruth Davis' father), he refused to abandon the property his family rightfully owned. Instead of running, he gathered ammunition and arms and waited. At least one news account says the mob came to Carrier's house to teach the young "buck" a lesson.

"They kept shooting, shooting, shooting," remembers Minnie Lee Langley, now 80. "We ran up under the bed, under the mattresses, covered up all kinds of ways to keep those bullets from hitting us. They was shooting the house down."

Pellets Fell Like Rain

Old Sam Bell remembers shotgun pellets falling on his house, miles away, "like it was raining. You couldn't go outside if you wanted to, not hardly without getting shot."

Scared, panicked, Minnie Lee Langley threw off the covers and ran downstairs: "When I got to the end of the steps, Cousin Sylvester he grabbed me and say, 'Come on! Let me save you! He carried me up in a wood bin that was behind the door and he put me between his legs and he squat down behind me."

"Everyone who came up to that door, he got 'em. And then there were men standing outside, 'cause the moon was shining so pretty. And he got them,

Continued on page 3

too. He sure did."

No one living saw Sarah Carrier shot. Minnie Lee was upstairs when her cousin told the children that Aunt Sarah was dead. Minnie does say she saw the response from Cousin Sylvester: the lifeless form of under-Sheriff Poly Wilkerson, sprawled over the threshold of their home. Next to Wilkerson lay the body of lumber mill boss Henry Andrews.

The two white men were killed instantly. Neither man was popular at the sawmill, among white or black workers. Wilkerson was said to have been an abusive "peacekeeper," and Andrews was a hated supervisor who mistreated sawmill workers. One story claims Wilkerson, and perhaps, Andrews, were shot in the back by their own men.

Sylvester Carrier was not alone in standing up to the mob. Lee Ruth Davis' father, John Wesley Bradley, and Cousin Willis -- nicknamed "Big Baby" -- were also among those who returned the mob's fire that night.

"Papa said in a few minutes everything was gone.

They didn't come back until morning. But they took all of them dead people and loaded them up on two trucks and left."

-- Lee Ruth Davis

"Papa said in a few minutes everything was gone," says Lee Ruth Davis, "And they didn't come back until morning. But they took all them dead people and loaded them up on two trucks and left. Sylvester was shot in the leg somewhere, Papa said, 'cause he was able to get him out."

Reporters said three blacks were also found dead in the house by the mob, which left at early morning and returned with more ammunition, only to find the house empty.

The survivors -- including the wounded -- had fled to the woods. One child had lost an eye to broken glass. An elderly woman was shot through the hand. Scared and suffering -- without medical treatment -- they waited in the forest. The group split up in the woods,

boys I say hit the woods, and go now because he said they is coming in here tonight and they are going to kill everything that is breathing," Ms. Davis said.

But Wright went beyond merely warning his neighbors. He filled his twenty-room house with black women and children and stood up against any marauders who trespassed onto his property. In the many versions of the Rosewood tale handed down in Levy County and elsewhere, John Wright is always portrayed as a savior.

"When there was nowhere else to go, he opened his house to the women and children," says Doyal Scoggins, who lives in the Wright house today (It was one of two left standing after the burning stopped.) "He was so respected by both whites and blacks he was able to stand between them unharmed."

Eventually, a railroad train was sent for the women and children Wright was protecting. From a platform in the Wright's back yard, they were loaded

onto the train and taken to Gainesville, where caring black families from as far away as Jacksonville were waiting to give further shelter. Most simply began lives in new cities, never to be reunited with their husbands or fathers again. It is believed that Wright organized the entire effort.

The upraised earth of the old railroad line that carried the women and children to safety can still be seen through the Rosewood woods. "One of the main things we want to do is honor this man. He is a true hero of Florida history. Without his efforts, God knows how many more people would have died," says attorney Hanlon.

"Maybe we'll build a child care center, in storekeeper Wright's name, or maybe something else that would improve the quality of life for the



Levy native Joe Bishop, shown here walking the grounds of the Sumner mill, says he first learned about Rosewood at Cedar Key High School. It is not part of the curriculum.

