

Black History Month

A Florida Focus

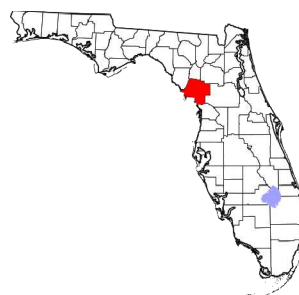
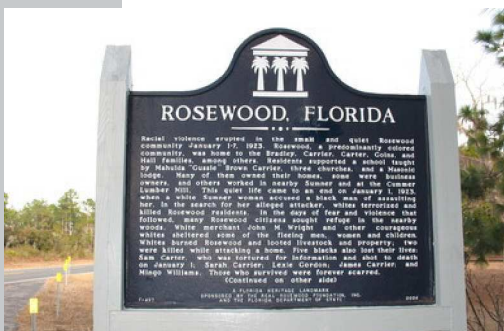
A CIVICS IN REAL LIFE SERIES: CIVICS CONNECTION SPOTLIGHT

Spotlight #9: The Rosewood Massacre

100 years ago, in [Levy County, Florida](#), the predominantly Black town of [Rosewood](#) was massacred by a white mob and completely destroyed. In 1920, Rosewood had a population of about 200 people. A rural community, most Rosewood residents either farmed or traveled to the nearby, and mostly white town of Sumner, to work in the cedar mills. On January 1, 1923, 22 year-old Sumner resident, Fannie Taylor, reported to a neighbor that she had been attacked by a Black man (later accounts place doubt on Fannie's story). Fannie's husband, accompanied by an angry mob of neighbors, began to search for the unidentified suspect. [Over the next seven days](#), the search continued, and as it did, the mob grew larger and more violent. When the mob first reached Rosewood, they encountered Aaron Carrier, a Black WWI veteran. Targeted by the mob, Carrier was arrested by Levy County Sheriff, Bob Walker, who was trying to keep Carrier safe by arresting him. Despite this arrest, the growing mob did not stop their rampage. They tortured and shot Sam Carter, a Rosewood blacksmith, and stormed the home of Sarah Carrier, where many town residents were hiding. They set fire to the remaining Black homes and murdered anyone who had not escaped. On January 5, Governor Cary Hardee called Sheriff Walker to offer help from the National Guard, but by then, it was too late. By Sunday, January 7, the town of Rosewood was gone. Historical records put the massacre's death toll at eight, six Black residents and two white people from the mob. A white grand jury was convened one month after the massacre to look into the events, however it found not enough evidence existed to prosecute those responsible. The story of Rosewood was [largely forgotten](#) until being re-discovered by a St. Petersburg Times reporter in the 1980s. After being [brought to the public's attention](#), survivors and descendants slowly began to share [their stories](#). In 1994, the Florida legislature [commissioned a report](#) on the Rosewood Massacre. As a result, the legislature passed and Governor Lawton Chiles signed into law the [Florida State Rosewood Claims Bill](#), which paid reparations to the nine surviving Rosewood residents, making it the first time in U.S. history that any state paid money to Black Americans for a past event involving racial injustice. It also established scholarship funds to state universities for descendants. In 2004, the site received an official [historical marker](#), dedicated by Governor Jeb Bush.

CONNECTION QUESTIONS

- What are some of the ways in which national, state, and local governments may work to ensure historical events such as the Rosewood Massacre are honored and remembered?



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