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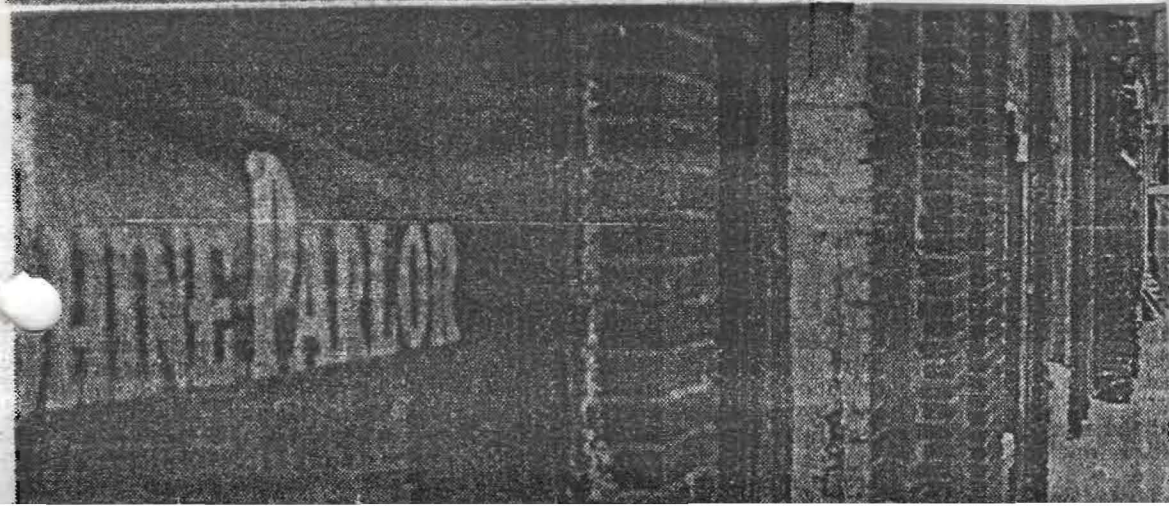
TULSA WORLD

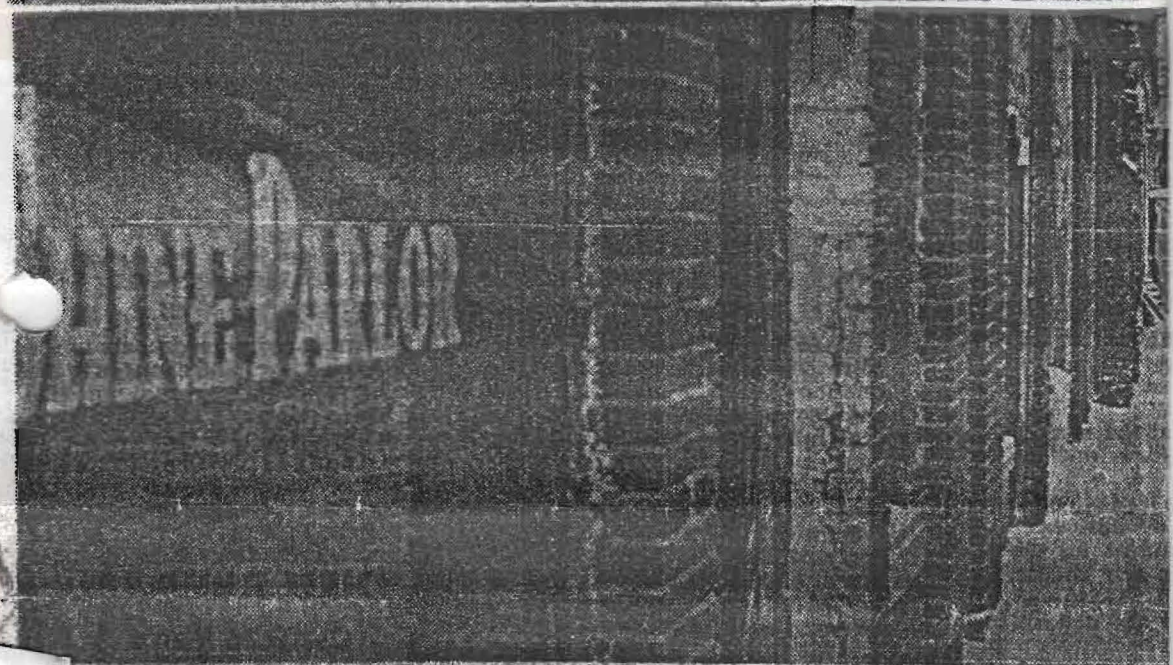
Business / Oil

Riley W. Wilson, Editor

Tulsa Look

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World Staff Photo by John Southern
The Greenwood-Archer Area

x's 'Little Black Wall St.' ing Toward Better Days

By FRANK LESLIE
World Business-Oil Writer

Until about 30 years ago, recalled Charles H. Lewis, the area of Tulsa centered at Greenwood Avenue and Archer Street was referred to as "Little Black Wall Street of America."

