

TULSA BELOW

There are things happening below your feet.

TAMMY MERCURE

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Hex House

Centennial Time Capsule

Mass Graves at Oaklawn Cemetery & The Canes

Coal Mines

Downtown Tunnels

TAMMY MERCURE

HEX HOUSE

10 East 21st Street



Death surrounded Carolann Smith. Her mother died when she was just nine years old. She married Fay H. Smith in 1914, at the age of twenty-one. She lost two children in their infancy. Then her husband died in 1934. It was ruled a suicide, but the autopsy showed a shot to the back. A year later, her maid, Beulah Walker, fled Carolann's house in a tizzy and was hit and killed by a car. Then, the man investigating her husband's death and the man who struck Beulah both died mysteriously. She got a hefty insurance payment for her husband but was denied her claim on Beulah for falsely claiming to be her cousin.

Around 1941, she moved to 10 East 21st Street. She always wore a sharp hat and a lush mink coat and mingled with the Tulsa elite. A couple of years into living in the large brick home, a woman delivering her WWII food rations noticed the number of books didn't match the number of people she saw. She alerted the police to investigate.

While questioning the neighbors, the police learned of strange happenings, like Carolann burying things in the yard by moonlight and screams coming from the home. When they went to the house, they found that Bonnie, one of the people listed on her ration request, was actually her dog Bon Bon. To their horror, they found two women—Virginia Evans, 31, and Nell Willetta Horner, 30—living in squalor in

her basement. They rescued the women and dug up the yard to find two dogs buried in caskets.

Virginia and Nell went to work daily for six years, keeping to themselves while handing over their checks to Carolann. Virginia's father also sent Carolann money for his daughter's care. Virginia and Nell slept in the unheated basement on orange crates, while Carolann lived the high life upstairs. Virginia testified that she was "hypnotized, mesmerized, or something." The women stayed because they were hopeful for the eternal life promised by Carolann.

She was only prosecuted on fraud charges, but the trial was a national sensation. Some saw her as an evil spellbinder, while others thought she had gone mad. Dr. Welch of Tulsa said her menopausal state had made her nervous system "unstable."

She disappeared from all records after she served her year-long sentence. The Hex House stood, scaring neighborhood children, until 1975. Today, the stairs and the basement remain under the empty parking lot. People have reported strange noises coming from the ground and electrical disturbances when they are nearby.

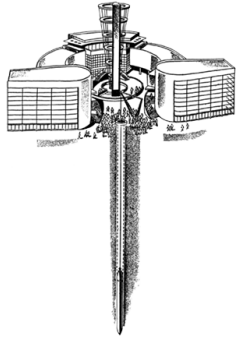


Carolann Smith

CENTENNIAL TIME CAPSULE

1142 E 6th Street





*Westinghouse
Time Capsule*

On January 17, 1998, Joe Cappy, the CEO of Dollar Thrifty, and Tulsa mayor Susan Savage, drove an expensive Plymouth Prowler prototype down into the time capsule at Centennial Park. The capsule honors Tulsa's 100th birthday and will be opened in 2048—fifty years after its burial. The underground encasement also includes a cellphone, a case of Weber's root beer, menus from area restaurants, and student essays imagining life when the capsule is opened.

The Prowler is the second car buried in Tulsa. In 1957, for the state's semi-centennial, "Miss Belvedere," a beautiful gold and sand-colored Plymouth Belvedere, was entombed under the Tulsa County Courthouse. Optimistic that we'd have flying cars by the time they exhumed it, they included a can of gasoline and some oil. Other odds and ends were packed in the trunk, including Schlitz beer and a pack of gum. The Belvedere was unearthed in 2007. It had been sealed in plastic within a vault that was supposed to survive a nuclear attack. However, at some point, water seeped in. The recovered car was a rusty bucket with corroded keys.

When the Prowler was buried, the Belvedere's fate was unknown. The Prowler has better odds as the car was drained of chemicals, the chamber is filled with inert gas, and it isn't completely underground.

People have been leaving things for future generations to find for thousands of years, but the term time capsule originated around 1938. The Westinghouse Time Capsule was made for the 1939 World's Fair in Flushing Meadows, Queens. Over a hundred items, including a 35mm camera and letterpress letters, will be opened in 6939. To increase the odds of the treasure being found and understood, Westinghouse published 500 books about the capsule, which included explanations of both longitude and latitude and the English language. The books are housed across the United States, including at the University of Tulsa.

Critics of time capsules point out that most items deposited don't have much historical value, and the things often disintegrate, get lost, or use outdated technology by the time the capsule is opened.



OAKLAWN CEMETERY

1133 E 11th Street



When Black people were relocating from the South after the Civil War, Oklahoma was inviting. E.P. McCabe led the movement to make Oklahoma a Black state when it entered the Union. It didn't happen, but many Black towns, like Boley, Taft, and Tullahassee, thrived. These towns tended to be more rural.

For those looking for city life, Tulsa had the Greenwood District, dubbed Black Wall Street by Booker T. Washington. The thriving community of Black Tulsans consisted of 35 square blocks of lovely homes, schools, banks, hotels, barbershops, and a robust economy.

The white people surrounding the neighborhood grew resentful. Details of the inciting incident vary, but the gist is the typical sundown town story—a Black man attacked a white woman. “Diamond” Dick Rowland was arrested and taken to jail. The sheriff and Greenwood community feared a lynch mob would kill Rowland. A year earlier, a suspect in a murder had been lynched. The white community was furious that the sheriff and armed Black men were protecting Rowland. At some point, gunshots erupted, and for two days in 1921, with the blessing of the city and state, white residents terrorized and murdered Black residents.

