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THE LONGVIEW RACE RIOT OF 1919

by Kenneth R. Durham, Jr.

The summer of 1919 witnessed the worst period of racial strife in the history of the United States.¹ World War I produced a number of new attitudes and social changes which led to conflicts during the first post-war year. Among these changes was a new sense of pride which Negroes in general, and the black soldiers in particular, gained because of their contributions to the war effort. The confidence of the blacks also increased because of the economic and social gains which the war brought them. After the war, however, this confident attitude angered many whites who determined to “put the Negro in his place.” At least seventy Negroes were lynched in America during the first year after the war, and some of these victims were veterans still wearing their uniforms. Twenty-five riots occurred during the summer of 1919, and they were not confined to any one section of the country. The worst one occurred in Chicago where thirty-eight people of both races were killed over a thirteen-day period. Other riots occurred in Knoxville, Tennessee, Omaha, Nebraska, Elaine, Arkansas, Washington, D.C., and Longview, Texas.²

The Longview riot was much less bloody than either the Washington or Chicago riots. This low mortality could have been partially due to the rural environment of Longview, which in 1919 had a population of 5,700 of which 1,790, or thirty-one percent, was black.³ Longview is located in Northeast Texas 125 miles due east of Dallas. It is the county seat of Gregg County,

¹ John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans* (New York, 1969), 480.

² *Ibid.*, 480-481.

³ The fourteenth Census of the United States (1920), Vol. III (population), 1020.

which, in 1919, had a population of 16,700 of which 8,160, or forty-eight percent, was black.⁴ Although this rural and small-town environment may have contributed to the lack of bloodshed, it is not the main explanation because in Elaine, a town of less than 2,500 people⁵ at least five whites and between twenty-five and one hundred blacks were killed.⁶ The primary reason for there being only one person killed during the Longview riot was the prompt and responsible actions taken by Mayor G. A. Bodenheim and Gregg County Judge E.M. Bramlette. These men, along with other local officials and community leaders, took immediate steps to defuse the tension; and they were prompt to request outside aid when the situation became worse in spite of their efforts. If they had not been prompt and persistent in requesting additional military aid, the rioting would have continued, destroying more property and taking the lives of people of both races.

Various factors contributed to the racial tension in Longview. Negro literature which circulated in Gregg County advocated Negro equality and encouraged blacks to push for better treatment.⁷ The most influential black publication to circulate in Gregg County was *The Chicago Defender*, a weekly Negro newspaper with nationwide coverage and circulation. The local reporter and distributor for the *Defender* was S. L. Jones, a black school teacher. Jones and Dr. Calvin P. Davis, a 34-year old black physician, were leaders among the local Negroes.⁸ Another cause of racial tension was the murder of the Negro Lemuel Walters on June 17. Earlier in June, Walters had been whipped by two white brothers from Kilgore, a small community about 10 miles

⁴ Ibid., 999.

⁵ Ibid., 98-99.

⁶ Walter F. White, "Massacring Whites in Arkansas," *Nation*, CIX (Dec. 6, 1919), 715.

⁷ Interview with Earl D. Smith by the author, Longview, August 4, 1978; and the Fort Worth *Star Telegram*, July 11, 1919.

⁸ Clipping from the Longview *Daily Leader*, July 11, 1919, Longview Riot General File, Office of Retained Records, Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas.

south of Longview, because he allegedly had made indecent advances toward their sister.⁹ He was placed in jail, but later a group of white men took him into their custody and killed him.¹⁰

The immediate cause of the riot was *The Chicago Defender's* article in its July 5 issue which described Walters' death from the black point of view. The article said that Walters' only crime was that he was loved by a white woman, and it quoted her as saying that she would have married him if they had lived in the North. She was so distraught over his death that she required a physician's care. The article also said that the sheriff welcomed the white mob which took Walters and killed him.¹¹

Even though the article did not name the Kilgore woman, her friends and relatives knew to whom it referred, and they considered the article scurrilous. They held Jones responsible for submitting the article to the paper; consequently, on Thursday, July 10, the woman's brothers met him on Methvin Street across from the Court House and gave him a severe beating.¹² Dr. Davis arrived in his automobile shortly after the fight and took Jones to his office for treatment.¹³

⁹ Interview with Arthur A. Henderson by the author, Longview, January 30, 1978.

