

SEPTEMBER 9, 1925

GREETED BY A VIOLENT MOB



Dr. Ossian H. Sweet's house, located at 2905 Garland at the corner of Charlevoix.

Photo: Detroit Public Library

Dr. Ossian and Gladys Sweet, newlyweds and newly parents, purchased the house at 2905 Garland Street in May 1925.

The neighborhood was mostly white. The Sweets knew Black people who had faced and suffered violence for crossing the "race line" in other Detroit neighborhoods earlier that year.

So, in hopes that tensions would relax by autumn, they delayed moving in until September 8, 1925.

During their first night at the house, hundreds of people gathered outside, expressing their nonacceptance of the new neighbors. The Sweets did not sleep well.

They notified the police to help maintain order, but knew law enforcement alone would not prevent mob violence. They had not yet brought all of their belongings, but they had borrowed guns and ammunition. The Sweets were aware that they would need to be ready to defend themselves if things got worse.

The second night, the mob returned, larger and angrier.

To provide additional support, Ossian asked family, friends, and acquaintances to come to the house. The Sweet's infant daughter, Iva, was left with Gladys' parents, who lived nine blocks north, on Cairney Street.

The police were once again stationed around the house to keep the crowd moving. Still, members of the mob began shouting and throwing stones and bricks at the house.

The eleven people in the house grabbed firearms and positioned themselves throughout the rooms. They peeked through windows and watched as the mob grew in size, noise, and anger.

