

Chapter 5: November 10: “Hell Jolted Loose”

- The Committee of Twenty-Five met with the Committee of Colored Citizens (CCC) on the evening of November 9 to make demands of the African American community, primarily the removal of Manly, who left town that day because he was informed of the dangers to his life if he stayed. The CCC was to provide a reply by 7:30 A.M. on the tenth to Alfred M. Waddell. The reply did not arrive by the specified time, and Waddell proceeded to the Wilmington Light Infantry (WLI) armory.
- Waddell met a crowd of men at the armory at 8:00 A.M. and led a march to the *Record* printing offices near the corner of Seventh and Nun. The *Record* offices were destroyed by a mob numbering as many as 2,000 whites who then returned to the armory.
- Word of the fire at the press spread, and blacks working at James Sprunt’s cotton compress quit work and clustered at the waterfront as crowds of armed whites pressed for the crowd to disperse. Sprunt and other whites worked to protect the blacks and calm the whites, avoiding bloodshed at the compress.
- Violence broke out at the intersection of Fourth and Harnett when groups of blacks and whites argued with each other from opposing corners. Both sides claimed the first shot was fired by the other with two “witnesses” providing opposing testimony.
- After the first shots were fired, the governor called out the WLI, who marched into Brooklyn to calm the riot. They participated in skirmishes and killed several black men at Manhattan Park and elsewhere.
- The WLI and the Naval Reserves operated two rapid-fire guns in the city. The guns were used to intimidate and terrorize both blacks and whites before the day was over. Another rapid fire gun was brought to the city by members of the Kinston Naval Reserves, who joined the WLI and other State Guard units in the city to press for peace at the behest of the governor.
- Several black men were identified as killed or wounded in sporadic skirmishes throughout the day. Some black men were found and taken to the hospital on the eleventh. Several men died from their wounds in the days following the riot. One white man was critically wounded, a few other whites were also wounded, but there were no white casualties.
- During the riot, members of Waddell’s Committee of Twenty-Five, George Rountree, John D. Bellamy, and others worked to facilitate a coup d’etat to overthrow the Republican mayor, Board of Aldermen, and chief of police. By 4:00 P.M., the elected officials were resigning and being replaced by men selected by the Committee of Twenty-Five. The newly placed Board of Aldermen elected Waddell mayor.

Chapter 5

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“You cannot think or imagine anything to equal or compare to the policy the Democrats seem to have adopted to carry this section. I look for a lot of innocent men killed here if things continue as they are now.”

Benjamin Keith to Marion Butler, October 17, 1898, Marion Butler Papers

The violence of Thursday, November 10, 1898, is multifaceted. Foremost, planned violence to suppress the African American and Republican communities grew into unplanned bloodshed. Anticipating violent reprisals from the black community, white leaders established a framework of preelection preparations that broke down as violence escalated. Previous planning by the Secret Nine and men such as Roger Moore and Walker Taylor appeared to afford more protection of citizens and control of the election rather than to call for an outright offensive strike into the black community. But the frenzy over white supremacy victory, incessantly repeated by orators such as Alfred Moore Waddell and Charles Aycock simply could not be quieted after an overwhelming and somewhat anticlimactic election victory.

The fever pitch of white supremacy rhetoric for the masses reached a breaking point in Wilmington on November 10. Edward Wootten, a student at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, was told by his mother in Wilmington that she feared violence, but “we need it and . . . it must come before things are settled.”¹ Her sentiments were echoed by the *Wilmington Messenger* a few days after the riot when the editors stated that “the relations between the races were too strained for it to be avoided” since “matters had reached a point in Wilmington at which a conflict between the races was

inevitable.”² For the leaders, victory and gratification were theirs with the election win. For the masses, violence overrode sensible thought after the November 9 meeting.³

After the previous day’s work in securing a meeting of the leading black citizens and assuring their assistance in calming the city, some of Wilmington’s Democratic Party leaders felt it unnecessary to attend Thursday morning’s 8:00 A.M. meeting to hear the response of the Committee of Colored Citizens (CCC). White attorney George Rountree met one of the leading members of the black community late on the ninth and was reassured that all was well. Rountree was informed that Alex Manly was planning to leave at once and that attorney Armond Scott would deliver an answer to Waddell. Because Rountree and others did not realize that the timely delivery of the response to Waddell was botched, they felt no need to attend the early morning meeting at the armory on the tenth. These behind-the-scenes leaders failed to see that the strict control they had exercised over the Red Shirts and White Government Unions had eroded.⁴

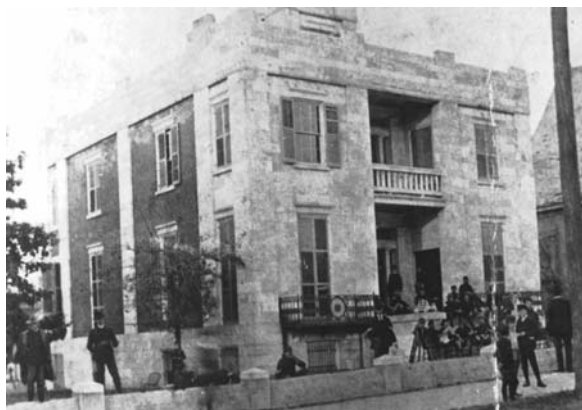
² “Wilmington Quiet,” *Wilmington Messenger*, November 15, 1898.

³ According to one theory of group aggression, a series of triggering factors are needed to facilitate a riot. The mass meeting of November 9th clearly fits the model put forth by psychologist Arnold Goldstein and was a precipitating event that led to the riot the next day. For more information on theories of group aggression, see Appendix H.

⁴ McDuffie, “Politics in Wilmington,” 693; Rountree, “Memorandum,” Henry G. Connor Papers, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.

¹ E. Y. Wootten to Edward, November 8, 1898, Wootten Papers, University of North Carolina at Wilmington Library.

According to the plans of the Committee of Twenty-Five, Alfred Moore Waddell waited at home until about 8:00 A.M., approximately a half hour longer than the deadline for a reply from the CCC. He then proceeded to walk down Fifth Street to the Wilmington Light Infantry armory on Market. Once Waddell arrived, he was met by a crowd of about 500 men eager to learn the answer to the Declaration by the CCC. The *Wilmington Messenger* remarked that the assembled crowd was armed and represented a cross section of the town, including large numbers of professionals and clergy. Some of the men were exhausted—some had been on patrol all night and others had slept at the armory—a focal point of demonstrations and planning sessions in the days and weeks leading up to November 10.⁵



Wilmington Light Infantry Armory,
November 1898
Image: New Hanover County Public Library

⁵ Originally the home of John Allan Taylor, the building was constructed around 1847 and acquired by the volunteer military organization in 1892 for use as its headquarters and armory. Wrenn, *Architecture of Wilmington*; *Wilmington Messenger*, November 11, 1898; McDuffie, “Politics in Wilmington,” 694; Hayden, “Introduction to the Wilmington Rebellion,” 21.

In addition to the readiness of Roger Moore’s paramilitary organization, groups of true military units were in the city—the State Guard militia unit of the WLI under Captain T.C. James, active duty federal troops in Company K under Captain MacRae, and federal troops from the Naval Reserves under Commander George Morton.⁶ These men awaited the morning

⁶ Earlier in 1898, some members of the WLI were called up by Governor Russell to serve in active duty in the Spanish-American War as part of Company K, 2nd North Carolina Volunteer Infantry. They had just returned home in late September on furlough after seeing no action on the battlefield. Captain Donald MacRae worried over the return of his troops to Wilmington in the midst of heated speeches and marches in favor of white supremacy in the upcoming election. In a letter written from Raleigh on September 18, 1898, Captain MacRae warned Douglas Cronly, former captain of the WLI and member of Company K, that he had suggested to Captain James of the WLI “in as delicate as way as possible that it would be advisable to ‘water’ any stimulants which may be provided for the boys” during the festivities to mark their return home. MacRae’s worries were well founded since many North Carolina soldiers who returned to Raleigh after the war’s end found themselves in drunken brawls and shoot-outs with black Raleigh citizens. There seems to have been a small degree of tension between the members of the WLI that left to be “Spaniard fighters” and those who remained at home. MacRae urged that “undesirable discussions” should be limited between the two groups in order to prevent any friction. Returning troops were aware of the activities of the white supremacy campaign since Josephus Daniels and the Democratic Party circulated copies of the *News and Observer* among troops while they were stationed in Florida.

Men within Commander George Morton’s Naval Reserves also returned to Wilmington in the fall of 1898. The Naval Reserves crew represented a wider spectrum of Wilmington’s population than did the roster of the WLI. Members of the crew came from both the upper classes of society but also from the lower, laboring sections, including a small number of African Americans. Members of the Naval Reserves experienced an even more frustrated participation in the war than did the WLI forces. Their ship, the *Nantucket*, limped into Port Royal, South Carolina and did not leave for the duration of the war, serving, instead, as a defense and training

of the tenth with a tense readiness. To keep their troops occupied and out of harm's way, the military leaders put their men through drills, thus preventing an anxious boredom until they were needed. Although their role was that of peacekeepers, their leader, Colonel Walker Taylor, understood the important role the WLI could play in the event of violence. Members of the WLI had participated in previous patrols and activities in the city but not as a uniformed, organized company.⁷ Taylor, as commander of the WLI, could not actively engage his men in the city until violence broke out. Therefore, Colonel Roger Moore's framework of civilian block captains and leaders, based on military protocol, was the front line of organized armed men.

Moore's civilian men knew their place in the ranks and took orders from their leaders who ultimately reported to him. However, once the official military in the form of the WLI and State Guard were called out upon order of Governor Daniel Russell later on the 10th, Moore's men either dispersed or joined the forays of the WLI in keeping the peace, even as the Red Shirts and Rough Riders continued to act on their own.⁸

ship in that port. Once the flag was lowered on the ship in August, the crew disbanded, returned to Wilmington without their ship, and mustered out of service in September. Adjutant General's Office, *Roster of the North Carolina Volunteers in the Spanish-American War, 1898-1899* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1900) 45-48; MacRae to Cronly, September 18, 1898, Cronly Papers, Duke University Library, Durham; Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 277, 280-281; de Rosset, *Pictorial History*, 88-89.

⁷ Catherine McLaurin to Sallie McLaurin, November 9, 1898, Eccles Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.

⁸ Hayden recalled that after the first shots were fired, the "Red Shirts began to ride and the Negroes began to run!" Hayden, *WLI*, 92; James Cowan, "The Wilmington Race Riot,"; Mrs. Roger Moore, letter to editor of *Wilmington Messenger*, [1900], Moore

March to the *Record*

As Waddell arrived at the armory around 8:15 A.M. and informed the crowd that no response had been received from the CCC. The previously "orderly" crowd became restless and called for someone to step up and lead them to wreck the *Record* office. Waddell had been informed of the contents of the letter drafted by the CCC and that it was mailed instead of hand-delivered but did not share this information with the assembled crowd.⁹ Other leaders of the campaign were conspicuously absent, including Roger Moore and Walker Taylor. Moore, as organizational leader of Wilmington's defenses on behalf of armed whites, was at his predetermined station, and others under his command were in their positions throughout the city, posted so as to be ready to respond quickly. Furthermore, Moore had instructed Waddell to inform him by phone if it became necessary to march on the *Record*.¹⁰ However, because of personality conflicts between the two men, Waddell took matters into his own hands and did not contact Moore to step up and lead the crowd even though some men called for Moore's leadership.¹¹

Colonel Walker Taylor, post commander, and Captain Thomas C. James understood the tenuous position the WLI held in the upcoming activities since the

Papers, University of North Carolina at Wilmington Library; J. R. Kennedy, "Colonel Moore Recalled," *Morning Star* (Wilmington), November 24, 1936.

⁹ Hayden, "Introduction to the Wilmington Rebellion," 21; McDuffie, "Politics in Wilmington," 694.

¹⁰ McDuffie, "Politics in Wilmington," 693 -4; James Cowan, "The Wilmington Race Riot." Accounts of Moore's position vary; McDuffie claims he was at corner of Fifth and Chestnut. F.A. Lord, a white participant, recalled that Moore was stationed at the jail. F. A. Lord to Louis T. Moore, 1936, Louis T. Moore Collection, New Hanover County Public Library.

¹¹ McDuffie, "Politics in Wilmington," 694.

