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The Cape Fear Ran Red: Memory of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état of 1898

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**THE CAPE FEAR RAN RED: MEMORY OF THE WILMINGTON RACE RIOT AND
COUP D'ÉTAT OF 1898**

A thesis submitted to
the Graduate College of
Marshall University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

In

History

by Jacob Michael Thomas

Approved by

Dr. Michael Woods, Committee Chairperson


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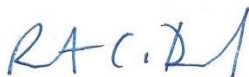
APPROVAL OF THESIS

We, the faculty supervising the work of Jacob Michael Thomas, affirm that the thesis, *The Cape Fear Ran Red: Memory of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état of 1898*, meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by the History Program and the College of Liberal Arts. This work also conforms to the editorial standards of our discipline and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With our signatures, we approve the manuscript for publication.


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ABSTRACT

On November 10, 1898 the city of Wilmington erupted in racial violence as the members of the white population massacred anywhere from twenty-five to a hundred of the black citizenry. The result of the Wilmington Race Riot was the reassertion of white supremacy in North Carolina and a flip in Wilmington's population, as whites became the majority. This paper will argue that the events of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état came about from the direct interference of Wilmington's white elite along with outside interference from Democratic Party Leaders across the state of North Carolina as well as the Red Shirts. I will also look at the long-term consequences of this white supremacy movement and how the riot was memorialized in the city of Wilmington, specifically looking at Hugh MacRae Park and comparing this park to movements around the United States to rename landmarks and remove statues dedicated to the Confederate cause. Memorialization of the riot has penetrated deep into the roots of the city of Wilmington and North Carolina as a whole and while the state continues to deal with its dark past the question of how to remember white supremacy in the state is being brought from the 19th to the 21st century.

INTRODUCTION

Wilmington, North Carolina exploded into violence on November 10, 1898, when a mob of white citizens forced hundreds of black citizens to flee the town and killed almost a hundred black people. This act of violence is named the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and is referred to as one of the successful coup d'état in American History. The Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état has been institutionalized by the city of Wilmington and across North Carolina as a memory of a group of elite white citizens retaking the city from the black citizens that had begun to prosper in the city.¹

In chapter one, the background of both Wilmington and North Carolina will be discussed in length as the city and state marched closer to 1898. This chapter will specifically argue that in the aftermath of the American Civil War decisions were made and actions taken by the white elite of Wilmington that would lead to the outbreak of racial violence in 1898 as the groups of the white population in Wilmington fought to retake a city that they viewed was taken from them. By discussing the fall of Fort Fisher and the Confederacy, Wilmington during Reconstruction, the emergence of the Populist Party and backlash to this, and the rise of the Red Shirts, the “taking” of Wilmington by both the North and the African-American population will be shown.

In chapter two, the riot and coup itself will be discussed in full. This chapter will specifically argue that Wilmington fell as the city was retaken by the white elite and Democratic control was reestablished in the city. The Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état are

¹ I refer to the violence in Wilmington as a race riot due to the fact that that is the commonly used term; however this term is being challenged as a race riot denotes that the races were on equal footing, which will clearly be shown to not be true.

demonstrations of how Wilmington and North Carolina were taken back from Fusionists-black control. This chapter will also show the reception of the riot and coup across the country.

Chapter three will discuss how Wilmington and North Carolina have institutionalized the riot and coup across the state. Specifically, the chapter will argue that the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état of 1898 have been institutionalized as memory through various means, such as the naming of public landmarks, and this institutional memory has left major issues, including a distrust between blacks and Wilmington officials and an economic gap between the races in the city of Wilmington and the state of North Carolina. This institutional memory has been created by elections, fictional writings, speeches, and the naming of parks and building names. In more recent years, this institutional memory has been challenged and could, and should, continue to be challenged by the city, state, and historians. By reconvening the 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission to address issues still at large in the city and by taking a hard look at the names of parks and buildings and changing them in time, the ghost of the Wilmington Race Riot can be laid to rest.

Historiography of the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898

Before jumping into the historiography of the riot and coup, an important note must be made. Before 2000, the major works on Wilmington and the coup were works of fiction. I choose to include fiction into the historiography, because while fiction is what it is, each of the fiction works are one, based in truth and two, important components to how the writing on the riot and coup has changed over 121 years.

The Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état have an extended historiography that dates back to just a few days after the riot and coup had settled. While the narrative has evolved over the years, in 1898 Alfred Moore Waddell created the first story of a lower class revolution

against an unjust government. His narrative has been defended and challenged by multiple people, with the current narrative being that created by the 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission in 2006. By looking through the historiography of the Riot and Coup, the narrative path will be clearly shown. Beginning with Alfred Moore Waddell, the Riot and Coup have evolved from a revolution of the lower classes to the violent uprising led by secret organizations determined to overthrow the local government.

