



RESOURCE GUIDE: 1906 Atlanta Race Riots

Researching the 1906 Atlanta Race Riots at the Georgia Archives

For several days in September of 1906, Atlanta witnessed mob violence directed toward its black citizenry. This event made an imprint on the official state records because the state militia was called into Atlanta to maintain order. Although the central record sources for this event are likely concentrated in the records of local governments and private accounts, a substantial number of Georgia state records are productive resources for investigating this important event.

Records of the Adjutant General (RG 22-)

Because the adjutant general controlled the state militia (which was evolving into the National Guard), the records of this agency have the highest level of material relevant to the 1906 Riots.

Adjutant General's Miscellaneous Files (RG 22-1-10). The descriptive inventory for this series has substantial folder control (frequently with dates), but it is not ordered chronologically. Because various Guard units reported activity in their "returns," it is possible that any of the unit returns filed around this date would provide information.

Two examples are given here:

In Unit 9 of this series we located a "Return of Co. F, 2nd National Guard of Georgia for Quarter ending December 31, 1906." This document references riot duty and indicates a statewide concern.

Unit 2 of this series contains a folder (Folder 17 by count—not noted on the folder) entitled "Georgia National Guard Army Quarterly Returns, Cedartown Guards 1906 to 1912." The last document in the folder is "Return of Company G, 5th Infantry National Guard of Georgia." This Cedartown unit reports that the riot duty in Atlanta was good training.

Incoming Correspondence to the Adjutant General (RG22-1-17)

The richest concentration of 1906 riot-related materials exists in two files in Unit 37. These files are "370.6 Atlanta Riot Duty 1906" and "370.6 Riot Duty 1906." These are adjacent files containing letters, orders, and reports concerning riot duty on the part of the militia units. A cursory examination of this series located these documents. It is very likely that in -depth examination of the series will reveal additional material relevant to this event or its aftermath.

Adjutant General's Letterbooks (RG 22-1-1):

Unit 62 of this series covers the time period of the riot. A careful reading of its contents would be required to determine the level of relevance to the 1906 Riot. This volume is comprised of copies of outgoing letters.

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THE GEORGIA ARCHIVES

Private Records

The William J. Northen Papers AC0000-0074M

This private collection contains information related to the riot and represents the point of view of Georgia's most prominent white activist against mob action. Much in this collection will have relevance to research on the 1906 Riot. Series 3, folder 5 contains a brochure entitled *An Illustrated Lecture: the Atlanta Riot and the Minister's View-Point* (undated, 3 pages).

Selected Newspapers Available at Georgia Archives for 1906 Riot Coverage

The Atlanta Independent: January 6-December 22, 1906, microfilm drawer 210, box 74.

The Christian Index: January 4-December 27, 1906 (Southern Baptist publication), microfilm drawer 204, box 63.

The Voice of the People: 1901-1904 (Publication of Bishop H. M. Turner, a monthly organ of the Colored National Emigration Association; provides important background information for the riot, microfilm drawer 60, box 22.

The Atlanta Constitution: 1906 (microfilm drawer 392; select box by date).

Additional Suggestions

The sources provided above are not exhaustive. Additional information for this important event might be encountered in additional official and private records. The governor's records could contain relevant information. For example, the Executive Minutes (RG 1-1-3) record the daily official activity of the governor. Although a cursory search of the minutes did not reveal references to the riot, closer examination of this series of records might provide a basis for interpretation of relevant actions or even meaningful inaction. Incoming Correspondence to the Governor (RG 1-1-5) might contain citizen concerns or reaction to the riot. The published journals and laws of the Georgia General Assembly might indicate direct or indirect political responses. The full text of the historic Georgia laws are available on a searchable database linked to our website at www.GeorgiaArchives.org: click on "What do we have?" and then on "Online Records" and select "Georgia Legislative Documents." Follow the links to the search page. Note that the search can be restricted by date.