WLI, as a local North Carolina State Guard unit, was pledged to maintain peace and order. After consultation with Taylor, James refused to have the WLI officially participate in the destruction of Manly's press. The WLI could not and would not lead the march to the press.¹²

Waddell assembled the crowd in military fashion, in columns of four for the length of two city blocks, with himself and other leaders of the Committee of Twenty-Five, Red Shirts, and business interests leading the march.¹³ These front ranks were Waddell, escorted by Mike Dowling of the Red Shirts, followed by F. H. Fechtig, W. C. Galloway, A. B. Skelding, and E. S. Lathrop of the Committee of Twenty-Five.¹⁴ Also named by witnesses as leaders of the march were John D. Bellamy and former mayor Silas Fishblate.¹⁵

¹² Taylor, at a meeting of riot "veterans" in 1905 recalled that "I got a telephone message that a crowd was at the Armory and wanted the military to lead them up to the Record Office and as I was Post Commander at that time and my duty would have been to disband them, I did not go down until Capt. James telephoned me that they had all gone and then I went down and Capt. James and I went over the situation" and then sent a telegram to the governor. "Minutes of the Association of the WLI," North Carolina Collection.

¹³ The men reportedly formed themselves into columns according to military drills and, by the time their formation was complete, they presented a formidable front, twelve men across for two blocks. Hayden, *WLI*, 85; *Wilmington Messenger* November 11, 1898; Hayden, "Introduction to the Wilmington Rebellion," 22.

¹⁴ Hayden, *WLI*, 85.

¹⁵ There are contradictions on Bellamy's participation. An unsigned letter to President McKinley from an African American Wilmingtonian claimed he was at the head of the march. However, Bellamy's testimony in court contradicts this statement: "Question: Mr. Bellamy, were you present at anytime during the destruction, or any part of the destruction, of the Manly printing office and printing press? Answer: I was not present; I was not even in the crowd that went there; I don't know who went there, except upon information, and had nothing to do with it, and have never seen the building, as I recall,

Once the main body of the crowd had left for the press, Taylor and James met at the armory and discussed the potential for trouble. Taylor, a member of both the WLI and a leading businessman, felt compelled to control the situation as much as possible and composed a telegram to the governor: "Situation here serious. I hold military awaiting your prompt orders."¹⁶

Form No. 1.
THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY,
 INCORPORATED
 21,000 OFFICES IN AMERICA. CABLE SERVICE TO ALL THE WORLD.
 This Company TRANSMITS and DELIVERS messages only on condition of payment of the following rates:
 For transmission of Telegrams, Cablegrams, and Radiograms, and the Company is not responsible for errors or loss
 in transmission or delivery of Unrepeated Messages, beyond the amount paid for transmission, in any case where the
 sender has not received the receipt for the message.
 This is an UNREPEATED MESSAGE, and is delivered by request of the sender, under the conditions stated above.
 THOS. T. SIGBERT, President, General Manager.

RECEIVED at 322 Fayetteville St., Raleigh, N. C. Nov 10 1898
 Date: 11/10/98
 To: Gov. D. Russell, Raleigh, N.C.
 Situation here serious I hold
 military awaiting your prompt
 orders
 Walker Taylor Post Command.

Telegram: Walker Taylor to
 Governor Daniel Russell.
 Image: North Carolina State Archives

Taylor and his men then waited at the armory for a reply while the crowd descended on the press. John V. B. Metts, a sergeant in the WLI, wrote that he and the other members of the WLI were "kept under arms" in the armory until eleven o'clock while the citizens met there and "proceeded to burn the *Record* building."¹⁷ Another member of the WLI, Private James D. Nutt, expressed the men's eagerness to participate

either prior to or since the destruction." Further, Bellamy contended on another occasion that he was out of town at the time. *Contested Election Case*, 249; Unsigned Letter to President McKinley, November 13, 1898, General Records of the Department of Justice, National Archives, Washington, D. C.; Bellamy, *Memoirs*.

¹⁶ Governor Russell Papers, State Archives, North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh.

¹⁷ John V. B. Metts to "Miss Elizabeth," November 12, 1898, Hinsdale Papers, Duke University Library, Durham.

after Captain James had “marched them around the yard [of the armory] about eight times” after his request to leave the armory and participate had been denied by Captain James.¹⁸

Waddell’s column of men marched east on Market and turned onto Seventh Street, white residents in homes they passed viewed the crowd with mixed emotions even as husbands and sons joined the march from their porches. William Parsley wrote to his sister-in-law in New York that her mother broke into a “fit of hysterics sufficiently violent to alarm me” when the armed group of men led by Waddell marched by their house but that she soon was calmed enough for him to join the procession. Furthermore, his young daughter, Mannie, “distinguished herself” as she joined the procession from the sidewalk for a short distance while walking towards her grandparent’s home at 619 Orange Street. Parsley recalled that she enjoyed the walk but that his wife and mother were not so charmed by the girl’s activities.¹⁹

Although Waddell’s march took the men en route to the press through affluent neighborhoods on Market Street, once they turned onto Seventh and passed Orange Street, the neighborhood became distinctly different, occupied almost entirely by blacks who watched the procession from within their homes and other concealed locations.²⁰ Chief of Police John R. Melton observed the procession and recalled that it took about an hour for the 1,000 to 1,500 men to pass.²¹ The press occupied a building called Love and Charity Hall and was in the heart of a

black neighborhood near the corner of Seventh and Nun Streets.²²

Since they were in what could be assumed to be hostile territory, and given the fact that armed groups of black men had clustered around the press in August as a defensive measure after threats were first made against Manly and the paper, the white paramilitary organization sent out pickets, or guards, along the streets in the southern section of town. One participant later recalled that he was instructed by his ward captain to run a patrol on Church Street and later extended his patrols along Castle to Seventh in the early stages of the riot.²³

With his perimeter secured by the pickets and guard patrols, Waddell knocked on the door of the building wielding a Winchester rifle. The knock yielded no answer since Manly had been warned of the dangers to his life and property in advance by white reporter Thomas Clawson.²⁴ The men then forced the door open and poured

¹⁸ “Minutes of the Association of the WLI,” North Carolina Collection.

¹⁹ William Parsley to Sal [McLaurin], nd, Eccles Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.

²⁰ 1897 Wilmington Map, Hayumi Higuchi. A digital version of Higuchi’s map can be found in Chapter 8.

²¹ *Contested Election Case*, 364.

²² The hall, also called Free Love Lodge by Hayden, was operated by the Grand United Order of Love and Charity, first organized in 1878, and provided help for the poor, sick, and indigent through its association with St. Luke’s A.M.E. Zion Church. The building at Seventh and Nun Streets was newly constructed in 1897, and after its destruction in 1898, contributions from the white community reimbursed the organization for its losses. Construction commenced on a new hall in April 1899. Manly moved the printing press and *Record* offices to the building after he was evicted from his rented office space downtown in August. The property owner of the business office in downtown did not want Manly’s controversial business on his property. Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle*, 17-18.

²³ *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), August 25, 1898; F.A. Lord to Louis T. Moore, August 8, 1936, Louis T. Moore Collection, New Hanover County Public Library.

²⁴ Clawson, “Recollections and Memories” Louis T. Moore Collection, State Archives, North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh; McDuffie, “Politics in Wilmington,” 695, reports that a black man near the door failed to move out of the way fast enough and was shot in the neck. This is the only recorded instance of this man being shot.

inside to demolish the equipment and supplies of the *Record*—marking the beginning of overt violence in the city. The men cheered as they broke into the building, destroying office furniture and the press. As men entered the press offices, items such as a beaver hat, drawings of Manly, and a sign reading “The Record Publishing Co.” were thrown into the street to cheering onlookers who could not get inside.²⁵ A fire started in the building, forcing the men inside to leave the structure and return to the street to watch it burn. Later investigation among the ranks of men involved concluded that hanging kerosene lamps inside the building were knocked to the floor, which was saturated with more kerosene found stored in a closet. The person who struck the match was never named, but William Watson and Dan Rowan

were identified as the ones responsible for spreading the kerosene, which accelerated the fire as it spread quickly throughout the two-story frame building.²⁶ Waddell and other leaders were displeased that the fire broke out since they only wanted to damage the press and the ability of the black community to produce a newspaper. It was later recalled that “a mob, no matter how well disciplined, is no stronger than its weakest link.”²⁷ Additionally, the building was perilously close to the prominent St. Luke’s A. M. E. Zion Church and private homes. As cinders began to catch fire on shingles of nearby houses, the alarm was sounded from a firebox at the corner, and men from the neighborhood fire station responded to the call. Whites involved in the destruction of the press assisted with extinguishing the



Remains of Love and Charity Hall/ Record Printing Offices. African American firefighters visible on second floor as white children watch from steps of St. Luke’s.

Image courtesy of New Hanover County Public Library

²⁵ Prather, *Democracy Betrayed*, 113.

²⁶ Hayden, *WLI*, 85; *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), November 10, 1898.

²⁷ Hayden, *Story of the Wilmington Rebellion*, 15.



Newly discovered image of burning of Manly press building. This image was taken soon after the destruction of the press building. Smoke is still very evident in the upper floor. The men in the foreground have a wide range of expressions to reflect their mood. Some of the men wear firefighter uniforms. The image was made by Wilmington photographer Henry Cronenberg. Image courtesy of the New Hanover County Public Library



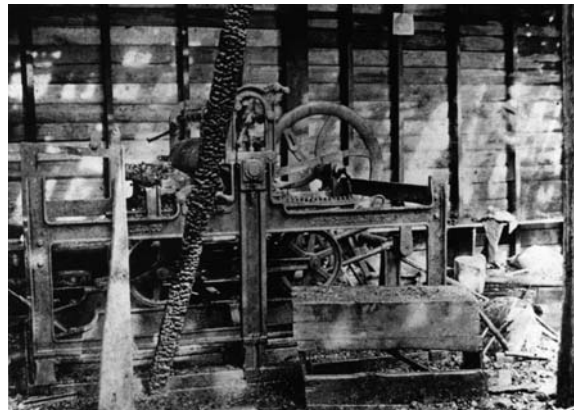
Armed rioters in front of destroyed press building. Photo was reproduced in *Collier's Weekly*.
Image: North Carolina State Archives

small roof fires on nearby houses.²⁸ The fire crews were stopped at Sixth and Castle by W. T. Savage on orders of Fire Chief Charles Schnibben until it was certain that the building was destroyed beyond repair.²⁹ Once the all-black fire crew was allowed to approach the scene, they were met by a barrage of shouts and a “fusillade of gun and pistol shots.”³⁰ The whites watched as the firemen fought to douse the flames. Later accounts by observers admired the fortitude of the fire fighters who did their job in spite of harrowing circumstances—taming a raging fire in close proximity to other buildings under the watchful eyes of hundreds of armed antagonistic men.³¹ After the fire was extinguished, some whites stopped a moment to pose with their rifles in front of the destroyed building.

The black community reacted in a multitude of ways—children at a nearby school were running through the neighborhood in a frightened panic, and an elderly lady stood on the street and “invoked the wrath of Heaven” on the perpetrators even as they worked to destroy the press and building.³² Fire crews tore down the remains of the building after the crowd dispersed.³³ Although the number of participants swelled to as many as 2,000 at the time the press began to burn, many whites were not a part of the march on the

press and were alerted to the violence by the sounds of gun shots, fire bells, and shouts.³⁴

Waddell and the men present at the press destruction then re-formed their lines and returned to the armory. There, Waddell counseled the men: “Now you have performed the duty you called on me to lead you to perform. Now let us go quietly to our homes and about our business and obey the law, unless we are forced in self-defense to do otherwise.”³⁵ But Waddell’s cautions fell on deaf ears for there were already roving clusters of armed men in a state of recklessness throughout the city. The white supremacy monster that he and other members of the Democratic Party had spawned, and previously held in check, had exceeded their control.



Remnants of *Record* printing press
Image: New Hanover County Public Library

Once the press was destroyed, the city entered a state of panic. Women and children were ushered inside behind locked doors and windows, and workers of both races rushed to the city’s center to ascertain what had happened. With telephones and

²⁸ Henry West, “The Race War in North Carolina,” *The Forum*, Volume XXVI, 583-584

²⁹ Hayden, *WLI*, 86; Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 113. These men were part of an all black fire station, the Cape Fear Steam Fire Engine Company. The company was organized in 1871 and was the first all-black steam fire engine company in the US. Schnibben and Savage both were possibly members of the Red Shirts and White Government Union. Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle*, 186-192.

³⁰ *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), November 10, 1898.

³¹ Hayden, *Story of the Wilmington Rebellion*, 15.

³² West, “Race War in North Carolina,” *Forum*, 585.

³³ *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), November 10, 1898.