Photo by Peter B. Gallagher

"When we got to the Wrights, there must have been three or four hundred people. Some had sheets on, some had no clothes. Some was bloody and everything. It was a mess."

The Florida *Times-Union* reported January 6, 1923:

"(Levy County) Sheriff (Bob) Walker told the Associated Press tonight that further trouble appeared imminent. Relatives of the slain negroes are believed to be armed and are expected to cause trouble if overtaken by the whites."

Walker, however, advised Gov. Hardee that the situation was under control. "The message from the Levy County sheriff did not go into details, it is understood," the *Times-Union* reported. "It only advised the governor briefly that it was thought local authorities could now cope with matters."

It is said that Walker did prevent at least one lynching when he removed one Aaron Carrier from the mob and placed



The Cummer Lumber Co. mill in Sumner, circa 1924.

prison term for carrying a concealed weapon. It was believed he was in the house at the time of the clash."

From her hospital bed in Miami, Lee Ruth Davis asks, "Jesse Hunter?"

To this day, she does not know who

theory. Minnie Lee Langley says Sylvester Carrier, though wounded, got away. He moved to Texas and changed his name, never to return.

Another black man, Mingo Williams, 50, was found dead on a road north of Bronson, about 20 miles from Rosewood, shot through the jaw.

The St. Augustine *Evening Record* reported "a score or more blacks are believed slain in the fighting which took

"The houses were burned by a number of white men while a crowd of between 100 and 150 looked on, but no

safety in Chiefland.

The Hero Of Rosewood

By January 5th, the Gainesville *Sun* was reporting a full-fledged race riot. The newspaper said it had requested Alachua County Sheriff Elias Ramsey respond "with us many men as possible as it was feared the situation, apparently already beyond the control of the Levy County authorities, would grow worse." The men were needed to "aid in quelling the rebellious black population," the *Sun* asserted.

Despite the appeal, Ramsey's reinforcements were met with no further armed resistance. The "rebellious population" were women and children in their nightclothes who had wandered into the woods to escape the mob. All the black men in Rosewood had fled the area.

It might have been worse except for John Wright, a white merchant who ran the store in Rosewood with his wife. Gravestones in the Shiloh Hill Cemetery show the Wrights had lost three children to epidemics of either malaria or influenza. The Wrights quickly passed on word of the impending trouble to their black neighbors.

"Mr. Wright told Papa to tell the big

Who Assaulted Fannie ?

From the Tallahassee *Democrat* of Jan. 5, 1923:

"During the night when the attackers ran out of ammunition and several had left to replenish the supply, the negroes leaving the bodies of two women and one man in the house escaped. The blood stains indicated that several had been wounded. Immediately after, the mob began firing the buildings in the village. While the village was in flames, it was said that members of the mob fired upon negroes who were fleeing from their homes."

Nine-year-old Minnie Lee Langley fled with her little brother and aunts to their relatives in Wylie, a few miles distant. They were turned away to the woods. No one from Rosewood was allowed to stay. Seven-year-old Lee Ruth Davis went first to the Wrights' home and then to the woods. They would escape a day later on the train.

"I had a dream where I saw a train coming," says Lee Ruth Davis. Though younger than her aunts, they believed her, and cautiously returned to the Wrights.

one could be found who would say that he saw the houses fired."

-- Associated Press, Jan. 8, 1923

the black man in protective custody at the Bronson jail. The act of mercy seemed somewhat out of context, however. According to a draft of the Rosewood relief bill prepared by Holland & Knight: "if it was (Walker) it was one of the last times he ever helped the people of Rosewood."

The last two paragraphs of the *Times-Union* story:

"The community has ben (sic) aroused since the attack on the young white woman at Sumner, Monday. (Jesse) Hunter, who escaped from a road gang in Levy County, was accused in connection with the crime, which was said to have resulted in (Sylvester) Carrier declaring his act was an example of what negroes could do without interference.