¹⁰ The role of the Sheriff of Gregg County, D. S. Meredith, in Walters' death is clouded by conflicting evidence. Texas Ranger Captain W. M. Hanson, who arrived in Longview three and one-half weeks after Walters' death stated in his official report to the Adjutant General of Texas that Meredith turned Walters over to a group of white men who said they were going to give him a good beating and make him leave town. However, they killed him, and his body was discovered a few days later near Longview. Hanson to the Adjutant General of the State of Texas, July 17, 1919, Longview Riot General File, Office of Retained Records, Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas. On the other hand, Perry Meredith, the Sheriff's son, who was age thirteen at the time of Walters' death, said his father planned to secretly place Walters on a train to get him out of town safely. He recalls his father cloistering Walters in the family home that evening for a few hours awaiting the train's arrival. Sometime after midnight his father escorted Walters to the station and, reportedly, put him on the train with a one-way ticket. The white men who wanted Walters learned of the Sheriff's plan, however, and apparently kidnapped Walters after the train left Longview. Interview with Perry Meredith by the author, White Oak, Texas, August 15, 1978.

¹¹ *The Chicago Defender*, July 5, 1919.

¹² Interview with Joe Kunz by the author, Longview, August 4, 1978; and Hanson to the Adjutant General, July 17, 1919.

¹³ Hanson to the Adjutant General, July 17, 1919.

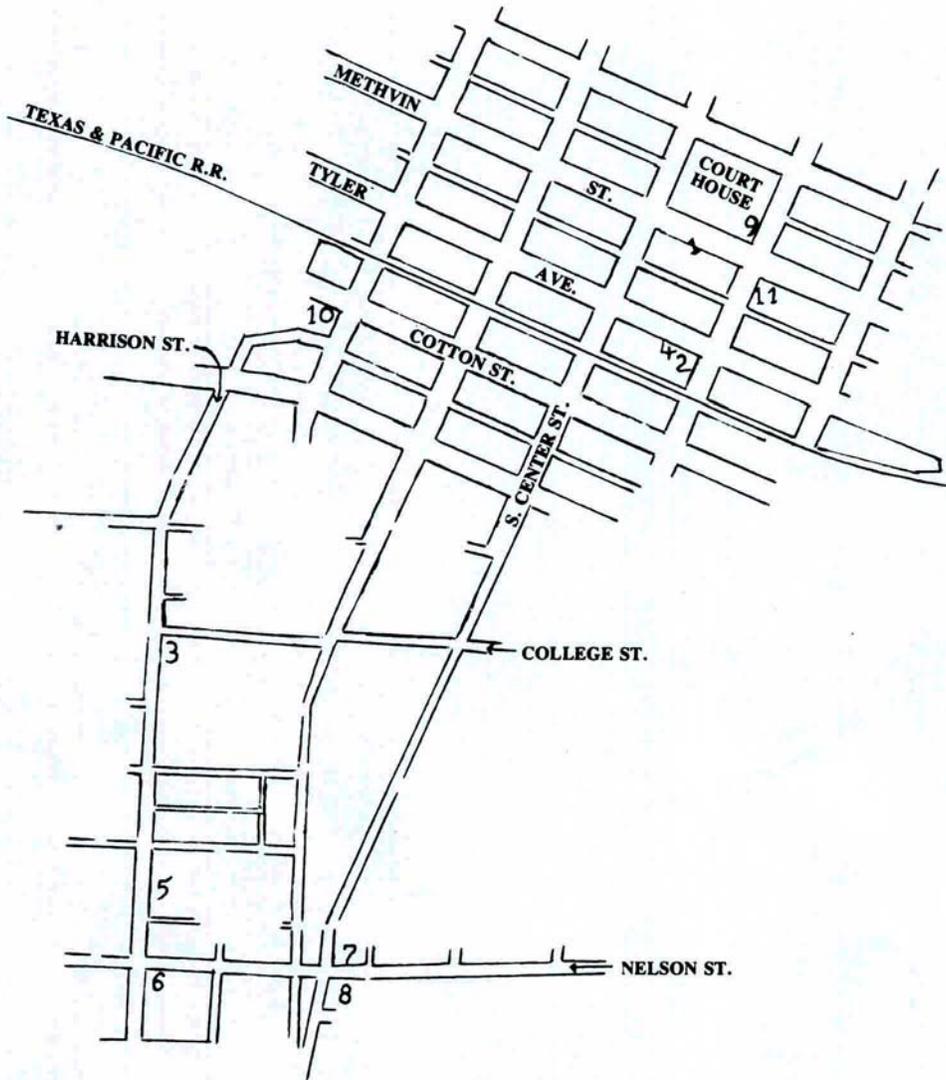
Tension and anger spread throughout the town as whites learned of the article and as blacks gathered at Davis' office to hear of the beating. When Judge Bramlette and Mayor Bodenheim became aware of the tension, they and Ras Young, a local attorney, urged the angry white men not to punish Jones further. The officials felt that their efforts for peace had been successful, and, by late Thursday night, they were optimistic that the worst was over.¹⁴