³⁴ Several witnesses in *Contested Election Case* recalled seeing smoke and hearing the fire bells. Cronly included the shouts and fire bells in her recollections.

³⁵ McDuffie, “Politics in Wilmington,” 697; Hayden, *WLI*, 86.

telegraphs in the progressive business community, news among the white elites traveled quickly from one location to the next, helping to organize troops and civilian support, and to seek medical assistance.³⁶ Racing across the city to find family members, black men and women spread rumors of murder and fire well before the full-scale conflict.

Because of the frantic nature of the story and the way in which it was reported at the time of the event—often with papers going to press while guns were fired in the streets—many inaccurate or incomplete accounts were circulated and survive today. Letters and other primary documents survive from witnesses and participants to add their personal experiences to printed versions of the day’s activities. Some who participated in the riot and later recalled the day in order to record the “rebellion” for posterity added through their memories many of the reporting inaccuracies. Confusion has arisen over the accuracy and truthfulness of participant records, contemporary newspaper articles, and similar data. Therefore, one must piece the day’s events together using multiple, often overlapping, information sources.

To comprehend the ensuing riot, it must be understood that groups of four to eight armed white men were patrolling every block throughout the city from the day’s

³⁶ Wilmington and Raleigh were the first two cities in North Carolina to establish telephone exchanges in North Carolina in 1879. Access to telephones was limited to businesses and leading businessmen. The 1897 city directory provides the numbers for fifty-three patrons of the Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company and for twenty-seven customers of the Interstate Telephone and Telegraph Company. Patrons included many men central to the story of the riot: Hardy Fennell, the Orton hotel, Charles Schnibben, Iredell Meares, Roger Moore, Robert Orrell, Walker Taylor, and James Woolvin. Howell, *Book of Wilmington*, 162; 1897 Wilmington City Directory; Jane Cronly letter, nd, Cronly Papers, Duke University Library, Durham.

first light until nightfall and had been doing similar patrols throughout the weeks leading up to the election.³⁷ Because tensions were high after the mass meeting on the ninth, the men and their patrols were even more on edge than previously. Exhaustion and fear were prevalent emotions.³⁸ Still, many black and white workers proceeded to work as if nothing had changed. In addition to the patrols, the WLI and Naval Reserves were well prepared—having at the ready several horse drawn wagons mounted with machine guns and cannons, or designed for troop transport.

Hell Broke Loose

Harry Hayden wrote that “Hell broke loose” about an hour after the *Record* was destroyed. The majority of the violence and bloodshed that took place was found in Brooklyn, the traditionally African American neighborhood in the northern section of the city.³⁹ The first shots between whites and blacks were fired at Fourth and Harnett as armed white men returned to their neighborhood from the march that burned

³⁷ EY Wootten to “Edward,” November 8, 1898, Wootten Papers, University of North Carolina at Wilmington Library.

³⁸ Many of the letters and accounts used in this report contain references to exhaustion on the part of the participants because they were consistently awakened for patrol duty and to assemble for threats of armed blacks that never materialized. Collections containing such letters include, Cronly Papers, James Spencer Worth Papers, Wootten Papers, Hinsdale Papers, Eccles Family Papers, and the Louis T. Moore Collection.

³⁹ Brooklyn has historically been considered the African American section of the city. Documents relating to the violence of November 10 indicate that Brooklyn “began” at the Fourth Street Bridge. Research using the city directory and maps generated by Hayumi Higuchi indicate that the area around Fourth and Harnett was a mixed-race neighborhood with a nearly 50/50 mix of whites and blacks.

the *Record*.⁴⁰ The northern part of the city exploded with violent outbreaks at multiple intersections and landmarks during the day. The exact timeline of events remains unclear.

Standoff at Sprunt's Cotton Compress

One of the areas where panic and fear ignited tensions was the Sprunt Cotton Compress on Front Street between Walnut and Red Cross Streets. James Sprunt, among the city's wealthiest white men and a member of the chamber of commerce, employed hundreds of black workers who worked as stevedores loading cotton onto ships, as laborers at the large compress, and as equipment operators to process the cotton. The men working at the compress were unaware of the activity on the other side of town until the fire bell rang. Workers' wives fled to the compress to tell their husbands about the *Record* burning and that whites were burning their homes and firing weapons throughout the city.⁴¹ In short order, several hundred workers gathered in a state of confusion outside the compress, and work stopped in the compress as laborers left their posts. The unarmed workers were "in a state of bewilderment, wondering what had happened, and what might eventuate."⁴² The workers told Sprunt that they were "hard working ... and that the whites ought not to stir them up and terrorize them."⁴³ In attempts to protect his workers, Sprunt tried to get them to stay on his property and away from town in hopes

that they would not be involved in violence.⁴⁴

Sprunt was joined by Junius Davis, George Rountree, and Roger Moore in his attempts to calm the workers and prevent them from going to their homes. At the same time, however, after hearing a rumor of the gathering of workers at Sprunt's business, a large number of whites entered the area with guns on their shoulders, ready to keep the "mob" of frightened blacks under control. Some of the whites approached Moore and told him that "if he did not give the order to shoot into the negroes on the opposite corner," the mob would do so anyway. Moore responded that he had been placed in "command" by his fellow citizens, and until he was removed from command, he would not allow bloodshed and would have the instigators arrested. The men complied and took their place in the ranks.⁴⁵

Captain Donald MacRae, recently returned to Wilmington from the Spanish-American War, recalled that while he watched a crowd going in the direction of the compress, someone told him to go home and get his gun. MacRae returned to the street loaded with a "riot gun and about seventy five pounds of riot cartridges and two pistols and a bowie knife or two" and headed for a crowd gathered near Sprunt's compress. While in the crowd watching Sprunt attempt to calm his employees, MacRae was recognized as a soldier and was asked to lead the crowd, who wanted to "kill the whole gang of negroes."⁴⁶ MacRae was asked to be their leader because he had just been through the war and knew "about what should be done." MacRae recalled that he "had very little stomach for it and as very

⁴⁰ The white men who have been identified as the first to exchange gunfire with blacks in the Brooklyn neighborhood were also residents of the area.

⁴¹ Rountree, *Memoirs*, 14, Henry G. Connor Papers; "Story of the Wilmington Riot, A Pure Bred Negro Relates It," *Charlotte Daily Observer*, May 24, 1905.

⁴² James Cowan, "The Wilmington Race Riot."

⁴³ McDuffie, "Politics in Wilmington," 709.

⁴⁴ "Story of the Wilmington Riot," *Charlotte Daily Observer*, May 24, 1905.

⁴⁵ James Cowan, "The Wilmington Race Riot"

⁴⁶ "Minutes of the Association of the WLI," North Carolina Collection.

few of the negroes were armed, it was little less than murder that they [the crowd] proposed.” MacRae acknowledged that all the black men were concerned about were their homes.⁴⁷



Captain Donald
MacRae
Image: William L.
DeRossett, *Pictorial
and Historical New
Hanover*.

Rountree then called for the rapid-fire gun from the armory to be brought to the compress so it could be used to intimidate people into peacefulness. Rountree had been surprised by the outbreak of violence, having been asleep during the opening round when Waddell’s followers burned the *Record*. Rountree had awakened to gunshots and rushed to the post office, meeting businessman and postmaster James H. Chadbourn Jr. there. They immediately began planning the steps they would take to mount a political coup.⁴⁸ Afterwards, Rountree returned home, retrieved his Winchester, and walked to the corner with his gun on his shoulder and “feeling very much like a fool,” he later recalled. After seeing no action, he returned his gun to his house, went back to the corner near Sprunt’s

⁴⁷ “Minutes of the Association of the WLI,” North Carolina Collection.

⁴⁸ Chadbourn had previously supported the Republican Party wholeheartedly, being appointed to the Police Board under the Republican administration of Silas P. Wright and postmaster for the city. However, under immense pressure from local Democrats in Wilmington, Chadbourn publicly recanted his support of the Republican Party and pledged himself to “white rule.” Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 62-65.

compress and saw the blacks begin to congregate. As he helped to calm the crowd, Rountree recalled that one of the black workers asked him what they had done to justify being the target of all the armed whites eager to shoot. Rountree acknowledged he could not supply an answer.⁴⁹

Sprunt and other white business leaders continued to try to calm the blacks and encouraged them to disperse and return to work. Sprunt and his colleagues also appealed to the whites who wanted to open fire into the crowd of blacks who failed to disperse fast enough. In an effort to convince his workers that their houses were not in jeopardy, Sprunt sent a trusted black man accompanied by a white man out into the community in Sprunt’s personal buggy to ascertain the damage and danger so he could report his findings to his fellow employees.⁵⁰ Once the worker returned and reported that only the press had been burned, the crowd seemed a bit calmer and started to disperse.⁵¹ Sprunt and the other whites offered to accompany men to their homes while others stayed at the compress in fear. Many of Sprunt’s workers were then escorted home in small groups by armed white men.⁵²

⁴⁹ Rountree, “Memorandum.”

⁵⁰ McDuffie, “Politics in Wilmington,” 709.

⁵¹ Rountree, “Memorandum.”

⁵² Thomas Rivera, an African American citizen of the city at the time of the riot, related to historian Helen Edmonds that Sprunt, in efforts to protect his workers, had his private yacht brought around so that its guns were aimed at the armed whites while the factory doors were barricaded to keep his workers safely inside. Sprunt could very well have had guns on his boat since in April 1898, just after war was declared on Spain, the U.S. Navy compiled a list of Cape Fear steamers and drew up instructions for equipping those steamers with one- and six-pound cannon. Edmonds, *Negro and Fusion Politics*, 169; “Story of the Wilmington Riot” *Charlotte Daily Observer*, May 24, 1905; Watson, *Wilmington, Port of North Carolina*, 128.



Sprunt's yacht, the *Luola*.
Image: Lower Cape Fear Historical Society

The waterfront area in which the Sprunt compress was located was also home to several other employers of blacks, including railroad offices, lumber yards, pitch and turpentine plants, and shipping firms. As news spread of the happenings at Sprunt's and that armed mobs of white men were throughout the city, African American workers from the waterfront sought to make their way to their homes but were stopped by white armed patrols who told them to turn back.⁵³

Waddell's speech cautioning men to return home peacefully only a short time earlier failed to calm tempers. After burning the *Record*, some men boarded the city streetcar trolley and rode it along its route, traveling south on Sixth Street, turning west on Castle, and then turning north on Front Street into the northern sections of town. Flushed with excitement from the fire, as the streetcar entered black neighborhoods along Castle Street, they fired their rifles into the homes and businesses of black residents.⁵⁴ By the time the white men who lived in the Brooklyn area had returned home, by foot or streetcar, their adrenaline was pumping and tensions were high.

Eye of the Storm – Fourth and Harnett Streets

The bloodshed began when black workers from the waterfront industrial yards and Brooklyn residents were confronted with armed whites. The place where the peace fractured was at the corner of Fourth and Harnett Streets in Brooklyn, a mixed race neighborhood on the edge of the predominantly black section of Wilmington.

A group of blacks were gathered on the southwest corner of Fourth and Harnett near Brunje's Saloon in George Heyer's store when armed whites returned to the neighborhood. A streetcar loaded with men direct from burning the *Record* also entered the area.⁵⁵ As the groups exchanged verbal assaults from opposite street corners, whites and blacks alike sought to calm fellow citizens.

Norman Lindsay encouraged his fellow blacks to go home: "For the sake of your lives, your families, your children, and your country, go home and stay there!"⁵⁶ After Lindsay's plea, the group of blacks moved to the opposite corner at W. A. Walker's store while the whites took up a position between Brunje's store and St. Matthew's English Lutheran Church. Aaron Lockamy, a newly deputized white police officer, also tried to diffuse the problem by going between both groups and trying to get them to disperse. He recalled that, while serving as a special policeman during the aftermath of the election, he was stationed in Brooklyn to ensure that the opening of two bars on Fourth Street would be peaceful. Instructed not to arrest anyone by Chief Melton, Lockamy asked the blacks to

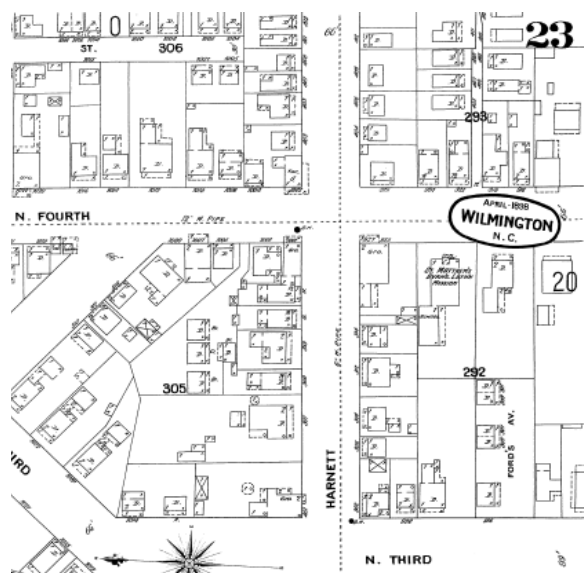
⁵³ *Wilmington Messenger* November 11, 1898.

