

Historic hospital may get second life

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In grooming the idea, Cook hopes the building will accept a role in the current scheme of things like it did years ago when blacks were not accepted into mainstream hospitals.

Report: 1898 N.C. riot was planned

STAFF REPORTS

WILMINGTON — Race riots that led to the overthrow of this city's government in 1898 was actually an insurrection that white supremacists had planned for months to strip black residents of their rights, a state commission concluded.

The violence in Wilmington, which resulted in the deaths of at least 22 black people, "was part of a statewide effort to put white supremacist Democrats in office and stem the political advances of black citizens," the 1898 Wilmington Riot Commission concludes in a draft report.

Afterward, white supremacists in state office passed laws that disenfranchised blacks until the civil rights movement and Voting Rights Act of the 1960s.

"Essentially, it crippled a segment of our population that hasn't recovered in 107 years," said Harper Peterson, a commission member and former mayor of Wilmington. "It's a major event that went unnoticed."

At the time of the violence, black men in North Carolina had been able to vote for some three decades as part of Reconstruction following the Civil War, said Jeffrey Crow, deputy secretary of the state Office of Archives and History, which researched the report.

The United States abolished slavery in 1865.

But within a year of the insurrection, the General Assembly was controlled by Democrats and had passed the first segregation law that ended voting rights to blacks.

The General Assembly established the commission in 2000. Its draft report was opened for public comment last week.

Some commission members have suggested financing historical exhibitions about the riot and its consequences, portraying it in school history texts and developing economic interests in affected areas.

In addition, the state should issue some sort of apology for its inaction, said Irving Joyner, vice chairman of the commission and a law professor at North Carolina Central University.

On the Net:

Riot Commission:
www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/1898-wrrc

But they knew they could find relief at St. Agnes.

Cook said there are still vast needs in the black community today that the building could play an important role in addressing.

"We want to make it something to broaden its appeal," he said.

Cook hopes that people will be willing to support the community service concept of the

project as much as they are willing to invest in the brick and mortar part of the initiative. He estimates the renovation will cost approximately \$6 million to \$8 million. To add the allied health program services, an additional \$3 million to \$4 million would be needed.

The eight-member board has created a 501(c)3 non-profit in order to accept dona-

tions.

"We already have the structure to collect money," Cook said. "We hope to attract more attention from philanthropists, and the state and the federal governments."

The group will also apply for federal grants. Alumni of the college and the hospital have been active in the process too.

One of those alumni mem-

bers is Martha Hudson, 81, of Raleigh. Hudson was the head nurse of pediatrics at St. Agnes.

Hudson became a nurse to try to find a cure for her sister's sickness. She said her sister was simply the wrong color at the wrong time to receive better care.

Hudson credits St. Agnes for her success as a nurse, which is why she decided to

become a member of the board.

The sight of the dilapidated building often brings her to tears.

"It has a lot of history to it," she said. "It means a lot to me. The main goal of the hospital was to make people better and get them back on their feet. People don't realize what St. Agnes has gone through."



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