¹⁴ Clipping from the Longview *Daily Leader*, July 11, 1919.

**PARTIAL MAP OF LONGVIEW SHOWING THE MAJOR
POINTS OF ACTIVITY DURING THE RACE RIOT OF
1919**

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Site where Jones was beaten* | 7. Ben Sanders' house* |
| 2. Bodie Park | 8. Charlie Medlock's house* |
| 3. Jones' house* | 9. National Guard Headquarters tent |
| 4. Fire Station | 10. Bush's house |
| 5. Quick Hall* | 11. Hopkins-Stuckey Dry Goods Store |
| 6. Dr. Davis' house | |

*approximate locations



The worst was yet to come, however, as gangs of both races roamed the town that night looking for members of the opposite race.¹⁵ About midnight a gang of twelve to fifteen white men, ranging in age from nineteen to forty, gathered at Bodie Park at the southwest corner of Tyler and Fredonia Streets.¹⁶ As they talked about the events of the day they decided to pay Jones an unfriendly visit. About 1:00 a.m. they drove their cars into the black section of town to Jones' house on the southeast corner of Harrison and College Streets. As they walked from their cars to the house they were surprised by heavy gunfire from blacks inside the house. Some of the whites also had guns, and they returned the fire as they fled. About 100 shots were fired in all.¹⁷ Three white men were injured superficially by birdshot.¹⁸ Another one took cover under a nearby house when the shooting started, but after the other whites fled, the blacks caught him and beat him severely, fracturing his skull.¹⁹

The other white men fled back to downtown Longview. While some went to the fire station, which was adjacent to Bodie Park, others broke into the Welch Hardware store to get guns and ammunition.²⁰ Angered further now by the gunshot wounds, and being unable to account for their missing companion whom they feared dead, they decided to sound a general alarm to get reinforcements. They rang the fire alarm bell until a group of about 100 men gathered. They explained to the new arrivals

¹⁵ Interview with Arthur A. Henderson, January 30, 1978.

¹⁶ Interview with Joe Kuntz, August 4, 1978.

¹⁷ Clipping from the Longview *Daily Leader*, July 11, 1919; and interview with Joe Kunz, August 4, 1978.

¹⁸ Clipping from the Longview *Daily Leader*, July 11, 1919.

¹⁹ *Galveston Daily News*, July 12, 1919; and interview with Arthur A. Henderson, January 30, 1978.

²⁰ Interview with Wilmer Meredith by the author, White Oak, Texas, August 11, 1978.

what had happened earlier and encouraged them to join in a second attack upon Jones' house. An undetermined number of the men then drove to Jones' house about 4:00 a.m.²¹

They were surprised to find the house deserted, but they vented their anger, nevertheless, by setting fire to the structure. From Jones' house they proceeded two blocks south down Harrison Street to the Quick Hall, a Negro dance hall owned by Charlie Medlock. They set fire to the hall because they suspected that Medlock had ammunition stored there, and these suspicions were confirmed when ammunition inside the hall exploded throughout the burning of the building. Next they went two blocks further south and set fire to Dr. Davis' deserted house which was located at the southeast corner of the Harrison and Nelson Street intersection. There was an automobile parked beside the house, and it exploded during the fire.²² From Davis' house the mob proceeded east on Nelson three blocks to the homes of Ben Sanders and Charlie Medlock located near the Center Street intersection. The mob set these houses on fire, and when the owners protested, the whites whipped Charlie Medlock and Ben Sanders' wife, Belle.²³ By the time they set these last blazes the light of day was dawning, and the men dispersed to their homes and businesses.