⁵⁴ Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 122.

⁵⁵ Among the men on the streetcar was Sam Matthews, armed with a navy rifle even though he was not an active member of the Naval Reserves. Hayden, WLI, 91; Crew of the Nantucket, William Lord de Rosset, *Pictorial and Historical New Hanover County*, 89.

⁵⁶ Hayden, *History of the WLI*, 88.

disperse and go home for their own safety. They refused but moved as a group a bit farther away from the corner. Lockamy's inability to disperse the crowd angered the white men at the opposite corner. Lockamy felt he had done all he could in the turf war and went back to his post on Fourth near Brunswick. From this point forward, gunshots rang throughout the city for the next several hours.⁵⁷



April 1898 Sanborn Insurance map of intersection of Fourth and Harnett Streets.

⁵⁷ Just before the election, the Board of Aldermen had instituted a ban on the sale of alcohol to last until 6:00 A.M. on November 10. After riot began, the board met again at 12:50 P.M. at Alderman Morrell's home at 210 N. Sixth Street to continue the ban. Aaron/Alton Lockamy's post was probably at Boesch's grocery at 319 Brunswick, some two blocks away from the site of the first shots. White men who shot at the blacks were at the intersection were S. Hill Terry, George Piner, Theodore Curtis and Sam Matthews. *Contested Election Case*, 341-343; Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 119; *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), November 10, 1898; *Morning Star* (Wilmington), November 11, 1898; *Wilmington Messenger*, November 11, 1898; Minutes of the Board of Aldermen, Town of Wilmington, November 5, 1898, November 10, 1898, State Archives, North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh; 1897 *Wilmington City Directory*; Hayden, "Introduction to the Wilmington Rebellion," 24-6.

White and black witnesses of the activities at the intersection of Fourth and Harnett both claimed that the other side was the responsible party for firing the first shots. There are conflicting viewpoints on first shots and an affidavit, probably taken by Rountree was used in newspapers to counter accounts from black witnesses such as George H. Davis, a black man wounded at Fourth and Harnett and interviewed by reporter Thomas Clawson for the *Wilmington Messenger*. Lockamy went back and forth between the clusters of whites and blacks on opposing corners at Fourth and Harnett at least two times and later said that the only people on the corner that were armed were whites.⁵⁸

Notwithstanding the point of origin, once the first shot was fired, whites launched a fusillade of bullets towards the blacks near Walker's store. Several black men fell injured, but most were able to get up and run away from the scene. Most accounts agree that three men died instantly at Walker's while two injured men ran around the corner into a home at 411 Harnett. One of these men by the surname of Bizzell died in the house while the other, George H. Davis, was later taken to the hospital on the eleventh. Davis apparently lived at the residence and was wounded in his left thigh and had a bullet lodged between his shoulders. He was found in the house along with a dead black man and three women by reporter Clawson and taken to the hospital on the eleventh. Although Davis recovered, Clawson recalled that after he sent for a white doctor, W. D. MacMillan, and a black doctor, T. R. Mask, he thought that "it appeared impossible for one so desperately wounded ever to recover."⁵⁹ The rest of the men fled west on Harnett,

⁵⁸ *Wilmington Messenger* November 11, 1898; *Contested Election*, 341-342. See note 73 for text of affidavit taken by Rountree.

⁵⁹ Clawson, "Recollections and Memories."



Intersection of 4th and Harnett, November, 1898. Hayden wrote that S. Hill Terry, Theodore Curtis, and Sam Matthews fired shotguns at the black men before the crowd of whites fired a “fusillade” of shots at this intersection, marking the first deaths at this spot.

Image courtesy of the New Hanover County Public Library



Newly discovered image of the intersection at Fourth and Harnett Streets. The view in this image is from the same angle as the previous photo but shows more of Harnett Street. Some of the men wounded in shooting at Fourth and Harnett ran into some of the homes just east of the corner store.

Image Courtesy of the New Hanover County Public Library.

reportedly firing at whites as they ran. Although it was difficult for black men to purchase weapons in the weeks and months just prior to the election, many already owned weapons for hunting or personal safety. Men identified in papers as wounded at Fourth and Harnett intersection were Alfred White, William Lindsay, and Sam McFarland. Men identified as dead at Fourth and Harnett were John Townsend (Townsell?), Charles Lindsay (aka Silas Brown), William Mouzon, and John L. Gregory. Whites identified as being at the scene were S. Hill Terry (armed with double-barrel shot gun loaded with buck shot), Theodore Curtis, N. B. Chadwick (armed with a 16-shot Colt or Remington rifle), Sam Matthews (armed with a .44 caliber Navy rifle), and George Piner.⁶⁰

After the first shots were fired, a streetcar entered the business section in downtown from Brooklyn, and the conductor told men gathered there that blacks had shot into the car. Men crowded into the car bound for Brooklyn at the stop on Fourth at Harnett.⁶¹ One of the “first responders” was Captain Donald MacRae of Company K, fresh from the tense situation at Sprunt’s Compress. MacRae recalled that once he arrived in Brooklyn after hearing reports of fighting, he began to establish a skirmish line with other white men in the area. He was stopped by another man because he was still a captain of Company K in the U. S. Army and white leaders thought

that he should not be involved in case the president investigated the participants.⁶²



Bernice Moore’s Drug Store, 901 N. Fourth Street. Moore called for assistance of the military from his store and white victims Mayo, Piner, and Chadwick received medical attention from Dr. Schonwald. Image: New Hanover County Public Library

Having feared the worst in the weeks prior to the election, leaders Roger Moore and Walker Taylor had developed a strategy for quelling potential violence by stationing contacts throughout the city with instructions to notify Taylor and Moore if trouble ignited. The contact in the Fourth Street area near Harnett was Bernice Moore at his drug store at 901 North Fourth Street. Moore was instructed by J. Allan Taylor of the Secret Nine to sound the “riot alarm” to alert the WLI and Naval Reserves in the event of violence. As soon as shots were heard, Moore called the armory to inform the leaders there that shots were being fired in Brooklyn. Once the riot alarm was sounded, Walker Taylor declared martial law, and the WLI and the Naval Reserves began to make their way into the Brooklyn neighborhood.⁶³

⁶⁰ *Wilmington Messenger*, November 11, 1898; *Morning Star* (Wilmington), November 11, 1898; Hayden, *WLI*, 88-89, 91; McDuffie “Politics in Wilmington,” 741; Prather, *Democracy Betrayed*, 32

⁶¹ Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 118-119.

⁶² “Minutes of the Association of the WLI,” North Carolina Collection.

⁶³ McDuffie, “Politics in Wilmington,” 719.

Taylor had authority to take control because just before Moore's call for backup was received at the armory, a telegram arrived from Governor Russell through the state's adjutant general that instructed Taylor to "take command of Captain James' company ... and preserve the peace."⁶⁴

Form No. 125.
THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY.
 INCORPORATED
 21,000 OFFICES IN AMERICA. CABLE SERVICE TO ALL THE WORLD.
 THOS. T. ECKERT, President and General Manager.

Receiver's No.	Time Filed.	Check.

SEND the following message, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to. } Nov 10 1898

To St. Col. Walker Taylor
2nd Reg N.C. State Guard
Wilmington, N.C.

The Governor directs that
you take command of
Captain James Com-
pany at Wilmington
and preserve the peace
Attention invited to
Order Under Twenty

READ THE NOTICE AND AGREEMENT ON BACK.

THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY.
 INCORPORATED
 21,000 OFFICES IN AMERICA. CABLE SERVICE TO ALL THE WORLD.
 THOS. T. ECKERT, President and General Manager.

Receiver's No.	Time Filed.	Check.

SEND the following message, subject to the terms on back hereof, which are hereby agreed to. } _____ 1898

To _____

eight regulations of
the North Carolina
State Guard. Report
your action to
the Governor direct.
By order of the Governor
and Commander in Chief
John S. Davis
Adjutant General

READ THE NOTICE AND AGREEMENT ON BACK.

Telegram from Governor Russell to Walker Taylor
 Image: North Carolina State Archives

Before the governor's telegram arrived, Commander George Morton of the Naval Reserves sought approval from a city official to grant the military authority to take over, but he claimed he could not locate the mayor or a police officer. Instead, Morton's men found Deputy Sheriff G. Z. French in his room at the Orton Hotel and requested permission to march Morton's men from his headquarters in Brooklyn. French complied, possibly under duress, and wrote out an order instructing Morton to "use all force at your disposal to quell the existing violation of the peace in this city."

Morton then sent a telegram to the governor informing him of his plan of action and also notified Walker Taylor of his intentions. The governor later ordered Morton to place his men under Taylor, although the transfer of command had already taken place by the time the telegram was received. Morton's men, equipped with Lee magazine rifles and a Hotchkiss rapid-firing gun, assembled at the corner of Third and Princess.⁶⁵

As soon as the first shots were fired, a "running firefight" erupted on Harnett, with scores of men, black and white, running in all directions from the intersection, some firing at the opposite side as they ran.⁶⁶ William Mayo, a white man who lived at 307 Harnett, was seriously wounded by a stray bullet.

Mayo's wounding presented a rallying point for the whites who then began to retaliate. Because of Mayo, whites fired in unison into a group of black men and another five or six died near the intersection of Harnett and Fourth Streets. Mayo was taken to a nearby drug store for treatment by Dr. John T. Schonwald who lived close to the scene. Mayo's injury was serious, but

⁶⁴ Governor Daniel L. Russell Papers, Correspondence, November 1898, State Archives, North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh.

⁶⁵ NC Public Documents, Adjutant General's Report, 1899, Document 9.

⁶⁶ Hayden, WLI, 88.



George Morton and part of his crew at his home in Brooklyn on the day of the riot. Morton's home, located at 720 N. Fourth Street, became the headquarters for the military presence in Brooklyn.
Image: New Hanover County Public Library

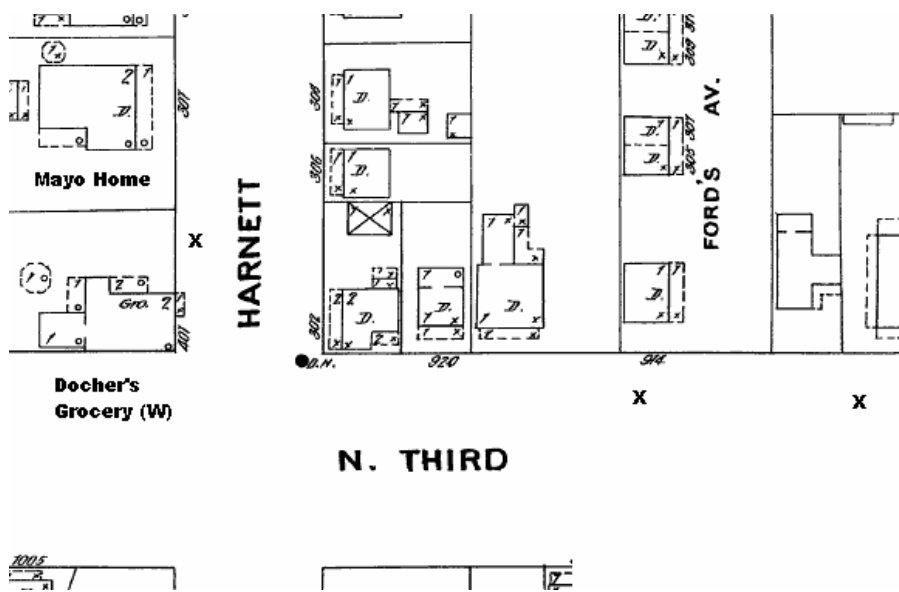


Mayo residence, 307 Harnett St.
Image: New Hanover County Public Library



This newly discovered photograph depicts the intersection of Third and Harnett Streets. According to the caption, an "x" near the center of the image marks where a white man was shot, presumably Will Mayo. Mayo's home was next to this grocery store, owned and operated by John Doscher. The image is looking up Harnett Street toward the intersection of Fourth and Harnett. (Image courtesy of the New Hanover County Public Library.)