"The white men went to Carrier's home last night to see if Hunter was there and to warn Carrier against further talk of that kind. Hunter was serving a

Jesse Hunter is, or how Poly Wilkerson's posse might have tracked him to Rosewood. Nor does Ms. Langley. They believe Fannie Taylor was visited by a white man, an engineer on the railroad which ran from Jacksonville to Cedar Key, a stranger who got off in Sumner.

The two survivors, who have kept up with the Rosewood gossip all of their lives, further believe that several years later, after the Taylors followed the mill to the town of Lacoochee, Fannie Taylor again claimed to have been attacked by a black man.

A local historian, who claims to have a box of interview transcripts with massacre eyewitnesses -- interviews he collected nearly 40 years ago -- agrees with the two survivors: "Fannie Taylor had a problem with wanting attention," says the man, who asked that his name not be used.

"She was known to fabricate these incidents to alarm her husband."

DeWitt Taylor, 78, whose brother James was married to the alleged victim, Fannie, says simply, "God knows that's a lie." His late sister-in-law was attacked by a black man, and the attack was witnessed by her four-year-old son. (The son, Burness Taylor, is believed to be alive but could not be reached for this story.)

Killings, Burnings

Although six people had been killed, and six more known to be wounded, newspapers reported packs of armed white men were still searching for the "black brute" who bruised Mrs. Taylor. The actual nature of the assault, by the way, has never been documented. Every physical assault from rape to mere battery has been described in various accounts.

The *Times-Union* claimed the black dead were Sarah Carrier, her son Sylvester, and a woman named Lexy Gordon who "was shot to death as she was leaving her burning dwelling." Lee Ruth Davis says that Mrs. Gordon was white-skinned, and that the mob was disappointed that her two pretty daughters had escaped.

Since they could not rape the girls, they shot the mother dead, is Lee Ruth's

place last night."

The following day, according to press reports, a black man, identified as James Carrier, was taken from the black quarters of the Sumner lumber mill and shot to death over the graves of others killed in the first Rosewood shootout.

"He is said to have refused to reveal the names of the negroes who did the shooting," the Gainesville *Sun* reported on January 7. "The white men, who were in a throng, led him into the negro grave yard and made him stand on the newly dug graves of his brother and mother, also victims of the fightings, while they riddled his body with shots."

The survivors say this was Gene Carrier, Aunt Sarah's crippled brother. His crime: appearing in public to see about his sister. A popular version of this story has Carrier digging his own grave prior to his being shot dead.

On Sunday, Jan. 7, twelve more houses were burned in Rosewood. "The thing I remember most about Rosewood were all the big houses," says Clarence Strong, whose family are Levy County black pioneers. "It was sad to see 'em all burned down. I used to stop in Rosewood all the time. I don't think I've stopped there since the day the town burned down."

"The houses were burned by a number of white men while a crowd of between 100 and 150 looked on," the Associated Press reported in a Jan. 8, 1923 dispatch, a full week after Fannie Taylor's alleged assault and Sam Carter's lynching, "but no one could be found who would say that he saw the houses fired, according to county officers."

One week later, a black man named Abe Wilson was lynched in Newberry, less than 30 miles from the smoldering former town of Rosewood.

Justice By Restitution

A grand jury convened in Bronson the month after the "riots." A special prosecutor solicited testimony from 25 whites and eight blacks, then went home. Insufficient evidence. The avoidance of responsibility -- by the "county officers" and by Gov. Hardee who sat in Tallahassee while Rosewood burned -- especially troubles Rosewood survivors.

"I think the state should pay us for the loss we had," says Lee Ruth Davis. "Some restitution should have been made before now."

The Gainesville *Sun* blamed the

Continued on page 4



Doyal Scoggins owns the former Wright home where black women and children found shelter from the mob.

Photo by Charles Flowers

Massacre At Rosewood

Continued from page 3

Rosewood trouble on "a vagabond," Jesse Hunter, the man who broke the chain gang and was never captured. The *Sun* editorial seemed upset not with the packs of white men who went on criminal killing and burning sprees, but with the tolerance of area officials towards the "homeless" of that era.

