

DR. OSSIAN SWEET

BLACK EXCELLENCE

Ossian's parents emphasized education and his ambition took him far.

When he was 13, he went away to Wilberforce Academy in Ohio, the first school in the U.S. owned and operated by Black educators. Ossian became a charter member of the Black fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi. To fund his studies, he spent summers working in Detroit, a boomtown at that time.

Ossian decided to train for a career in medicine. He went to Washington D.C. to study at Howard University, a school founded for African Americans at a time when most universities disqualified or limited Black American enrollment.

Ossian was in D.C. during the "Red Summer of 1919," when white supremacists terrorized cities all across the country. During four days of deadly riots in the city, Ossian witnessed a Black man being brutally beaten, while law enforcement stood by.



The staff of Dunbar Hospital, shortly before Dr. Sweet's arrival in Detroit.

Photo: Detroit Public Library



Dr. Sweet's first medical practice was in Detroit's Black Bottom neighborhood. This photo was taken in the 1942.

Photo: Library of Congress

Ossian Sweet was born in Florida in 1895, the second child of ten. Racial violence and discrimination were rampant in Florida during his childhood. When Ossian was just five years old, he witnessed a white mob lynch a Black teenage boy named Fred Rochelle.

Doctor Ossian Sweet chose to pursue his career in Detroit.

He received his medical license to become a doctor in 1921. Motivated to serve Detroit's communities, Dr. Sweet established a successful medical practice in Detroit's Black Bottom neighborhood. He also worked at Dunbar Hospital, operated by Black physicians and one of the few hospitals in Detroit for Black patients at the time.

While Dr. Ossian Sweet achieved many of his dreams in Detroit, he did not escape racial discrimination or violence.

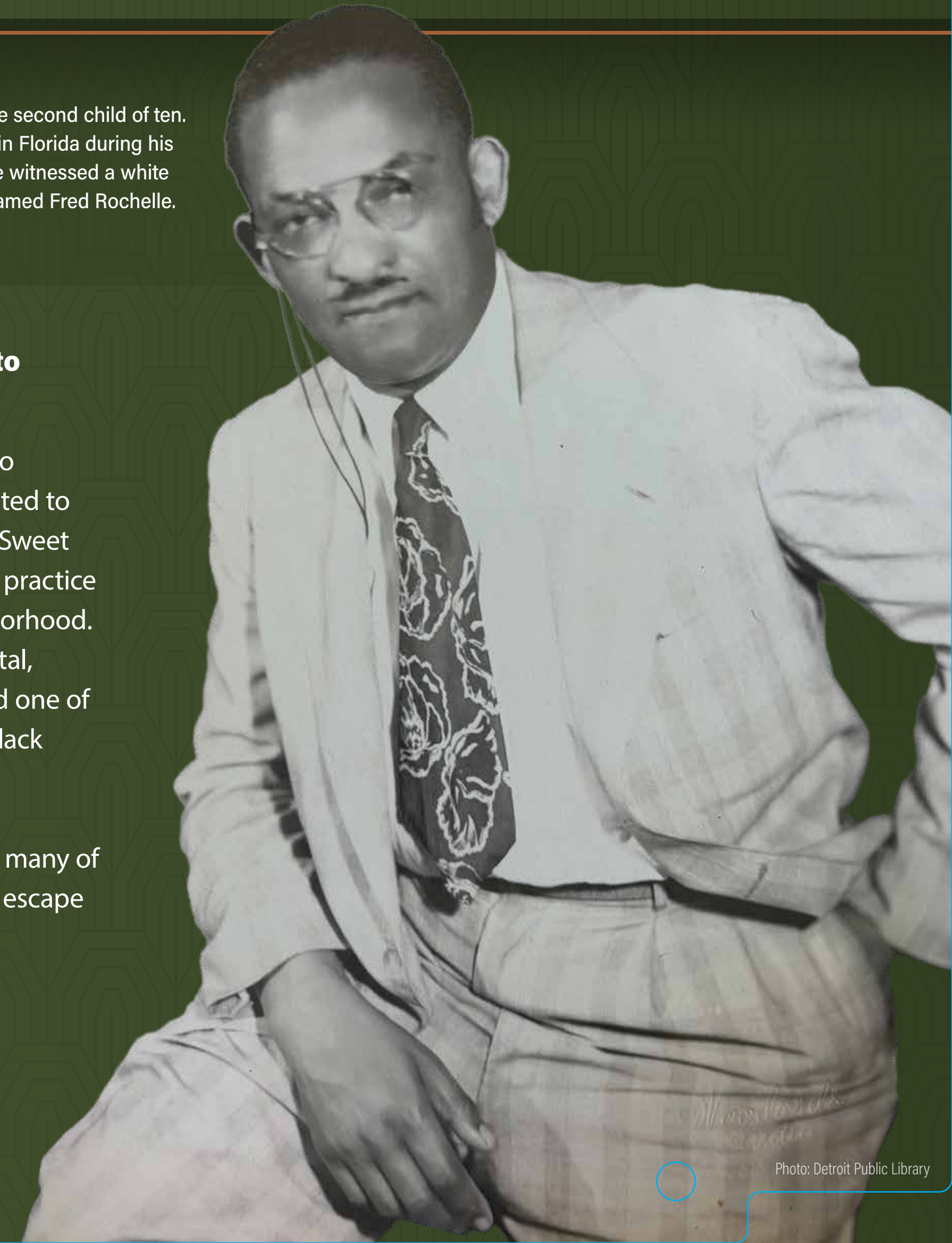


Photo: Detroit Public Library

