

# Springfield, IL RACE RIOT of 1908

*Catalyst that led to the formation of the NAACP*

August 14, 1908—“It was a hot night and the patients of St. John’s Hospital who were permitted to be up remained on the porch for some time. At ten o’clock, the Sister (Sister M. Magdalene Wiedlocher) who was on night duty tried to get the patients to go to bed but a number refused. These claimed that there were to be “terrible happenings” that night and, therefore, they would not retire. Soon, about a dozen men were brought into the emergency department in quick succession for treatment of gun wounds. The riot had started. The entire hospital force was called on duty, and the sisters and doctors worked throughout the night caring for the injured.”

“About 60 wounded were brought into the hospital during that night. When no more rooms were available, patients were laid on mattresses on the floor – negro and white side by side. It is interesting to note that once these men entered the institution, they set aside all prejudice, antagonism, and hatred. There was no trouble in the hospital during the entire time of the disturbance. In fact, these men, in entering the institution, walked through the corridors on tiptoe, fearing they might disturb other patients.”

“About four blocks between Mason and Jefferson and Ninth and Eleventh Streets were entirely wiped out. When firemen tried to save negro homes, the fire hose was repeatedly cut. As the fire was very close to St. John’s Hospital a number of the firemen spent the night on the roof of the building in order that they might be ready to put out the first spark which the wind might blow in that direction.”

“St. John’s Hospital as it appeared in 1896 is described in the supplement to the Illinois State Journal It said: St. John’s has developed into an institution of which the city may well feel proud, both on account of its colossal dimensions and on account of the fulfillment of the mission to which it is dedicated – the care of the sick. Next to the state house it is the largest hospital in the state outside of Chicago. It consists of three distinct parts, a central building with an east and west wing. Patients of all creeds and nationalities are received and treated with care and kindness at St. John’s Hospital. Although under the management of the Sisters, the institution, attested by everybody who was ever compelled to stay in it, is not sectarian as the term goes, but catholic in the broad sense of the word which means universal, a charitable institution for the alleviation of the suffering of mankind.”



**Sister M. Magdalene Wiedlocher  
Circa 1910**

## **HIS LOVE HEALS**

A history of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis  
Springfield, Illinois  
1875-1975

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