"If it had been a man who broke the chain gang, why lynch an innocent man, why burn a community to the ground?" wonders Janie Black, Lee Ruth Davis' niece. "Why take a lame man and have him dig his own grave and then shoot him?"

The legislator heading the Rosewood reparation bill asks the same questions.

"There is no way to compute the damages to these people," says Rep. De Grandy. "How do you put a dollar amount on pain and suffering, on loss of relatives, loss of community? What amount of compensation can make these people whole?"

"In this county, if you don't toe the line and do what the man wants, if you don't vote the way the man says . . . then you lose your job."

-- Fred Matthews, Levy NAACP president

If the legislature doesn't come through, perhaps the survivors will realize some reparation from the motion picture or television industry. South Carolina producer Michael O'McCarthy has been pursuing a Rosewood cinema project for more than a year.

O'McCarthy has promised the survivors they will share in any profits. Why hasn't Hollywood noticed before now? "Hollywood doesn't want anything to do with any project involving the Klan," says O'McCarthy.

'A Foul and Lasting Blot'

The now-defunct *Tampa Times* was prophetic in a January 1923 editorial: "A foul and lasting blot has been placed on the people of Levy County."

All that remains today of the black

Beat Down So Long

Levy County NAACP President Fred Matthews says publicity surrounding the Rosewood massacre may help expose the current economic depression minorities face in Levy. The county's lack of racial skirmishes that have broken the peace in other nearby counties means little to him: "The Klan does a lot of things around here with their hoods off," he says.

"In this county, if you don't toe the line and do what the man wants, if you don't vote the way the man says, if you don't conduct yourself the way the man likes, then you lose your job," says Matthews, retired from government service up north. "And when that happens you don't get another job. Maybe not the rest of your life."

Poor attendance at NAACP meetings, poor voting turnouts in black districts, apathy towards county political affairs, give black residents much of the blame, says Matthews: "There is a forced complacency here . . . the black people of

Levy County have been beat down so long, they don't want to fight anymore."

Matthews spouts out statistics that he says he found "shocking" after moving back to his hometown Bronson after two decades in New Jersey: "There are only three blacks working in over 12 banks, that handle any funds. There are a lot of blacks on the clean-up crews. There are two blacks working at the county courthouse. But a lot of them work in the road department as laborers. None as supervisors."

The Rosewood issue is rising at a time when Levy County is finally attempting a creative solution to its economic woes. Under the guidance of planner George Sandora, Levy has joined a coalition of Florida Big Bend counties called "The Nature Coast." Their goal: to grab a significant chunk of the Florida tourism market by offering what much of Florida now lacks.



Leonard and Mary Reynolds are the first black family to live in Rosewood since the massacre 70 years ago. "Nobody's going to run us off," says Leonard.

Photo by Charles Flowers

in attendance.

Where some, like the legendary Sylvester Carrier, may have moved out of state and changed their names, Bradley remained in Florida. "Papa said he wasn't going to change his name for nothing," Lee Ruth recalls with a shrug.

In her mind, Rosewood was not an isolated event, but a constant possibility that might reoccur at any time. "If they come, they'd find what they found before."

Besides, Bradley believed if he changed his name he would lose any claim to the land he owned in Rosewood.

Minnie Lee Langley's last memory of her Cousin Syl was the young man standing outside the home of his dead mother. His leg was shot and he was laughing. Then, she says, Sylvester Carrier saved his life by doing what the "coon hunters" originally asked him to do: he escaped Rosewood, taking a boat to the Gulf of Mexico and somehow making it to Texas.

Ticklish Ground

Ruth Verrill's 1976 book *Romantic and Historic Levy County* bears no mention of the trouble at Rosewood. A visit to the two museums in Levy County produce scant mention of the events of

of fresh turkey wafting through the neighborhood and the sounds of the choirs of three churches celebrating the holy days, Rosewood was destroyed.