The people of Greenwood did not go down without a fight, but the brutal massacre left the business district burned to ashes. Numbers were not accurately recorded, but it is likely between 100 and 300 Black Tulsans were murdered in cold blood.

Four mass burial sites were identified later through oral histories. They are Oaklawn Cemetery, Rolling Oaks Memorial Gardens, Newblock Park, and The Canes near 11th and Riverside. Additionally, it was mentioned that people saw bodies being unceremoniously dumped into the Arkansas River.

In 2021, with all eyes on Tulsa for the 100th anniversary of this great tragedy, the 1921 Graves Public Oversight Committee started using ground-penetrating radar to investigate the sites. They found a mass grave at Oaklawn. Mayor G.T. Bynum declared that the city would do a full homicide investigation for any bodies discovered during the dig.

Then the national TV crews left the city. 19 sets of remains were brought to a lab. Many potential graves were left, as the coffins were considered “too fancy”. Two months later, without fanfare, the bodies were put back in the muddy pit without even finishing the lab work. Many involved were worried that the creek under the cemetery would make it difficult to find the remains again. The mayor’s office said they had a permit deadline, but no deadline was discovered by journalists. One skull has a gunshot wound, yet no homicide investigation was started.

Today, you can see a patch in the cemetery’s southwest corner with different colored sod. Tulsans would like to know the whole truth about what happened in 1921, but plans for further research have not been shared publicly.



THE CANES
11th & Riverside

COAL MINES

4145 E 21st Street and surrounding area



A midtown Tulsa resident kept getting holes near his driveway. Guessing it was a possum, he'd throw some dirt in the hole and move on with his day. One grew in size despite the added soil, so he started to investigate. With a little digging, he found a 10x10 room under his driveway leading to a deep shaft.

It is a reminder that the city did strip mining for coal from the late 1800s to around 1955. In 1906, *The Indian Territory Business Guide for the Homeseeker and Investor* spoke of Tulsa's natural beauty and said that there was "no rival in the Territory, being situated right in the center of coal, oil, and gas fields."

The area is flush with Nowata Shale formations. The main areas for coal were around the fairgrounds and the city of Dawson. Dawson, now absorbed into Tulsa, was the area around Sheridan and Apache. Coal was mined mainly for the local citizens and the railroad, but at the peak of production, more than 16 cars a day were filled with coal.

In 1999, Shirley Baker Ware shared her memories of Dawson and coal in the book *A Neighborhood History of Tulsa's Historic Dawson*. She spoke about coal being their only source of heat and her young brother getting sent to go pick up buckets of coal for fifty cents from the tipple at Yale and Latimer. A man who lived in the Mystery Bar, a setting in

the movie *The Outsiders*, fondly remembered living at the bar with a coal chute in the basement.

Many companies were mining in town, like the Leavell Coal Co., the Henry Adamson Coal and Mining Co., and the Hickory Coal and Mining Co. The mines had a history of exploitation. Hickory was founded nefariously by Peter Adamson, Jr. Doctor W.A. Cook was appointed the white guardian of Lucinda Hickory, a young Muscogee girl who was the great-granddaughter of Tulsa founder Tuckabache. He had court-appointed control over her land allotment, and he promptly leased the land to Adamson. Adamson quickly set up the Hickory Coal and Mining Co. and named mine two after Lucinda. Lucinda died under mysterious circumstances at age thirteen. Her parents, Jennie and Tom, sold the land for very little money. Within two years, Jennie was dead, and Tom was homeless.

Coal mining ended in the area when energy needs were met elsewhere. The former mines are said to be secure due to being 60 feet underground, but it did deter some builders. William K. Warren, when planning Saint Francis Hospital in the 1950s, opted for the current location when he found evidence in the mines on his first site. Throughout Oklahoma, there is an effort to fill in abandoned mines, with 26 deaths on these sites reported since 1972.

TULSA TUNNELS

427 S Boston Avenue and surrounding area



With the discovery of oil in 1901 in Glenpool, Tulsa changed overnight into a boom town. In twenty years, the population exploded to 100 times as many people, and the city was dubbed the Oil Capital of the World.

Many of the most beautiful buildings downtown were built during this growth period and are considered Art Deco and Gothic Revival treasures. They include the grand Boston Avenue Methodist Church with its impressive 12-story tower, the 96-room Tulsa Club that used to have Turkish baths, the Cosden Building which converted into the Mid-Continent Tower, and two buildings built by Waite Phillips.

Waite Phillips, the founder of Phillips 66, built the Philtower in 1927. The gorgeous building is capped with a pyramid-shaped illuminated tile roof. Two gargoyles greet visitors outside, and the lobby has an ornate vaulted ceiling. When built, it was the tallest building in the state.

The Philcade was completed in 1931 to be the little sister of the Philtower across the street. The penthouse was the living quarters for Waite, his wife Genevieve, and their two children. Purposely less flashy, the building still has beautiful details, like gold leaf geometric designs and Genevieve marble in the lobby.

An 80-foot underground tunnel was built to connect the two buildings to easily move freight. In the early 1930s, stories abound in the news about millionaires and banks being robbed by the likes of Machine Gun Kelly and Pretty Boy Floyd. Waite eventually used the tunnel to safely go back and forth from work to home. There are stories of running liquor during prohibition for the wealthy, but there is no proof of this. Today, the tunnel can be accessed from the Philtower side by opening a large vault door in the basement. The Philcade side remains locked.

Over the years, 600 more feet of tunnels were added downtown to connect eight buildings, parking garages, and a hotel. The tunnels are used daily by workers downtown to avoid inclement weather. The snaking paths take visitors past Italian marble walls, stained glass, an imposing bank vault, and a bronze Atlas forever burdened by time.





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