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, April 1898. This map includes additions to indicate the home of Will Mayo, and the "x" marks as indicated photographs.



since he received quick care, he survived an otherwise life-threatening injury.⁶⁷

Additionally, two other white men, Bert Chadwick and George Piner, were injured and treated alongside Mayo.⁶⁸ Mayo's wounding rallied the white men involved in the first scuffle, and they began to avenge Mayo as they aimed for any blacks that came into sight. The whites also sought to identify the individual who shot Mayo, perhaps as a means to stop random shootings. Later in the afternoon, after some simple investigation and finger pointing, it was decided that Daniel Wright, who lived nearby at 810 North Third, was the culprit responsible for shooting Mayo as well as shooting George Piner.⁶⁹ A manhunt was launched for Wright.

⁶⁷ Mayo's wounding became a symbolic rallying point for the white men. William F. Jones, street car driver, conveyed Mayo to Moore's Drug Store where Dr. Schonwald stopped the bleeding before transport to the hospital by young boys and their ambulances stationed at Cowan's Livery Stable. Rev. Christopher C. Dennen of St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church administered Mayo's last rites on the way to the hospital just in case Mayo did not survive his wound. The .44 caliber Winchester bullet hit Mayo and went through his left side and both lungs before exiting his body. It was written into white accounts of the riot that Mayo had been standing on his porch at the time of the shooting and that he was shot as his assailant ran down the street. It is unclear if Mayo was part of the crowd who had just returned from burning the *Record*, if he was a member of a Citizen's Patrol, or if he was armed at the time of he was shot. It is also unclear who, exactly, shot Mayo. Speculation also indicates that perhaps Mayo was shot as an incidence of "friendly fire" when whites were aiming at blacks running in his general direction. Hayden, *WLI*, 90-91; *Wilmington Messenger* November 11, 1898.

⁶⁸ Chadwick was wounded with a .44 caliber bullet which passed though the muscle in his left arm without breaking his arm and Piner was shot with a .44 caliber bullet that entered his abdomen in the left side and exited on the right. Hayden, *WLI*, 91; *Wilmington Messenger* November 11, 1898.

⁶⁹ Another interpretation of the Mayo shooting had Wright near the intersection of Third and Harnett as

As large groups of white men gathered in the vicinity of Fourth and Harnett—milling about, angry and eager to avenge Mayo's shooting—Wright was identified by a "half breed Indian" who told J. Allan Taylor that he knew who had shot Mayo. Taylor was shown a house where he was told Wright was hiding and that he could be identified by "a missing thumb on his right hand and the possession of an outmoded rifle with a large bore."⁷⁰ Captain MacRae remembered the incident with the Indian, saying that he felt the man had a grudge against local blacks.⁷¹ Taylor then sent a group of men led by John S. Watters to capture and identify Wright. Once his house was surrounded, white witnesses claimed Wright went into the attic and shot into the approaching crowd, wounding Will Terry and George Bland.⁷²

he shot Mayo, who was a block away at Third and Harnett instead of his porch. This account also states that after Wright shot Mayo, he "wheeled around" and shot George Piner who was at the intersection of Bladen and Fourth. Hayden, *WLI*, 91; *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), November 10, 1898; Hayden, "Introduction to the Wilmington Rebellion," 26.

⁷⁰ Hayden, *WLI*, 90.

⁷¹ "Minutes of the Association of the WLI," North Carolina Collection.

⁷² Prather, using Helen Edmonds' interview with Thomas Rivera, stated that Terry and Bland were killed. However, the 1900 census has Hill Terry, as named in the WLI, alive and serving as deputy sheriff at residing at 815 North Fourth Street. George Bland, age 25 in the 1900 census, was Terry's son-in-law and lived with Terry and worked as a liveryman. The 1880 census listed Hill Terry having a son, Will, age 12, but Will is not found in the 1900 census. It is unknown if the younger Will Terry was involved and possibly killed by Wright. A later account of the fighting noted that S. Hill Terry hanged himself while in jail awaiting trial for murdering his son-in-law. Jack Metts, in a letter dated November 12 recounted his version of the event: "The negro who shot our white man very nearly killing him was sought and got on his knees begging for mercy, saying he had five little children home—but the crowd of citizens who

Wright's home was set afire, and he tried to escape but was captured while his wife watched from the street. Once captured, Wright was marched into the street and hit in the head with a length of gas pipe. When he stood back up, someone in the crowd suggested that Wright be hanged from a nearby lamp post. Before a rope could be found, a member of the Citizen's Patrol drove up and suggested that Wright be given the chance to run for his freedom. Wright was given this opportunity, but, after he ran

about fifty yards, "at least forty guns of all descriptions turned loose on him." Wright was left in the street, bleeding and severely wounded with about thirteen gunshot wounds, five of which entered through his shoulders and back, for about a half hour before he was picked up and carried to the hospital. Doctors at the hospital observed that they had never seen anyone with as many gunshot wounds live for as long as Wright did. He held onto life until early the next morning, and his body was handed over



had him said go and he hadn't gone ten feet before the top of his head was cut off by bullets. It was a horrible sight." This account has elements related to Wright as Mayo's assailant and to another man, Josh Halsy, who was killed in action around Manhattan Park. John V.B. Metts, November 12, 1898, Hinsdale Papers, Duke University Library, Durham; Hayden, "Introduction to the Wilmington Rebellion."

According to the caption, this newly discovered image shows the area on N. Third Street where two black men were killed. The location has been identified using Sanborn Insurance maps and the "x" marks are reflected on the Sanborn map found on page 139. The "x" at the right is possibly the spot where Daniel Wright fell with 13 bullet wounds. A study of the residents of the street indicates that this was a mixed race neighborhood, with an even mix of black and white residents with a variety of occupations.

Image courtesy of the New Hanover County Public Library

to undertaker Thomas Rivera for burial after a formal inquest by coroner David Jacobs.⁷³

More shots rang throughout the area as more and more whites and blacks filtered into the Brooklyn area. Among the white onlookers was attorney George Rountree. Having just mediated the safety of blacks at Sprunt's compress, Rountree went to investigate so that if a governmental inquiry took place, he would be prepared to answer questions. Rountree is probably the person responsible for filing the sworn affidavit of William McAllister that was published repeatedly in local and statewide newspapers indicating that a black man was responsible for firing the first shots.⁷⁴ Rountree recalled that he and several others attempted to "quiet the situation and to prevent any further shooting," but

acknowledged that "at this time I had no influence whatever with the rioters" and was pleased that the arrival of the military "quieted the matter down as quickly as possible."⁷⁵

WLI Enter Brooklyn

Once the riot alarm was sounded and authority to act was granted by the governor, Captain James, upon orders of Walker Taylor, mobilized the waiting forces of the WLI to march into the Brooklyn neighborhood. They marched down Market Street to Third, then over to the intersection at Princess where they stopped in front of James Woolvin's funeral parlor at 105 North Third and waited for the Naval Reserves to join their procession. Once the WLI moved again, they marched down Third to Mulberry to Fourth Street to cross into Brooklyn. At the Fourth Street Bridge Captain James halted the group and announced: "[N]ow boys I want to tell you right now I want you all to load and when I give the command to shoot, I want you to shoot to kill." After James' statement, there was a shot fired at the group, but the WLI could not determine who had fired.⁷⁶

J. D. Nutt recalled that after they had marched through the area, by the time his unit returned to the armory, he still had all of his cartridges, not having fired a shot.⁷⁷ Members of the WLI remembered other facets of their marches through town. Jack Metts wrote on November 12, the first day

⁷³ "Minutes of the Association of the WLI," North Carolina Collection; *Wilmington Messenger* November 11, 12, 1898; Edmonds, *Negro and Fusion Politics*, 169; Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 125, 129.

⁷⁴ The text of William McAllister's affidavit reads: "I, William McAllister, being duly sworn, make the following affidavit: 1. That I am yard master for the Atlantic Coast Line. My duty is to make up trains on the yard of the said company in the city of Wilmington. 2. That at about 11 o'clock this morning I started to go to bed, and my wife called me to the window. I live on North Fourth Street, next to St. Mark's Lutheran church. My wife said: 'Billy, there is going to be trouble.' I jumped up and went to the window and saw a white man remonstrating with a negro with gesticulations. I heard the white man say, 'Go on, go on.' The negro went about ten paces, and then I saw the negro shoot. He pointed a pistol towards the white man and then fired. Immediately I saw blood flow from the said white man's right arm. Then there was another shot fired from the negro assemblage, and then there was firing from the white assemblage, with the result that three negroes fell. The negroes then dispersed. Then the white men proceeded towards Moore's drug store to telephone for assistance. Sworn to before me, this 10th day of November, AD 1898 William McAllister" Notarized by J.H. Boatwright. *News and Observer* (Raleigh), November 11, 1898

⁷⁵ Rountree, "Memorandum."

⁷⁶ "Minutes of the Association of the WLI," North Carolina Collection. The WLI must have stopped in front of Jim Woolvins' funeral parlor at 105 North Third. J.D. Nutt recalled that Woolvins "turned white as a ghost, except for his hair which was still red" when the WLI stopped in front of his establishment.

⁷⁷ "Minutes of the Association of the WLI," North Carolina Collection.

he had been home since the ninth, to his “Dear Miss Elizabeth” that as the WLI marched “out in the northern end of town where the negroes had congregated ... I nearly stepped on negroes laying in the street dead. Oh, it was awful.” Metts stated that they were fired at but that no one in his “crowd” got hurt. He stated that “we killed a ‘few negroes’” and that it was his first experience “under fire” and “[I was] not near as much excited as I expected to be.” He concluded his thoughts on the activities of the WLI during the riot: “I’ll tell you things are stirred up and I am glad to say I am still living but we have not killed enough negroes—two or three white men were wounded and we have not gotten enough to make up for it.”⁷⁸

Several other groups were ready once the signal was given, namely the Red Shirts and Rough Riders who were assembled in Dry Pond. Once Moore’s call activated the WLI, word spread to these men that fighting was taking place across town, and they quickly made their way to the scene.⁷⁹

By noon violence was widespread in the Brooklyn section of Wilmington. Reports of shootings and fires are found throughout the historical record of the event. Volleys were echoing throughout the city. In addition to armed whites moving into action around Brooklyn, black workers found themselves in the midst of a veritable war zone, caught between the river and gunfire. The laborers, still wearing their work coveralls, moved into town to help

their friends and neighbors along Harnett. A patrol of whites told them to go back and not approach, but, once the black men refused, the whites shot at them as they ran back towards the railroad. One of them died on the Carolina Central Railroad tracks.⁸⁰ Several black men were shot in the crossfire, including Sam Gregory, who was wounded and fell on Fourth between Harnett and Swann. Another unnamed man was wounded and seen crawling under the house of Mrs. W. H. Strauss on Fourth between Harnett and Swann where he was later found near death. He was picked up by a patrol on the eleventh and later died at the hospital of his wounds.⁸¹ Another man, Sam McFarland, was shot as a group of laborers

⁸⁰ *Wilmington Messenger*, November 11, 1898.

⁸¹ Speculation has arisen that the man found under Mrs. Strauss’ home at 1012 North Fourth Street, was either Sam McFarland, Sam Gregory, or John L. Gregory. The *Morning Star* stated that Sam McFallon was found under the house and taken to the hospital on November 11 but was expected to die. No McFallon can be found in the *Wilmington City Directory* before the riot although a black laborer, Samuel McFarlan, of 1014 North Second and another black laborer, Samuel McFarland of 512 Taylor Street, can be found in the 1897 *City Directory* but not the 1900 *Directory*. John L. Gregory, a black laborer who lived at 1301 North Fifth can be found in the 1897 *City Directory* but not the 1900. Perhaps the man who died was one of these men. Sam McFarland’s death was well documented in the papers. He was shot on the Seaboard Air Line tracks as they crossed Harnett and was taken to the hospital. The *Messenger* gave extensive coverage to McFarland’s wounding, detailing his transport to the hospital, his death, his employer, his address and that he left a widow. Sam Gregory’s death is widely described as the first one to result from the shooting at Fourth and Harnett, with the *Messenger* and *Dispatch* agreeing on his name and location of death. John Gregory’s death is reported in the *Messenger*, and he was one of the men who were given an inquest on the twelfth with the location of his death given as on Third between Harnett and Swann. *Wilmington Messenger*, November 12, 1898, November 13, 1898, November 14, 1898; *Morning Star* (Wilmington), November 12, 1898; *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), November 11, 1898.