And a fear took root that kept blacks from returning here, from ever again being surrounded by whites in a place where law was abandoned.

They could not know that it would be more than 60 years before another black family would settle in these woods of cypress, pine and red cedar. They, too, have learned the legacy of Rosewood.

'A Dog You Ain't Seen'

Section of Rosewood are a few crumbling hearths, a forest littered with bricks from the town burning, an overgrown well, a tiny abandoned cemetery of broken gravestones and two green DOT road signs that bracket the area like bookends along State Road 24 as it heads into Cedar Key. Though there have been few residents and nothing going on here for 70 years, the city limit signs are maintained by the state. Rosewood also appears on all official maps of Florida and Levy County.

Just inside the "line" from the Rosewood "city" limits is a tiny two-unit country "mall." One unit is a general store with Florida Gator curtains. The other is a smoked mullet shack. During hunting season, it is common to strap a dead deer on the hood of a car and pose for a Polaroid out front of the store.

That's about it. There is an unkempt RV-trailer park, confiscated by the government in the cocaine bust of a St. Petersburg man, and acres of sub-divided "lots for sale." It would be hard to find cheaper land, just off the main drag, anywhere in Florida between city limit signs. The steam railroad is gone, its engine enshrined in a park near today's Otter Creek.

An enormous pallet of woodchips and sawdust is all that remains of the once-bustling Cumber lumber mill. This mill and a nearby turpentine operation employed most of the blacks and whites of the time . . . until the forests were depleted and the "company towns" moved on.

Such utter dependence on the flighty forest products industry has always spelled "depression" for Levy County. When the last big company, Georgia-Pacific, left town in 1980, 1,000 jobs were lost. The resulting economic tailspin has planted Levy firmly on the bottom of Florida counties (67th) in both unemployment and available new obs.

"Look closely at life in Levy County today. Did the cover-up at Rosewood do any good for the black or the white people of Levy county?" asks attorney Hanlon. "Will exposing this tragedy do any good? I think it will."

Lily Wilkerson, a County Commissioner related by marriage to the Poly Wilkerson slain at Rosewood, has doubts: "What good will come of all this? Will it start racial trouble around here? You know how some people jump to conclusions and take things the wrong way. I understand what you are doing, but I just don't know if it is going to do any good for Levy County."

SECTION OF ROSEWOOD

"Natural resources," says Sandora, who claims he has personally seen a rare Florida panther cross a Levy County roadway recently. "We are not trying to attract people looking for glitz. We want to be involved in the promotion of ecotourism."

Sandora, who experienced growth bursts while living in both Ft. Lauderdale and Destin, hopes people will not judge the Levy County of today from its sins of the past: "That old racist attitude, the one that says no black people better be seen past the last bridge to Cedar Key when the sun goes down, that is a diminishing attitude."

"I'm not saying it doesn't exist. It certainly does. But it is much harder to find then it was ten years ago."

Not long after the Rosewood Massacre, the Cumber & Sons lumber yard closed and moved to Lacoochee and the Port of Tampa opened, killing Levy County's monopoly on Gulf Coast shipping.

Pollution and overfishing ruined the shellfish industry. Conservation efforts stopped the wholesale fur trapping trade. The company that made pencils in Cedar Key shut down. Such serious economic downturns have never been reversed, Sandora says. "There are very few major employers in this county. We need to attract more."

Fred Matthews has been an activist for black causes all of his life. As a student at Florida A&M University in the mid-50s, he was a leader of the Tallahassee "bus boycott," one of Florida's first civil rights demonstrations. When black people were not permitted in the front of the bus, Fred Matthews gave them rides for free in his old jalopy. He spent many nights in jail for that "crime," he says.

Matthews knows the price he might pay: "All I can say is, if my shanty gets burned down or I get killed, carry on the struggle. I realize every day that something might happen."

