

1866 MEMPHIS MASSACRE

,On May 1-3, 1866, mobs of white men led by the police attacked black people in areas near South St. (aka Calhoun & G.E. Patterson).¹ By the end of these riots, the mobs had killed an estimated 46 black people; raped several black women; and committed numerous robberies and arsons.² No one was prosecuted for this massacre, but news of it was widely reported.³ The ensuing outrage prompted Congress to pass laws that led to the ratification of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.⁴

4 E 177

Memphis Race Riot of 1866

On May 1, 2, and 3, 1866, Memphis suffered the worst racial violence in its history. The Memphis Race Riot of 1866 was an explosion of rage and violence perpetrated by up to 300 white Irish immigrants, including many who were policemen, against recently-emancipated blacks, thousands of whom had moved to the city during and immediately following the Civil War. At least 30 blacks were murdered, dozens more wounded, several raped, and many others robbed. Rioters torched numerous black churches, schools, and houses.

Federal troops still stationed in the city and the local Freedmen's Bureau provided little protection or assistance. No one was prosecuted in connection with the riot. The Memphis riot and a race riot in New Orleans two later were rallying cries in the momentous battle over the nation's reconstruction following the Civil War. Ultimately, they helped ensure adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, which prohibits states from denying any citizen due process or equal protection under the law.

LOCATION: Army-Navy Park, Second St. and G. E. Patterson Avenue (aka Calhoun) Memphis (Shelby County), Tennessee GPS: Latitude: 35.1327588; Longitude: 90.0564867

4E 177

Memphis Race Riot of 1866

"The Memphis Massacre"

On May 1, 2, and 3, 1866, an estimated 200-300 white people, the great majority of whom were Irish immigrants, including many policemen, attacked recently-
emancipated black people. At least 40 blacks were murdered, dozens more wounded, several black women were raped, and many others robbed. Rioters burned numerous black churches, schools, and houses. Federal troops still stationed in the city restored order on May 3. No one was prosecuted in connection with the riot, which was characterized by several newspaper accounts and a Congressional committee report as a "massacre."

The Memphis riot was a rallying cry in the momentous battle over the nation's reconstruction following the Civil War. Ultimately, it helped Congress's passage and submission to the states of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution.

LOCATION: Army-Navy Parks, Second St. and G. E. Patterson Avenue (a/k/a Calhoun) Memphis (Shelby County), Tennessee; GPS: Latitude 35.1327588; Longitude: 90.0564867.