

The House that Still Stands

Sam and Lucy Mackey were one of the many families who lived in Greenwood during the 1920s. Greenwood was a Black neighborhood in Tulsa, Oklahoma over a hundred years ago. During this time, there were many laws and rules that kept Black and White Tulsans from living near each other. Greenwood was a famous, rich Black neighborhood. The Mackey's were hard working citizens in Greenwood. They did housework and yard work for wealthy Tulsans. They saved up their money and built a big pale green wooden home.

Many jealous White Tulsans did not like that Greenwood was very successful. They were unhappy that Greenwood had many wealthy Black families and businesses because they were not as wealthy. One day a mob, a group of angry people, burned down and destroyed the entire Greenwood community. The Mackey family escaped during the destruction. But when they returned home, their wooden house was burned to the ground. They only found ashes.

The Mackey's were determined to rebuild their house. They did not receive help from the government to help pay for their home. They did not want their house to be destroyed again. This time, they used brick to build their new home. Their home had new technology for their time period. For example, a person could turn on a light switch at the bottom of the stairs. Then when they reached the top of the stairs, they could turn on another light switch that turns off the lights. Their closets had big spacious rooms; a person could walk inside of them. A walk in closet was not something most people had, only rich people. They were able to host parties, weddings, and events in their new home.

Later in the 1960s - 1970s Greenwood went through many changes. A highway was built through the neighborhood. In the 1980's an architect, a person who builds buildings, wanted to preserve the Mackey family house. The house had to be moved to a new location. Preserving something means making it last so that people can remember it and see it for a long time. An architect named Joe L. Robinson carefully numbered every brick and moved the house to its new location brick by brick.

Today, the Mackey House is the only home built in the 1920s which still stands in the Greenwood community. Mr. Robinson finished moving the house in 1986. The house was soon given the name, Mabel B. Little Heritage House to honor another citizen in Greenwood. Mabel B. Little was a hairdresser and businesswoman in Greenwood. Today people can visit the Mabel B. Little house and see a symbol of rebuilding and hope of Greenwood after the fires.