Silence Like Swamp Fog

In his last summers, John Wesley Bradley would drive his family from Gainesville on a kind of pilgrimage to Rosewood. They would walk the woods, picking deer tongue and boneset and other herbs he used for medicine. Once, daughter Lee Ruth Davis remembers, they sat down for dinner in the old Wright home. In 1983, the family had a reunion in Cedar Key with close to 100

Most of the land which blacks owned then has been sold for taxes. What black man would have been so foolish as to return and reoccupy his property?

Many of the survivors thought an investigation would surely bring justice,

"The way I look at it is, we are here to stay. We worked too hard to just throw this all away because of a lot of foolishness . . . I don't play."

-- Leonard Reynolds, retired DC cop

that the terrible wrongs committed at Rosewood would be exposed, that they might receive reparation for their property, if not for their pain and suffering.

But silence has enveloped the event like a thick early-morning swamp fog. None of the white so-called historians in Levy County saw fit to record the events at Rosewood. Instead, documents have been suppressed, newspaper morgues plundered and interviews with witnesses to the massacre destroyed.

Angry that a Miami *Herald* reporter used his name without permission in a story about Rosewood, the man with the interview transcripts refuses to bring them forward. A lady in Cedar Key, who claims to have important family records saved from the churches which burned in Rosewood, refuses to release or discuss the items.

(When the Rosewood bill goes into legislative hearings, such documentation and other evidence could be subpoenaed, attorney Hanlon says.)

The cover-up has included the few black witnesses who were not hidden away from an eyewitness view of the riots. Cousin Philomena, Sarah Carrier's daughter, died before she told anyone the name of the white man she saw enter Fannie Taylor's yard that New Year's Day. Sylvester Carrier is dead, now, having never revealed to a judge who fired the first shot, or the shot that killed Aunt Sarah.

None of the survivors can accurately identify the black man killed in the shooting at Aunt Sarah's. Perhaps it was the man known as Fats, whose thumb was placed in a jar and brandished as a trophy for years afterwards. They do say it was not Sylvester Carrier, whose refusal to be bullied around may have turned a routine 1920s Southern lynching party into an orgy of killing.

January, 1923. Rosewood is nowhere. Not at Bishop Hardware in Chiefland or McElroy's Barber Shop in Chiefland, not at Western Auto in Williston or any of the Levy County State Banks -- outlets where one can purchase the History of Levy County. It includes no mention of

the massacre.

Retired biology teacher Estus Gunnell helped write that history. His stumbling explanation for the absence of the most significant event in county history takes the art of rationalization to a higher level:

"We left it out because it was so morbid. You're treading on some ticklish ground when you get into that subject. What were we supposed to write? The Rosewood Massacre did not fit into the mainstream culture," says Gunnell. "It was an anomaly all its own. It was so odd as to defy any proper position in the natural flow of history. Sure, it happened, but it just doesn't fit."

"There is just something about the mechanism of human emotions that eludes me there. Something happened. I know that. But why I don't know. There are many flights of fancy associated with it. You'll never get the true story. You don't put that sort of thing in a history book, man."

Some, like 91-year-old E.M. Blocker, carry a bitterness that no rationale for such a destructive event can erase. His family lost the 40 acres he says they owned in Rosewood: "None of us knew what the motive for all this was. We didn't care. There wasn't any motive in our mind."

"It was just a nightmare and when you are in the middle of a nightmare, there ain't no time to figure out why, there is only time to get of there. And that is what we did."

When besieged black men like Sylvester Carrier and John Wesley Bradley decided to stay and fight, while others were running away, could they have envisioned the devastation that would follow? With Christmas trees still decorated and holiday cheer ringing in the crisp North Florida air, with the smell

For Leonard Reynolds, whose police pension gives his family an economic stability untied to the depressed Levy County status quo, the events of 70 years ago are still simmering in a pot of prejudicial stew that bubbles up at his audacity to live where black men were told never to return.

There are small things: like his mailbox, private "Reynolds Road" sign and newspaper box that are constantly vandalized, and larger events: his false arrest for supposedly stealing two dollars worth of gas from a broken pump, and the racial slurs and fists thrown at his wife, Mary, during a Cedar Key elementary school picnic.