⁷⁸ John V.B. Metts to “Elizabeth” November 12, 1898, Hinsdale Family Papers, Duke University Library, Durham.

⁷⁹ James H. Cowan, in his typed, undated recollection of the riot, wrote that Colonel Roger Moore was in control of the armed men of Wilmington until Walker Taylor and the military was activated. Moore turned “control” of his men over to Walker at that time. James Cowan, “The Wilmington Race Riot,” Prather, *Democracy Betrayed*, 33.

came into the area from the waterfront along Harnett. McFarland's obituary said he was shot on Harnett at the Seaboard Tracks as he left his employers, Belden & Howie, on his way home to dinner. He was "among a lot of hands who it was thought were going to Brooklyn to take a hand in the riot." McFarland was first thought dead but was later picked up and taken to the hospital where he died.⁸² Reporter Clawson recalled that as he was traveling through the city to report the fighting, "gunfire rattled all around us and bullets whistled closely."⁸³

Machine Gun Squads

One of the most intimidating components of the Wilmington Light Infantry was the machine gun squad.⁸⁴ The squad manned a rapid-firing Colt gun capable of firing 420 .23 caliber bullets per minute.⁸⁵ Purchased by local business interests, the gun was mounted on a two-horse drawn wagon furnished by Orrell's Livery Stables and driven by Pierre Harriss. Reporter Clawson later praised the city's forward-thinking attitude in purchasing the gun as a display of wisdom.⁸⁶

Captain William R. Kenan and 1st Lt. Charles H. White led the WLI gun squad: Robert Rankin, John Furlong, Edward Furlong, James Williams, John Quelch, and William Whitney. Although the gun was

under the command of the WLI, all of the men were not members of the WLI.⁸⁷ The members of the WLI and machine gun squad believed that showing the gun in the black sections of the city would intimidate them into quietude. Later recollections also indicate that the gun had a calming effect on white rioters who were out of the control of the military.⁸⁸

The squad hauled the machine gun through Brooklyn after first crossing over the Fourth Street Bridge and into the scene of the first shots. As it proceeded through town, the crew was fired upon near the intersection of Sixth and Brunswick, just on the north side of the Sixth Street bridge. The gunners were armed with rifles, and they returned fire, killing as many as 25 black men at that intersection.⁸⁹ The gun crew was also engaged in fighting in the vicinity of Manhattan Park. African American attorney William Henderson claimed that a rapid-fire gun was fired into a house, killing three blacks inside.⁹⁰ The squad returned the gun to the armory only to be sent out again to guard the bridge into town at Hilton Park. The squad was responding to rumors that blacks from the small village of Navassa just west of Wilmington across the

⁸² *Wilmington Messenger* November 13, 1898.

⁸³ Clawson, "Recollections and Memories."

⁸⁴ The machine gun purchased by the businessmen was taken out on river and demonstrated for black leaders on November 1, just before the election as an intimidation tool. *Contested Election Case*, 344.

⁸⁵ Testimony from retired Confederate artillery Colonel John W. Atkinson conflicts with that of Charles H. White, a member of the machine gun squadron, as to the type of rapid fire gun used by the WLI. Atkinson said he thought the gun was a Gatlin that was a "very rapid firing gun" whereas White recalled the weapon was a Colt that could fire 420 shots per minute. *Contested Election Case*, 267, 344.

⁸⁶ Clawson, "Recollections and Memories."

⁸⁷ Hayden, *WLI*, 90. It is interesting to note that several of the men on the machine gun squad were members of Company K.

⁸⁸ Clawson, "Recollections and Memories."

⁸⁹ Hayden recounted the shooting of 25 men at the intersection twice in his work, marking through it once and replacing it at a different location in the text. He also stated that only one man was shot and killed at Sixth and Brunswick Streets by the machine gunners. In reading various accounts of the activities of the machine gun squad and the Red Shirts, it is possible that the gunners did only kill one man at that intersection and that the other 25, if actually killed, were individuals killed or wounded near the location by Red Shirts. It is interesting, though, that Hayden felt the need to write that 25 were killed by the machine guns at that intersection twice. Hayden, *WLI*, 89-92.

⁹⁰ *Indianapolis Freeman*, December 3, 1898.



WLI Machine Gun Crew, photo was probably made in the rear yard of the WLI armory.
Image: Cape Fear Museum

Cape Fear River were planning to march into town from that direction.⁹¹

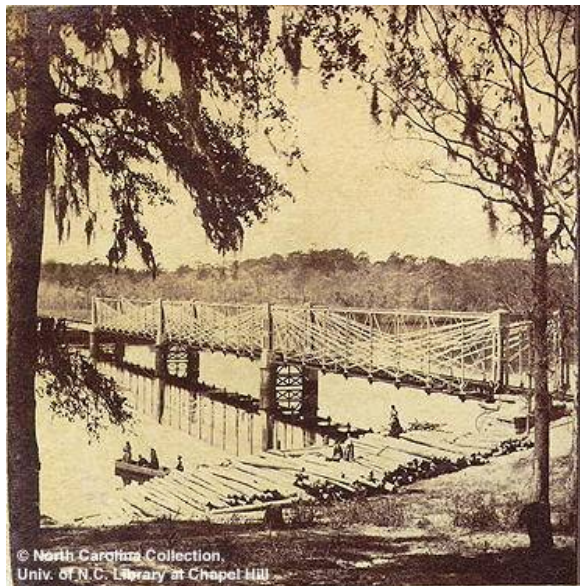
There were at least two rapid-firing guns in the city. The second gun, deployed by the Naval Reserves, was a Hotchkiss gun that could fire 80 to 100 shots per minute with a range of five miles. The gun arrived in Wilmington from New York just two days before the riot and proved a formidable

weapon.⁹² Commander Morton and his men also wheeled this weapon through town, aiming it at crowds to coerce groups into dispersing. The WLI's weapon received more attention in the local media since it was purchased with funds gathered from Wilmington's business community. Journalist Thomas Clawson of the

⁹¹ Hayden, *WLI*, 89-92; Clawson, "Recollections and Memories."

⁹² Another gun, the Gatling gun purchased by the Secret Nine, was led by Captain Harry McIlhenny. *Wilmington Messenger*, November 8, 1898; Hayden, "Introduction to the Wilmington Rebellion," 30.

Messenger followed the activity of the WLI's rapid-fire gun closely.



Railroad bridge at Hilton
Image: North Carolina Collection, University of
North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Yet another group of people also made their way into the melee in Brooklyn—they were mostly armed white citizens and reporters.⁹³ Clawson, along with other reporters who were in town to cover the election, ventured into Brooklyn to witness the fighting. In a later account of the fighting, Clawson wrote that he was particularly impressed by the machine gun squad. He attributed squad leadership to Roger Moore and William Rand Kenan and

⁹³ Most of the men involved in the first shots were those who lived in the transitional neighborhoods dividing the white and black citizenry in Brooklyn, and the others who filtered in after the first shots were outsiders from other parts of town or members of the WLI or other paramilitary organizations. S. Hill Terry lived at 815 North Fourth Street, Theodore Curtis boarded at 712 North Fourth Street, and Sam Matthews lived at 917 North Fourth Street. 1897 *Wilmington City Directory*; Higuchi 1897 map of Wilmington.

wrote that the two “heroic figures” led the “spectacular action of the machine gun outfit.” Clawson further recalled: “I have yet a vivid mental picture of these two magnificent Wilmingtonians as they grimly stood upright by their machine gun.” The gun was mounted on a large horse-drawn truck and was drawn “at a rapid rate through every section of Brooklyn.” He indicated that the men paused with the machine gun for a photo and then were rushed off to a section of the city where they were needed. The photo shows that some of the men wore portions of their active duty military uniforms from the Naval Reserves and Company K. Clawson was proud of the squad for their bravery since they were exposed to sniper fire, and, since they were among the first to be on the scene after the fighting began, the machine gun squad had “the situation well in hand when the military companies arrived.” He firmly believed that bloodshed would have been much more significant without the presence of the “flying machine-gun squadron.”⁹⁴

The rapid-fire guns were used to intimidate men on the streets, and to force compliance of African American churches. Churches, at the heart of the black community, helped communicate information and were seen as an organizational threat to whites. Rumors heard by leaders of the WLI held that the churches were used as arsenals, ready to equip black men with weapons to return fire at the whites. Therefore, at an early stage, the machine guns targeted all the churches and forced ministers to open their doors to searches by whites. At St. Stephens A.M.E. Church on the corner of Fifth and Red Cross Streets, one of the largest churches in the city with a congregation nearing 1,600 members, the crew aimed the rapid-fire gun at the church’s main entrance and threatened to open fire. The church leaders opened the

⁹⁴ Clawson, “Recollections and Memories.”

church, and, after a thorough search, no guns were found. John Metts recalled that the WLI and the Naval Reserves were searching the churches for guns, but the only items found were large numbers of election fliers encouraging members to “vote for Dockery.”⁹⁵

Even though there was sporadic fighting throughout the southern sections of the First Ward, other pockets of fighting erupted in response to specific “threats.” One such pocket was at Manhattan Park.⁹⁶ Around 2:15 P.M., while the Reverend I. S. Lee of St. Stephens A. M. E. Church was escorting William C. Jones and Sterling P. Adams through town to quiet the population, they were shot at by men from inside a building across the street in Manhattan Park.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ “Minutes of the Association of the WLI,” North Carolina Collection; Kirk, *A Statement of Facts*.

⁹⁶ There is confusion among contemporary accounts as well as those given by participants years afterward, but it appears that at least one man, Josh Halsey, lost his life as a result of the activity at Manhattan Park although some accounts indicate that an unnamed man *and* Halsey died at the scene. For more information on activity at Manhattan Park, see Clawson, “Recollections and Memories;” *Wilmington Messenger* November 11, 1898, November 12, 1898, November 13, 1898 and November 14, 1898; “Minutes of the Association of the WLI,” North Carolina Collection; Hayden, *WLI*; Jane Cronly, “Account of the Race Riot,” n.d., Cronly Family Papers, Duke University Library, Durham; *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), November 11, 1898; *Morning Star* (Wilmington), November 12, 1898, November 13, 16, 1898; Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 124-125; McDuffie, “Politics in Wilmington,” 716. Thalia Howe, a member of Wilmington’s black elite, witnessed a similar event from her home when a black man was shot in the street, his head ripped apart by the gunfire. Thalia’s recollections were passed to subsequent generations and provided to the researcher by Howe descendant Cynthia Brown, July, 2004. See also note 71 with letter from Metts regarding shooting of either Wright/ Halsey

⁹⁷ Part of the civilian organization under Hugh MacRae and J. Allan Taylor, the men were on the northeast corner of Sixth and Bladen when shots were fired in their direction from Manhattan Park.

Members of the military were informed that blacks were shooting at whites from Manhattan Park where there were several businesses, including a “disreputable dance hall run by a negro named Henry Nichols,” surrounded by a tall fence along Bladen Street. After a WLI group under command of Walker Taylor arrived on the scene after a double-quick march, the WLI searched the dance hall and arrested 4 men inside.⁹⁸

A fifth man fled the building, refusing to stop for the military, and he was summarily shot dead. A witness recalled that the “volley tore off the top” of his head, and he fell on the “pavement on the south side of Bladen near Seventh.” Thomas H. Wright, a member of the WLI involved in the incident recalled that the machine gun squad was across from their lines and that they were fearful they would be shot if the gunners had opened fire on the buildings of Manhattan Park. However, Charles H. White of the machine gun squadron recalled that as a black man climbed over the fence, all of the gunners followed Jack Quelch (including Captain Kenan) in jumping from the wagon to catch him, leaving White alone with the gun and only a pocketknife for

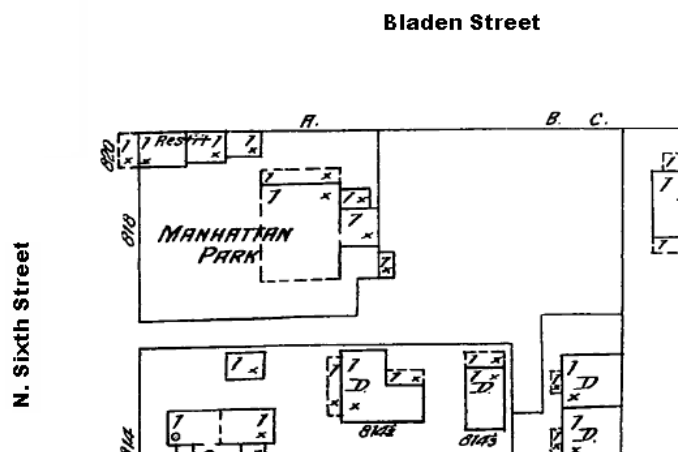
The men forced black ministers to accompany them throughout Brooklyn as they ordered black citizens to remain in their homes or in the woods before nightfall. Colonel William C. Jones was a former captain of the WLI, and Sterling P. Adams was an assistant engineer for the Atlantic Coastline Railroad. *Wilmington Messenger*, November 11, 1898; McDuffie, “Politics in Wilmington,” 719.

