

INTRODUCTION

IN THE YEARS COVERED BY this volume, Booker T. Washington personally and his Tuskegee Machine suffered systemic shocks from which they only partially recovered. The volume begins with the Ulrich incident. It ends during the presidential campaign of 1912, when Washington's personal liking for Theodore Roosevelt was in conflict with his loyalty to the Republican party and to William Howard Taft, the party nominee.

On the night of March 18, 1911, a white man named Henry Albert Ulrich brutally beat Washington with a cane and brought about his arrest on the charge of molesting Ulrich's wife and peeking through the keyhole in the vestibule of his apartment in a West Side district of uncertain reputation in New York City. Washington said he was in the neighborhood in search of the auditor of Tuskegee Institute, and when the police found out who Washington was they released him and charged Ulrich with assault. Many aspects of this incident are inexplicable, and after a long-delayed trial the assailant was acquitted by the split decision of a three-judge court.

During the wave of sympathy for Washington that followed news of the assault, Oswald Garrison Villard tried to bring about a rapprochement between the Tuskegean and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Washington was willing to exchange delegates between the NAACP and the National Negro Business League, but when Washington's black enemies in the NAACP supported a resolution of sympathy but blocked an expression of faith in Washington's innocence in the Ulrich incident, the efforts at accord broke down.

In February of 1911 Washington purchased a house on Long Island that became his summer headquarters. It was well that he did so, for