Early Friday morning County officials quickly realized their need for outside military assistance, and Sheriff D.S. Meredith and Judge Bramlette talked to Governor William P. Hobby by telephone notifying him of their situation. In response to this call, Governor Hobby placed on alert the National Guard units in Dallas, Terrell, and Nacogdoches, but he ordered to

²¹ Clipping from the Longview *Daily Leader*, July 11, 1919 and the Sherman *Courier*, July 12, 1919.

²² Interview with Eugene Boyd by the author, Longview, January 17, 1978.

²³ Hanson to the Adjutant General, July 17, 1919.

Longview only eight Texas Rangers from Austin and San Antonio. These men, under command of Captain W. M. Hanson, did not arrive in Longview, however, until 9:30 Saturday morning.²⁴ Later Friday morning Judge Bramlette telephoned the Governor a second time urging him to send a large force of National Guard troops to Longview immediately.²⁵ He apparently was apprehensive about the violence that could occur in Longview Friday night if military personnel were not present. In response to this second request, the Governor ordered the National Guard units in Dallas, Terrell, and Nacogdoches to Longview immediately. These units, which arrived in Longview Friday evening, totaled about 100 soldiers, including 29 men in Troop I, 7th Texas Cavalry from Nacogdoches; 40 men in Troop G, 5th Texas Cavalry from Camp Simpson in Dallas; and 30 men from Troop B, 6th Texas Cavalry from Terrell.²⁶ The headquarters for these unmounted cavalymen and for the rangers who arrived Saturday morning was located in a large tent erected on the east side of the County Court House Square.²⁷

These troops might have been able to bring peace to Longview and prevent the necessity of martial law if it had not been for the killing of the well-known black man, Marion Bush. Bush, age 60, was the father-in-law of Dr. Davis and a thirty-year employee in the molding room of the Kelly Plow Company.²⁸ He lived on the west side of Court Street one block south of the Texas and Pacific Railroad tracks.²⁹

²⁴ *Ibid.*, and *Dallas Morning News*, July 12, 1919.

²⁵ *Dallas Morning News*, July 12, 1919.

²⁶ Troop Muster Rolls, Longview Riot Miscellaneous File, Office of Retained Records. Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas.

²⁷ Interview with Earl D. Smith by the author, Longview. April 24, 1977.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Interview with Wilmer Meredith, August 11, 1978.

On Saturday night Sheriff Meredith and Ike Killingsworth³⁰ went to Bush's house to offer him protective custody in the jail.³¹ Meredith felt that Bush might be in danger of an attack by the white radicals because of his family relationship with Davis. The Sheriff explained this danger to Bush and assured him that he was not there to arrest him or harrass him. After a few moments of discussion, Bush told the Sheriff that he would go with him but asked him to wait until he could go back inside and get his hat. When he returned he was concealing a .45 caliber revolver and said that he had changed his mind and was not going. Bush, undoubtedly, recalled the fate of Lemuel Walters and, therefore, determined that he was not going to jail, even for this so-called protection. As he spoke he leveled the revolver at Meredith and fired; then he fired at Killingsworth, missing both men.³² After firing the shots Bush dashed back inside the house and fired again at Meredith who scrambled under the house. In a few moments Bush ran out the back door and headed west carrying a pistol and a high-powered rifle. Meredith emptied his pistol at him, but did not hit him.³³

Bush headed west along the railroad tracks, presumably trying to reach the Negro lodge at Camp Switch, a train stop about ten miles west of Longview. The Negro lodge contained guns, and he probably hoped to find refuge there.³⁴

When Meredith was unable to apprehend Bush, he telephoned Jim Stephens, a farmer who lived five miles west of town at Willow Springs, and asked him to stop Bush. When Stephens saw

³⁰ Interview with Joe Kunz, August 4, 1978.