Those prosperous days probably are gone forever, but some revitalization of the Greenwood business area must be part of North Tulsa economic development, he believes.

Consequently, Lewis — as new president of the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce — is putting top priority into this area, but only as part of overall North Tulsa development.

AS PART OF THE project, the Greenwood Chamber and Tulsa's Economic Development Planning Group have one program in the study stage.

It's converting of that stretch of Greenwood running north from Archer to the Crosstown Expressway into a market place for minority entrepreneurs.

"We would like to think our striving for economic development in North Tulsa means some revitalization of the one-time busy Greenwood area," Lewis said.

But, he stressed, the Greenwood Chamber is working for all of North Tulsa, not just the black residents.

Its objective in 1979, the chamber's 41st year, will be to create jobs for the unemployed, better jobs for the under-employed and better job preparation for the under-educated, he said.

"We are concerned about all North Tulsans who need jobs, are working at jobs which don't require using the full talents they possess, or are under-educated and have difficulty finding work," he said.

"ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT as implied by our involvement shall be the guidelines of our activities of this year, and we include all of those Tulsans living north of Admiral Boulevard who are unemployed, under-employed or under-educated.

"There are 180,000 Tulsans living north of Admiral. Of that total only about 40,000 are black residents."

Lewis, a dentist, said he plans a "vigorous administration" to work for these goals, which also held priorities for past-president Granville Farley, an employee of CIBES Service Co.

The Greenwood Chamber got its foundations in the early half of 1938 when a group of industrious North Tulsa black businessmen, led by E.W. Clarke, met to organize. Among this group were such prominent North Tulsa leaders as

J.T.A. West, Amos T. Hall, Melvin Payne, E.L. Goodwin, M.M. Mann, J.W. Hughes, B.A. Waynes, Thomas R. Gentry, Robert Fairchild and the Rev. J.N. Wallace.

AT ONE TIME, the Greenwood area boasted a list of 400 entrepreneurs doing business there.

The Greenwood Chamber's history says it is hard to determine when the area started its decline.

The black business district remained strong until the late 1950s when integration began and merchants watched money start to flow from the Greenwood complex into other areas of the city.

Currently, the old "Black Wall Street of America" is under a voluntary demolition plan through the Tulsa Urban Renewal Authority.

But members of the Greenwood Chamber are pretty determined on saving part, if not all, as a means of stimulating economic redevelopment in North Tulsa.

THE CHAMBER AND the EDPG have contracted with a Muskogee firm, Holloway, Watkins & Graham, to study the



World Staff Photo by John Southern

CHARLES H. LEWIS

Dentist and Greenwood Chamber President

Archer and Greenwood intersection, most of which are owned by TURA.

The consultants will base their marketing study on a larger North Tulsa area around this intersection, Laughery said.

The consulting firm will be looking at the feasibility of using combined public and private funds to restore ground-level shopping as well as second-story uses to the area.

The architectural and engineering elements will be emphasized early in the study because of a recent series of fires and other safety problems.

As for the Greenwood Chamber headquarters at 356 N. Greenwood, redevelopment plans call for it becoming a Black Museum although the chamber will keep offices in the two-story, red brick, one-time residence.

"THE CREATION of a market at the intersection is, certainly, one of the goals of the chamber this year," said Farley, who helped start machinery last year, "but it's not the major goal."

The restoration of that small section of the one-time bustling business center is pretty much a "drawing board" situation right now, added Lewis.

"We feel Greenwood needs to be brought back as much as possible, but the facts are there are a limited number of North Tulsans with the capital which will be needed for investment in business and industry required to help bring about this restoration," he said.

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THE CHAMBER AND the EDPG have contracted with a Muskogee firm, Holloway, Watkins & Graham, to study the architectural, engineering and economic feasibility of restoring a small segment at Greenwood and Archer to see if it can be rehabilitated and turned into an active market center.

This study is being funded through a \$10,000 grant from the Economic Development Administration and is scheduled to require up to six months before completion.

EDPG planner David Laughery said the study will concentrate on the shopping and residential buildings at the



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The chamber's 40th anniversary dinner party Friday at the Camelot Inn, at which Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson spoke, represented two major milestones, said Lewis.

First, he said, it meant the chamber had finished 40 years as a continuing organization which looks to the future.

Second, he added, it kicked off the 1979 membership drive.

"The chamber board voted without dissent to have Mr. Jackson come here as an inspiration to those who face the tasks ahead if we are to reach our goals," Lewis said.