⁹⁸ There has been some confusion in the sources as to the number and names of men arrested at Manhattan Hall. Taylor’s report to the state adjutant general indicated that four men were arrested. The *Messenger* reported that six men, Henry Nichols, Tom Lane, Wisconsin Edwards, James Hill, S. T. Knight, and William Tate were arrested at the scene. They were later released on the sixteenth since there was no evidence against them. *NC Public Documents*, Adjutant General’s Report, 1899; *Wilmington Messenger* November 11, 1898; *Morning Star* (Wilmington), November 16, 1898.



Manhattan Park area after shooting stopped. Note demolished fence and broken windows. The area that was called "Manhattan Park" by the white participants was described as having a dance hall and other buildings enclosed by a tall fence. This report has determined from eyewitness accounts and 1898 Sanborn maps (below) that the block containing Manhattan Park was bounded by Sixth, Seventh, Brunswick and Bladen Streets.

Image: New Hanover County Public Library



protection.⁹⁹ Wright also recalled that the ten foot tall fence around the buildings was partially torn down by Ben Turlington in order to get to the black men inside to arrest and throw them in a wagon to take to the jail.¹⁰⁰ The parts of the fence not damaged by Turlington and the WLI were destroyed by a barrage of weapons fire, completely eradicating the fence and opening the Manhattan Park area for the whites to search. The main building was pockmarked with bullet holes, and its windows had been shattered by the time the firing stopped.¹⁰¹ Evidently there was a large crowd of whites surrounding the Manhattan Park site. Jack Metts recalled that a crowd of citizens had fired first, and “when we [the WLI] fired, the crowd went crazy.”¹⁰² Walker Taylor, in his report to the adjutant general of North Carolina, claimed that the shooting was the only killing by the military during the conflict. After this man was shot, a member of the group responsible for his death was quoted by *Collier's*: “When we tu'nd him ovah, Misto Niggah had a look o' 'sprise on his face!”¹⁰³

The WLI, not satisfied that the responsible parties were either arrested or dead, particularly after a shot was aimed at the military company from the direction of Manhattan Park, searched for other shooters. Men speculated that Josh Halsey fired at the men from the Manhattan Park area; consequently, a detail was sent to find him.

⁹⁹ “Minutes of the Association of the WLI,” North Carolina Collection; *Contested Election Case*, 344.

¹⁰⁰ “Minutes of the Association of the WLI,” North Carolina Collection.

¹⁰¹ See photo of Manhattan Park from Hayden's *History of the WLI*; Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 124.

¹⁰² “Minutes of the Association of the WLI,” North Carolina Collection.

¹⁰³ *Collier's Weekly*, November 26, 1898; Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 124; *NC Public Documents*, Adjutant General's Report, 1899.

Private J. F. Maunder recalled that part of the WLI under Sergeant Harriss was lined up in front of Hill Terry's house at 815 North Fourth Street when they were given orders to find Halsey, who they found at home near Manhattan Park and subsequently shot dead.¹⁰⁴ One WLI member, Private William Robbins, told Maunder that he was “sick to his stomach” at the prospect of shooting someone. Maunder then told Robbins to “not show the white feather or I will shoot you myself.” After the order to fire on Halsey had been executed, Maunder noticed that Robbins had only “snapped” his gun instead of firing it and that his plunger was out and his cartridges were on the ground. Maunder lived in Brooklyn and later indicated that the trying times of living in that section of town had motivated him.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Cronly's account of Halsey's shooting indicates that Halsey ran home in fright and then ran from his home via the back door because his daughter begged him to run for his life from the approaching soldiers who then shot him “down like a dog” as he ran. Maunder's account in the WLI Association Minutes indicates that Halsey was given the opportunity to “run the gauntlet” and was shot at by the squad. He was killed immediately. Jane Cronly, n.d., Cronly Papers, Duke University Library, Durham; “Minutes of the Association of the WLI,” North Carolina Collection; Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 124-125.

¹⁰⁵ Another man, Thomas Lane, was arrested and found guilty after a trial on November 16 for shooting at the WLI during the activity at Manhattan Park. The *Wilmington Morning Star* observed that if Lane had not “fired into the military it would not have been necessary for them to have shot Josh Halsey, the negro inmate of the place who was killed as a sequel to Lane's fiendish effort to kill one of the members of the Light Infantry.” Maunder, a clerk with M. W. Divine Company, a sash, blind and paint dealer, lived at 624 North Fourth Street, a predominately white neighborhood in Brooklyn near the transition between majority white and black housing. “Minutes of the Association of the WLI,” North Carolina Collection; *Morning Star* (Wilmington), November 16, 1898; Hayumi Higuchi 1897 Map of Wilmington; 1897 *Wilmington City Directory*.

As the day progressed, shots were heard throughout Brooklyn, and contemporary reports point out that groups of emboldened black men encountered groups of white men in armed units. The reports of the day's actions and later accounts by participants read like a list of shootings and deaths.¹⁰⁶ Hayden recounted several killings witnessed by Red Shirts. One claimed he saw 6 men shot and killed at the Cape Fear Lumber Company plant and buried in a nearby ditch. Another Red Shirt told Hayden that 9 were killed by a white man working as a sniper, killing the men as they fled a building after having shot at whites from inside. He also reported that a "youth" shot a "Negro rabble rouser" as the man stood on a dry goods box denouncing the whites near Fourth and Nixon. Hayden's accounting of the shootings also gives the only instance of a body being thrown into the Cape Fear. "An observer" told Hayden that a black man had been shot on the wharf and his body tossed into the river after he "sassed" two white men there.¹⁰⁷ Many of Hayden's accounts give geographical markers to place the shootings in town; however, many shooting anecdotes, as well as some found in the local papers, provide only for an individual being shot, particularly black men for failure to stop for patrols well into the evening hours of the tenth and the early morning hours of the eleventh.¹⁰⁸

Throughout the day, the rest of town was mostly quiet while fighting raged in the

northern sections—"The fighting ... was way over in Brooklyn and except that every spare man in the neighborhood stood on the street corners adjacent [to their homes] with guns everything was quieter than Sunday."¹⁰⁹ Analysis of information on the day's activity reveals that only a few reported shootings occurred outside of the Brooklyn neighborhood. One, in particular, is disturbing because it demonstrated premeditation. Hayden stated that a black policeman named Perkins was killed as he left his home in the Dry Pond area by a Red Shirt who claimed he had waited four days to do the shooting.¹¹⁰ Two other reported shootings, both related to black men who refused to stop for patrols, are the only other instances that describe shootings outside Brooklyn. One report cited by Hayden said that a black man was shot at Front and Princess after being warned not to pass a

¹⁰⁹ William Parsley to "Sal," November 12, 1898, Eccles Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.

¹¹⁰ The reference is the only record of this shooting and the only Perkins in the 1897 City Directory is Dennis Perkins, a black shoemaker who lived at 617 South Second Street. Perkins can be found alive in the 1900 Census at the same location and still working as a shoemaker. If this is the same man, he could have been appointed a special policeman during the pre-election Red Shirt parades but somehow managed to survive the riot and continued to live in a predominately white neighborhood in the home he owned. Perhaps the Red Shirt so angry at the policeman was arrested and later fined for his rowdy behavior in the days preceding the riot and wished to take his anger out on Perkins. This case presents a problem since the Red Shirt interviewed by Hayden clearly believes he shot and killed Perkins however the only Perkins that can be identified in the same area at the same time is clearly alive a year and a half after the riot, still living in a predominately white neighborhood. Perhaps this is an example of the trouble with accepting all of Hayden's writings without substantiation or that the Perkins in question was not listed in the city directory. Hayden, *WLI*, 93; 1897 *Wilmington City Directory*; 1900 Census; *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), November 3, 1898; Higuchi 1897 Wilmington map.

¹⁰⁶ Hayden provided accounts of shootings that have not been corroborated by other sources. However, Hayden sought interviews with participants who were otherwise unheard in recollections of the members of the WLI's association or newspaper accounts.

¹⁰⁷ Hayden, *WLI*, 92.

¹⁰⁸ Hayden indicated that a deaf man was shot for failure to stop because he did not hear the command to halt. Hayden, *WLI*, 92; see also *Wilmington Messenger*, November 11, 1898 through November 15, 1898.

picket line. The other, in the *Evening Dispatch*, took place at the corner of Tenth and Princess when a black man refused to stop for a patrol at about eight o'clock at night.¹¹¹

As the fighting continued, word of the riot spread throughout the state and country with telegrams flashing back and forth between Wilmington, Raleigh, Charlotte, and President McKinley in Washington, D. C. Telegrams were sent to the *Raleigh News and Observer* first at 11:00 A. M., and later regular updates were posted at its offices; and people came by to read and discuss the situation.¹¹² The governor responded by dispatching several other State Guard units to Wilmington. These units began to arrive by train late in the evening and into the following day. First to arrive were the Maxton Guards at 11:00 P.M., and Taylor assigned them to guard the city hospital. The Clinton Guards arrived at 11:30 P. M. and guarded the city jail. The Kinston Naval Reserves arrived at 2:30 A. M. on the eleventh and were assigned patrol duty before they relieved the Clinton Guards at the jail.¹¹³ President McKinley met with staff to discuss the riot but did not move to activate troops because no official request for assistance was sent to him by Governor Russell.¹¹⁴

Another part of the violence, with particular ramifications for women and children, was the mass exodus of African Americans that began almost as soon as Waddell's group descended upon the press building. Women fled their homes with children in tow to the outskirts of the town. The women were soon followed by those men who could escape the shooting and

patrols through town. Most often, the stopping points or respites for these refugees were the cemeteries and swamps. Reports abound in the records about the disappearance of blacks from the city and the grim conditions of the wilderness in which they hid.¹¹⁵ The weather conditions on these November days and nights were typical of autumn in North Carolina—mild, but in the space of a few hours, chilly with cold mists.¹¹⁶ Newspapers reported that the roads were lined with refugees carrying bedding or personal belongings and that it was “pitiable to see the children hurrying in fright after their parents.” The refugees then spent the nights of the tenth and eleventh in

¹¹⁵ James Cowan wrote that “many negroes were frightened to the point of distraction with the turn of events [and] went to the woods near the city. They thought their lives were in jeopardy.” John Metts wrote that “the negroes are frightened out of their wits. Most of them have left town.” Edward Wootten's mother wrote on November 21, 1898 that a friend's black laborer, Stephen, was fired for registering to vote, and then, after he was told of the dangers to his life, he “left for parts unknown and is still there, nobody has seen him since.” James Cowan, “The Wilmington Race Riot”; John Metts, November 12, 1898, Hinsdale Family Papers, Duke University Library, Durham; E.W. Wootten, November 21, 1898, Wootten Collection, University of North Carolina at Wilmington Library.

¹¹⁶ Benjamin Keith wrote to Senator Marion Butler on November 17 that “the poor negroes have been in the woods like so many cattle during all this bad weather.” Peter Mallett, a white Fayetteville merchant with close ties to Wilmington recorded in for November 10, 1898 that there was “rain and some hail” along with his entry that “war commenced at Wilmington today ... negroes suffer” and that it was “cloudy and cold” on the eleventh. *The Messenger* reported that it was “sufficiently cool...to cause suffering” and that the “approaching darkness and a threatening storm added to the dread and horror of the situation.” Benjamin Keith, November 17, 1898, Marion Butler Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill; Peter Mallett Journal, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill; *Wilmington Messenger*, November 13, 1898, November 14, 1898.

¹¹¹ Hayden, *WLI*, 92; *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), November 11, 1898.

¹¹² Prather, 120.

¹¹³ Hayden, *WLI*, 98-99; *NC Public Documents*, Adjutant General's Report, 1899.