³¹ Interview with Wilmer Meredith, August 11, 1978. The exact reason for Meredith going to Bush's house is unclear. Meredith's son, Wilmer, says the reason was to offer Bush protective custody, but all of the newspapers consulted say the reason was to arrest Bush. If Meredith's purpose was to arrest Bush. The reason for the arrest is unknown.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Interview with Arthur A. Henderson, January 30, 1978.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Bush he shouted for him to halt, but Bush refused to do so. He fired at Stephens and ran into a cornfield. Stephens pursued him and killed him with shots to the chest and neck.³⁵

When City and County officials heard of the killing of Bush, they immediately feared new outbreaks of violence. Mayor Bodenheim telephoned Governor Hobby again shortly after midnight Saturday requesting more troops.³⁶ The Governor responded by proclaiming martial law over all of Gregg County beginning at noon Sunday, July 13. He placed Brigadier General R. H. McDill in command of all soldiers and rangers.³⁷ He also ordered to Longview 150 more men consisting of 42 men in Troop L, 5th Texas Cavalry from Greenville; 38 men in Troop E, 5th Texas Cavalry from Bonham, 35 men in Troop B, 5th Texas Cavalry from McKinney, and 13 men in Troop F, 6th Texas Cavalry from Tyler. The arrival of these troops Sunday pushed the total number of officers, men and rangers to over 260.³⁸

On Sunday General McDill issued orders initiating the specific details of the martial law. He divided the town into two districts, placing Colonel T. E. Barton in charge of one area and Colonel H. W. Peck over the other, and he placed Colonel H. C. Smith in command of the Rangers.³⁹ He ordered a 10:30 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. curfew in Longview⁴⁰ and prohibited groups of three or more people from gathering on the streets.⁴¹ He ordered the local telephone

³⁵ *Dallas Morning News*, July 14, 1919.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Copy of the Proclamation of Martial law by W. P. Hobby, Governor of the State of Texas, Longview Riot General File, Office of Retained Records, Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas.

³⁸ Troop Muster Rolls.

Hanson to the Adjutant General, July 17, 1919.

³⁹ *Dallas Morning News*, July 14, 1919.

⁴⁰ *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, July 14, 1919.

⁴¹ Interview with Earl D. Smith, April 24, 1977.

operators to prohibit any long-distance calls so that no one could request guns from neighboring towns.⁴²

McDill also ordered all citizens of Longview and Kilgore to turn in their personal firearms at designated places by Sunday evening. This order even included the city, county, and precinct peace officers. He designated the County Court House as the depository for the arms of all Longview citizens. He warned the people that their homes might be searched and that the penalty for concealing guns would be severe.⁴³ An estimated 5,000 to 7,000 firearms were eventually turned in at the Court House, and they were placed in scattered locations throughout the building.⁴⁴

McDill asked city and county officials Sunday night to name a citizens' committee to work with him and the other military officers.⁴⁵ The committee which the officials named consisted of local white businessmen, farmers, bankers, and lawyers. It met Monday morning in Judge Bramlette's office. Attorney Ras Young was elected chairman, and the committee drafted a list of five resolutions stating its position concerning the violence in Longview. The resolutions expressed disapproval of the article written by Jones and of the shots fired by the Negroes barricaded in his house. The committee also voiced opposition to the burning of the Negro property and stated its intentions to prevent further destruction. It commended the prompt action of Governor Hobby and pledged its support to the rangers and militia which he had sent to Gregg

⁴² *Galveston Dailey News*, July 14, 1919.

⁴³ *Dallas Morning News*, July 14, 1919.

⁴⁴ Ranger J. R. McMillan to James A. Harley, Adjutant General of the State of Texas. August 1, 1919, Longview Riot Pay File. Office of Retained Records at Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas.

⁴⁵ Hanson to the Adjutant General, July 17, 1919.