But, when the white men with guns - "lost" hunters -- occasionally saunter onto his property, Leonard must resort to pulling out his pistol with the long barrel and show his prowess by picking off a few cans he keeps atop the fenceposts about 80 yards away.

"Up here they call it 'Cracker Hunting Season.' That's when they want something to eat, they get their gun, get their deer, get arrested and get out of jail," says Reynolds.

"I just pull out my little gun, go bang! bang! bang! and they don't mess with me."

Perhaps the spirit of those who stood ground against the marauding 1923 mob has entered the conscience of men like Fred Matthews and Leonard Reynolds.

To hear these men speak, voices filled with both incredulity and bitterness, the grit of their commitment against racism, current or past, burns like the powder in Sylvester Carrier's smoking gun of 70 years before.

"The way I look at it, is we are here to stay. We worked too hard to just throw this all away because of a lot of foolishness," says Reynolds, who has a history of black activism. He says he was one of the first black D.C. patrolman to be issued his own patrol car. His grandchildren are the only black children in Cedar Key public schools.

"If people treat us nice, we'll be nice. If they want trouble, maybe they'll find trouble. I got another dog out there you ain't seen yet."

Next issue: The Rosewood survivors tell their stories. And an exclusive essay on "Rosewood's Roots" by noted Florida historian Stetson Kennedy.

Florida A&M Head Says White Thinking Must Change

Integration will never work until there is a commitment on the part of whites in control to change their attitudes toward the black and the poor, the president of Florida A&M University declared here Friday.

Dr. Benjamin Perry, a wind-up speaker in the two-day Governor's conference on education opportunities for the disadvantaged, said the present system is only creating tomorrow's welfare cases.

"White people must realize that no longer will they be able to hide their prejudices behind insincere smiles," said Perry. "The establishment needs to change its attitudes from one of tolerance to one of full acceptance of the individual."

Perry said the millions of dollars spent supporting a "pre-doomed" anti-poverty program was a waste of federal resources, and a large number of people it purported to serve were never touched by the trickle of funds filtering down through administrators and bureaucrats.

"Florida," he said, "may be the land of sunshine, but for many the sun is a tyrant. In a state that has 7,801 attorneys only 60 are black. In a state that has vast industry, less than 10 per cent of managerial positions are held by minorities."

Perry noted that the problems of a large, unskilled labor force went unnoticed, "until national television smoked out the eyesore that many of us already knew existed."

The South is headed for more racial unrest, he said, with the return of 10,000 to 15,000 disillusioned blacks each year from the North.



DR. BENJAMIN PERRY
Creating Welfare Cases

Dr. Perry admonished the 1,000 conferees in attendance that Florida cannot stand another 10 years of nothingness. He urged wider educational opportunities for blacks, including:

- A reduction of attrition rates in the universities and revised curricula to meet changing times and serve all members.

- More attention to counseling and guidance at the secondary level.

- Abolishing middle class values in the social structure of higher education.

- Monies for support of black institutions.

- A review of educational programs relevant to the disadvantaged communities.

Perry also called for a commitment by the state government to provide better housing and fair employment practices.

St. Petersburg Junior College President Michael M. Bennett,

another speaker on the final day of the conference, held at the University of Florida noted that not all disadvantaged students are black. Significant numbers are white.

The junior college, he said, is well adapted to "bridging and remediation" of the learning difficulties of the disadvantaged.

Bennett noted that the doors to opportunity were unlocked for blacks in 1954.

"They were invited to come in and sink or swim, with the rest of us," he said. "Several hundred blacks enrolled at my junior college — so we were fulfilling the American ideal of equal opportunity."

Bennett said he realized the emptiness of "equal opportunity" three years ago at a graduation ceremony.

"About 750 graduates paraded across the platform that May evening. Two of them were black. The disparity was just too great to ignore."

Bennett said educators must realize that disadvantaged students are not stupid, they are simply bewildered in a strange environment.

"The disadvantaged," he said, "pose the greatest challenge yet to our educational system."