¹¹⁴ *News and Observer* (Raleigh), November 11, 1898.

the woods. The *Raleigh News and Observer* noted that these people were “thoroughly subdued and frightened” as they filled every road leading from the town “loaded with packs . . . fleeing in the darkness to make their home elsewhere.” Other refugees sought protection in the homes of friends and relatives as well as those of whites. Former slaves of the Newkirk family made their way to the outlying home of their former masters near modern-day Landfall. Family tradition in the Newkirk family holds that families of former slaves hid in the home’s basement while the whites fed and protected them for as much as a week.¹¹⁷

The Reverend J. Allen Kirk of Wilmington’s Central Baptist Church, protesting the atrocities against his fellow citizens, related that “thousands of women, children and men rushed to the swamps and there lay upon the earth in the cold to freeze and starve.” Kirk hid his own wife and family in Pine Forest Cemetery, designated for black burials, even as he himself continued to move farther away from the fighting, spending time in Castle Haynes, 9 miles from the city.¹¹⁸ Thomas Rivera, a black undertaker, realized that his life was in danger, and, although he was not slated for banishment by white leaders, he left and spent the night in Oakdale, white cemetery,

¹¹⁷ *News and Observer* (Raleigh), November 13, 1898; Haywood Newkirk, telephone interview with LeRae Umfleet, March 31, 2006. There are a handful of black and white Newkirks in Wilmington in the 1897 and 1900 city directories and the 1900 census. Bryan Newkirk’s will, dated April 2, 1863, listed his slaves by name. Some of the black Newkirks in the census and city directory bear those names. More research is needed to clarify the relationships between the white and black Newkirk residents of Wilmington, New Hanover County, and Pender County. Bryan Newkirk will, New Hanover County Wills, State Archives, North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh.

¹¹⁸ Kirk, *Statement of Facts*.

until things quieted down.¹¹⁹ Another minister, North Carolina native Reverend Charles S. Morris, gave a speech in January 1899 to the International Association of Colored Clergymen in Boston in which he recounted the horrors of the riot and recalled that thousands of women and children fled into the “darkness of the night, out under a gray and angry sky, from which [fell] a cold and bone-chilling rain” where he claimed that “crouching waist-deep in the icy waters of neighboring swamps . . . terrified women gave birth” to infants that died of exposure. Preaching to this audience, Morris was expressing for northern African Americans the horrors of white supremacy in order to mobilize their political clout to push for federal intervention in the South.¹²⁰

Coup d’etat

While the city streets were filled with bloodshed, local leaders of the Democratic Party moved on their plans to retake control of the government. The Democratic Party was in control of the state legislature. Republican governor Russell, threatened with impeachment and death, was effectively silenced in a political minority. However, control of Wilmington’s city government was still in the hands of the Republican Party and would remain that way until the next election, which would not

¹¹⁹ Rivera was interviewed by Helen Edmonds on July 20, 1944, and his recollections can be found in her work. Edmonds, *Negro and Fusion Politics*, 168-169.

¹²⁰ Morris was a southerner by birth and experienced the terror of white supremacy racism, but he probably was not living in Wilmington during the riot. The 1900 census shows that Morris, age 23, was living in Middlesex, Massachusetts and born in Kentucky, his wife was born in South Carolina and their 11 month old son was born in Massachusetts. Charles S. Morris, “The Wilmington Massacre” in *The Voice of Black America: Major Speeches by Negroes in the United States, 1797-1971*, ed., Phillip S. Foner (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 604-607.

be held until the following year. Therefore, Wilmington's political elite staged a coup d'état to retake the city's offices. Citing ineffectual leadership, corrupt officials, and soaring crime, the men justified their actions as for the greater good of Wilmington society. In articles and cartoons circulated throughout the city and state prior to elections, the perceived ineffectiveness of Wilmington's mayor and Board of Aldermen was consistently conspicuous, thus paving the way for the afternoon takeover.¹²¹

Assured of success, as soon as the first shots were fired, Rountree, a primary facilitator of the coup, began to work to ensure that the amendment to the White Declaration of Independence calling for the resignation of the mayor would be fulfilled. Although not specifically stated in the version of the Declaration passed at the meeting on Wednesday, Rountree and others also hoped that the other members of the Board of Aldermen would follow suit if opposition was strong enough.¹²²

Determined to become a driving force in the coup, Rountree spoke with

businessman W. H. Chadbourn at the post office during the early stages of the riot. Chadbourn promised to induce the current mayor and board to resign if the businessmen would select a new slate of officials.¹²³ Afterwards, while in Brooklyn witnessing the early rioting near Fourth and Harnett, Rountree found Iredell Meares and informed him of the proposal that Chadbourn had put forth. Meares, a member of Waddell's Committee of Twenty-Five, agreed with the plan. Rountree sought out Chadbourn again so that the current members of the city's government could be called for a meeting. Rountree then went to the Cape Fear Club to mull over his next step. While at the club, Rountree was asked by another member of the committee, Charles Worth, to attend a meeting of Waddell's Committee of Twenty-Five at the Seaboard Air Line Building to present Chadbourn's offer to the committee. At the meeting, Rountree informed the committee that he could promise the resignations of the mayor and Board of Aldermen if they would select a replacement mayor and board.¹²⁴

In addition to the machinations of Chadbourn and Rountree, another man, Daniel Gore, a member of the sitting Board of Aldermen, contacted the newly elected U. S. representative John D. Bellamy. Gore told Bellamy that he could influence the mayor and aldermen to resign if Bellamy could contact the "gentlemen in charge of matters in Wilmington" and suggest that they select property owners and men of intelligence to serve on the board. Bellamy also attended the early afternoon meeting of Waddell's committee at the railroad offices to present

¹²¹ In 1997, the Research Branch of the Office of Archives and History investigated the claims of corruption, economic downturns, and increased crime. The researchers did not find support for any of these claims. Their findings can be found in Appendix I. For more information on Governor Russell's precarious situation and Democratic propaganda disparaging Wilmington's Republican mayor and Board of Aldermen, see Chapters Three and Four.

¹²² During the discussions regarding the amendment to the White Declaration of Independence, former mayor Fishblate had called for the city leaders to resign in more direct language. However, attorneys such as Rountree and Hugh MacRae sought to soften the language and call for the mayor and chief of police to resign instead. At the meeting, Rountree had answered businessman Nathaniel Jacobi that the issue of the resignations of the other members of the Board of Aldermen "would be attended to." Rountree, "Memorandum;" *Wilmington Messenger*, November 10, 1898.

¹²³ Rountree, "Memorandum;" *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), November 10, 1898.

¹²⁴ Rountree, "Memorandum;" *Evening Dispatch* (Wilmington), November 10, 1898.

this information to the committee on Gore's behalf.¹²⁵

Fully intending to act in their "elected" capacity as members of the Committee of Twenty-Five to enact the resolutions of the Declaration, Waddell's committee had also worked to persuade Mayor Silas P. Wright and his administration to vacate their posts. Frank Stedman and Charles Worth were selected from the committee to find Wright, the aldermen, and Chief of Police Melton and encourage them to submit their resignations. Wright, in the face of overpowering intimidation in city hall and armed conflict in the streets, disliked resigning under such pressure but agreed to do so. Melton also agreed to resign if he were given the remainder of his salary as police chief.¹²⁶

Waddell's committee considered their options and selected a group of men who would be representatives of their wards and elected to the Board of Alderman should the resignations eventuate. As a group, the committee went to city hall around three o'clock to meet with the existing members who had been called to city hall for a special meeting at 4:00 P. M. by various representatives of the committee, Gore, or Chadbourn. One by one, the old board resigned and voted to approve the entry of a new member to the board so that the old board was phased out into the new.¹²⁷ The last to resign was Mayor Wright because he saw that "the business men had expressed

dissatisfaction" with his administration and had requested that he step down. Wright subsequently was replaced with Waddell, who was unanimously elected by the new board.¹²⁸

One of the black aldermen forced to resign was John G. Norwood, who had been appointed by the governor to his position to represent the Second Ward during the restructuring of the city's charter in 1897. Norwood was told by the city clerk and treasurer to report at 4:00 to the city's offices on the afternoon of the rioting. Upon his arrival at city hall, Norwood was met by other members of the Wright administration. As they began their meeting, two vacancies on the board were filled by C. H. Ganzer for the Fifth Ward and H. P. West for the Second Ward.¹²⁹ Other members of the Wright administration were also compelled to resign, including Chief of Police Melton, resigning after a private conversation with Rountree, who advised Melton to step down because he couldn't guarantee Melton's safety otherwise. Melton recalled that there

¹²⁵ *Contested Election Case*, 249.

¹²⁶ McDuffie, "Politics in Wilmington," 698-699; *Wilmington Messenger*, November 17, 1898.

¹²⁷ Bellamy testified that the transition was "done decently and in order without any friction and under the advice of the most learned lawyers of the city." A few resignations were secured from Aldermen after the meeting and their replacements were similarly elected and sworn in. *Contested Election Case*, 20-21, 249; Keith, *Memories*, 112; Minutes of the Wilmington Board of Aldermen, State Archives, North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh.

¹²⁸ The new board consisted of C. H. Ganzier and Rev. J. W. Kramer from the First Ward, H. P. West and William H. Sprunt from the Second Ward, Hugh MacRae and J. Allan Taylor of the Third Ward, Charles W. Worth, Preston L. Bridgers from the Fourth Ward, and B. Frank King and A. B. Skelding from the Fifth Ward. Edgar Parmele was selected to replace Melton as chief of police by Waddell's board and M. F. Heiskel Gouvenier was named assistant chief of police. John J. Furlong, member of the machine gun squad, was promoted to police captain. The *Wilmington Dispatch* of November 10, 1898 went to press while shots were still being fired and the coup was taking place. The paper threw support behind Waddell for mayor: "In selecting a man for the chief executive of the city, let the committee not forget the services of our most tried and true citizen; the man who led the citizens this morning and avenged their honor; the man who will have good government and peace or blood—Alfred Moore Waddell." Hayden, *WLI*, 100; Rountree, "Memorandum;" James Cowan, "The Wilmington Race Riot;" *Wilmington Messenger* November 10, 11, 1898.

¹²⁹ *Contested Election Case*, 20-21.

were 100 to 200 armed men in the corridors of city hall at this time. After he resigned, a new chief was instantly sworn in. Melton told Rountree that he could not get his police force together well enough to restore order and that his resignation would allow the group to get “force enough to restore order.” Melton returned home only to be sent out of town the next day.¹³⁰

As bullets were flying through Brooklyn and the city’s government fell to armed politicians, men who were privy to the discussions of the Secret Nine, the Merchant’s Association, the Committee of Twenty-Five, the White Government Unions, and other organizations established a systematic program of banishment for black leaders and white Republicans. Many of those targeted for banishment were perceived as a threat by the leaders of the white community. The first group of black men identified by the whites was the Committee of Colored Citizens (CCC) assembled to hear the demands of the Committee of Twenty-Five and the White Declaration of Independence. Some of the men of the CCC were summarily found and arrested during the riot while others were arrested or coerced into leaving in the days and weeks following the riot.

During the riot, the WLI cooperated with the banishment campaign by detailing squads to arrest men named by the Secret

Nine.¹³¹ Others were allowed to remain in Wilmington as long as they “knew their place.” While only the primary leaders of the black community were named as targets for banishment, others were arrested during the activities on the tenth and eleventh for their safety. While the men behind the scenes only wished to see primary obstacles to white rule, such as attorneys and businessmen, leave, others added their own choices for banishment, carrying the arrest and confinement processes into the days after the riot. Much to the coup leaders’ despair, this secondary banishment campaign was out of their control and promised to prevent an end to hostilities and cripple the city.¹³²

By the end of the day on November 10, the white leaders of Wilmington had successfully manipulated the masses into open warfare. The beneficiaries of the violence were the white leaders who regained control of city affairs through the coup d’etat. In a multitude of ways, the foremost victims of the tragedy were the city’s African Americans, who suffered banishment, the fear of further murders, deaths of loved ones, destruction of property, exile into cold swampland, or injury from gunfire.

¹³⁰ Melton testified that he had heard armed men were headed to city hall to demand resignations and that as the old board was meeting, an armed crowd of men approached the building. Melton also recounted that Rountree “invited me out into the chamber of the board of finance and said that he would advise me to resign; that he thought he had control over the men, but he had just learned that he could not do anything with the men, meaning the Democrats; that he had no control over them, and they would not listen to him, and he would not be responsible for the consequence, and he advised me to resign, and I did so.” *Contested Election Case*, 364-5.

¹³¹ J. Allan Taylor led the banishment campaign for the Secret Nine. McDuffie, “Politics in Wilmington,” 719-720.

¹³² *Wilmington Messenger* November 12, 1898.