County. It also delegated to Judge Bramlette, Sheriff Meredith, and Mayor Bodenheim the authority to act with and to advise the military officers.⁴⁶

In the meantime Captain Hanson and his rangers conducted investigations to find the white men involved in the attack upon Jones' house and those responsible for burning the Negro property. By talking to various white men, the rangers identified the ringleader who revealed the names of sixteen other men who had made the initial attack with him upon Jones' house. On Monday the rangers proceeded to arrest these men,⁴⁷ charging them with attempted murder and releasing each on a \$1000 bond.⁴⁸ Further investigation on Tuesday revealed the names of nine other men who had participated in burning the Negro homes and the dance hall. They were arrested also.⁴⁹ After being charged with arson they were released on a \$1000 bond each.⁵⁰

After completing the investigation of the white men, Hanson questioned various Negroes concerning the shooting from Jones' house Thursday night, and he arrested twenty-one black men on charges of assault with attempt to murder.⁵¹ Neither Jones nor Davis were among those arrested because they both left town and never returned.⁵² The arrested blacks were placed temporarily in the county jail.

The news of the arrests of the black and white men and the activities of the National Guard were explained fully to the citizens Tuesday evening at a meeting called by General

⁴⁶ Copy of the Resolutions of the Citizens Committee, Longview Riot General File, Office of Retained Records. Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas.

⁴⁷ The names of these men may be found in the *Galveston Daily News*, July 15, 1919, but they are not listed here out of courtesy to the men's relatives who still live in Gregg County.

⁴⁸ Hanson to the Adjutant General. July 17, 1919.

⁴⁹ The names of these men may be found in the *Sherman Courier*, July 16, 1919.

⁵⁰ Hanson to the Adjutant General, July 17, 1919.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Interview with Arthur A. Henderson. January 30, 1978.

McDill. The meeting was held on the County Court House lawn, and Brigadier General Jake F. Wolters, Commander of the South Texas Brigade of Cavalry, spoke to the people.⁵³

This meeting, along with the arrests and the presence of the soldiers and Rangers, had a sobering effect upon the local citizens. In fact, throughout the duration of the martial law, no further acts of violence were reported. Nothing more serious than a couple of minor fires occurred, and neither was thought to be an act of arson. The only one worthy of note occurred at 8:15 p.m. Wednesday, July 16, at the Hopkins-Stuckey Dry Goods Store located across the street from the National Guard headquarters on the Square. The soldiers from Greenville dashed across the street and put out the fire which had been caused by defective wiring. Mr. J. Fred Stuckey showed his appreciation to the men by giving each of the forty men a pair of socks, and he gave the entire Troop a wagonload of watermelons.⁵⁴

As the tension in Longview subsided, General McDill talked with the committee of citizens about the appropriate time for lifting the martial law. The committee cautioned that before ending the martial law the Negroes who had been arrested should be sent out of the county for their own safety since rumors were circulating that white individuals planned to kill some of them as soon as they got their guns back. Consequently, on Wednesday the Negroes were taken to Austin under guard of the Troop from Nacogdoches. General Wolters and Captain Hanson also accompanied them.⁵⁵ Local officials hoped that the blacks could be kept in a state penitentiary at state expense, but the Attorney General of Texas informed them later that this procedure was illegal. He said that the proper course of action was to place the prisoners in various county jails

⁵³ *Dallas Morning News*. July 16, 1919.

⁵⁴ Field Report of Major Tim A. Smith, July 18, 1919. Longview Riot General File, Office of Retained Records, Camp Mabry. Austin, Texas.

⁵⁵ Hanson to the Adjutant General, July 17, 1919; and the *Dallas Morning News*, July 17, 1919.

around the state at the expense of Gregg County. The black men, he said, should remain there only until they could be tried in the courts of Gregg County.⁵⁶

On the same day that the black prisoners left, General McDill ordered home all of the remaining National Guard units except the Greenville Troop.⁵⁷ That same day the Adjutant General ordered five of the Texas Rangers elsewhere, leaving only three in Longview.⁵⁸ A further indication of the restoration of peace was an order by General McDill on Tuesday that the first of a series of three baseball games between Tyler and Longview could be played on Wednesday.⁵⁹

By Thursday peace and stability seemed secure; therefore, local officials and General McDill advised Governor Hobby that, in their opinion, martial law could be lifted. The Governor, therefore, issued an order on Thursday ending martial law at 12:00 noon on Friday, July 18.⁶⁰ On Saturday the Greenville Troop entrained for home, leaving three Texas Rangers as the only remnant from the larger force.⁶¹ Captain Hanson suggested that they remain in Longview for an indefinite period.⁶² On Saturday morning General McDill issued a circular announcing that citizens could begin picking up their personal firearms at 12:00 that day.⁶³

Although Judge Bramlette, Mayor Bodenheim, and other community leaders regretted deeply the turn of events which had brought the troops and the adverse nationwide publicity to

⁵⁶ W. J. Townsend, Assistant Attorney General of Texas to James A. Harley, Adjutant General of Texas, July 15, 1919, Longview, Riot General File, Office of Retained Records, Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas.

⁵⁷ Troop Muster Rolls.

⁵⁸ *Dallas Morning News*, July 17, 1919.

⁵⁹ *Marshall Messenger*, July 16, 1919.

⁶⁰ *Dallas Morning News*, July 17, 1919.

⁶¹ Troop Muster Rolls.

⁶² Hanson to the Adjutant General, July 17, 1919.

⁶³ *Dallas Morning News*, July 18, 1919.

Longview, they did not regret calling the troops.⁶⁴ On the other hand, some white residents criticized the officials for asking for troops, feeling that the local white people should have been allowed to settle the matter themselves. However, Jack Howard, Sheriff of Gregg County from 1891 to 1903⁶⁵ supported the local officials' call for troops. He estimated, from his years of experience as a lawman, that at least thirty Negroes would have been killed if the troops had not come.⁶⁶

Once martial law was lifted, county and city officials attempted to promote harmonious relations between the races and to avoid activities which would remind people of the riot. Consequently, none of the twenty-six white men arrested were ever tried,⁶⁷ and none of the black men arrested were ever tried.⁶⁸

Thus, it becomes evident that the Longview and Gregg County officials, especially Mayor Bodenheim and Judge Bramlette, behaved in a very responsible manner throughout the riot. Much has been written about racial incidents in which officials have acted irresponsibly, even to the extent of getting involved in the violence on the side of the whites, but this is one time when the men in charge acted in an impartial manner upholding their duties to protect all involved. The elected officials made efforts to defuse the situation after Jones was beaten on Thursday. They were persistent in asking that a large military force arrive before Friday night, and the arrival of the initial National Guard units was largely responsible for the lack of

⁶⁴ Sherman *Courier*, July 13, 1919.

⁶⁵ Election Record, Vol. I, 8-65, County Clerk's Office, Gregg County.

⁶⁶ Sherman *Courier*, July 13, 1919.

⁶⁷ Interview with an anonymous person, Longview, August 4, 1978; and the Criminal Minutes of Gregg County, District Clerk's Office. Gregg County Grand Jury records do not go back to 1919, therefore, it is impossible to determine whether the men were no-billed by the grand jury. It is possible that they were no-billed, but it is more likely that the charges against them were simply dropped.

⁶⁸ The Criminal Minutes of Gregg County do not record a series of trials of men charged with assault with attempt to murder, nor is there any evidence of a group trial.

violence Friday night. They promptly requested additional troops after Bush's death, and this was a wise move which provided a further guarantee of peace. Finally, the dropping of charges against both the black and white men involved in the riot was a wise decision. The officials undoubtedly dropped the charges because they anticipated that Gregg County juries would probably convict and punish the black men and acquit, or, at the most, give suspended sentences to the white men. Such an unjust outcome, they reasoned, would do more damage than benefit to racial harmony. Also court trials would have deepened racial animosity by keeping the riot on center stage for years as they did in Arkansas following the Elaine riots. Six years of trials, appeals, and stays of execution followed the Elaine riots and the twelve Elaine blacks who were given death sentences were ultimately released after all.⁶⁹ The Longview officials were wise to avoid these post-riot trials and the years of riot-related news coverage.

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⁶⁹ O. A. Rogers, Jr., "The Elaine Race Riots of 1919," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, XIX (Summer, 1960), 150.