Alfred Moore Waddell was a leader in the Wilmington Riot and Coup and aided in overthrowing the local government.² After this deed was done, Waddell wrote an article to the *Colliers Weekly* explaining his actions in the violent uprising. Waddell makes clear he is the mayor of a revolutionary government that has removed an unreasonable Republican and black led government. He simply performed a duty asked of him. Waddell first created this historiography of the Riot and Coup by explaining that the lower class citizens had risen up after he had lost control of the mob after burning down the *Daily Record*. His narrative would be challenged by David Fulton's *Hanover or: The Persecution of the Lowly: A Story of the Wilmington Massacre*.

David Fulton's work of fiction, *Hanover* was published in 1900 by an African American former resident of North Carolina.³ Fulton was born in Fayetteville, North Carolina before moving to Wilmington during Reconstruction and then to New York City in 1887. Fulton presents the theory that the leading men of Wilmington had conspired to overthrow the government and banish much of the African-American community with other states providing

² Alfred M. Waddell, "The Story of the Wilmington, NC Race Riots," *Collier's Weekly*, 26 November 1898.

³ David Fulton, *Hanover; Or The Persecution of the Lowly* (Portland, Oregon: Echo Library, 2009), 15.

\$30,000 to the cause. Unlike other novelists that covered Wilmington and the violence, Fulton used the city of Wilmington as the stated setting and spoke much more openly about the characters in the riot and coup. He calls Alfred Moore Waddell “The Colonel” which was a well known nickname that he went by. Fulton also wrote about the Colonel’s justification of the violence, which offers an important form of memorialization through the eyes of Fulton. Fulton writes, “Well, Guy,” broke in the Mayor, “it was hard for us to resort to such, but it was in self-defense.” “Self-defense! self-defense!” repeated the old man. “When poor’ nigger han bin tie, an’ yunna bocra got eberty’ing--gun, cannon an’ all de am-nition, an’ beside dat, de town full wid strange trash frum all ober de country to crush dem? Some er dese men I sees shootin’ an’ killin’, dars men an’ umen livin’ er my race dat nussed an’ tuk keer er dem w’en dey bin little. God er mighty gwinter pay yunna well fer yer work, Kurnel, an’ de gost er dem po’ murdered creeters gwine ter haunt yo’ in yer sleep. God don’ lub ugly, an’ yunna can’t prosper.” The old man concluded with a low bow, strode out, and left the Mayor alone with his thoughts.”⁴ Here is one main challenge to Waddell’s narrative, as Fulton attempts to show Waddell’s own justification, a justification that was then destroyed by the words of Fulton through the character of Uncle Guy. Fulton’s challenges were largely ineffective as he could not escape his relative obscurity, while his work was briefly referenced by the *Wilmington Messenger* without a mention of the author or title.⁵

Charles Chesnutt’s fiction novel *Marrow of Tradition* was written in 1901 and became the second account of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D’état.⁶ Chesnutt held Alfred Moore Waddell and others of the elite, white Wilmington citizens responsible for the violence.

⁴ David Fulton, *Hanover; Or The Persecution of the Lowly*, 123.

⁵ David Fulton, *Hanover; Or The Persecution of the Lowly*, 6.

⁶ Charles Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* (New York: Dover Publications, 2003).

However, Chesnutt agreed with Alfred Moore Waddell in his claim that the lower class whites had risen up against the black citizens of Wilmington. Chesnutt created a narrative as a combination of Waddell and Fulton. This narrative was completely reversed by Thomas Dixon.

In 1902, Thomas Dixon wrote *The Leopard's Spots* as a defense of the white supremacist movement that occurred in Wilmington with the killing and banishment of black citizens of the city.⁷ Dixon wrote that Waddell's and others' actions was a revolutionary uprising against a Northern and black invasion. Dixon's writing shows a departure from the narrative of Chesnutt and Fulton and back to the writing of Alfred Moore Waddell. In 1936, Harry Hayden took on the second writing of non-fiction in the historiography of the Wilmington Race Riot, thirty-eight years after the violence.

Harry Hayden was a writer for the *Wilmington Morning Star* and wrote a pamphlet titled *The Wilmington Rebellion* that took an in-depth look at the Riot and Coup.⁸ Hayden's pamphlet is important for a variety of reasons. First, he was the first to dub the group of J. Alan Taylor, Hardy I. Fennell, W. A. Johnson, L. B. Sasser, William Gilchrist, P. B. Manning, E. S. Lathrop, Walter L. Parsley, and Hugh MacRae as the Secret Nine.⁹ Hayden's account is also very important, because it offers another return to the white supremacist account of the riot and coup, with some even stating that Hayden had been one of the white rioters to remove the blacks from Wilmington, but no concrete proof exists. Hayden represents a return to narrative of Alfred Moore Waddell and Thomas Dixon. By calling the violence a rebellion, it shows that Hayden

⁷ Thomas Dixon, *The Leopard's Spots a Romance of the White Man's Burden* (Seattle: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 1902).

⁸ Harry Hayden, *The Story of the Wilmington Rebellion*, (Wilmington: *Wilmington Morning Star*. 1936).

⁹ Timothy B. Tyson, *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

saw the riot as an uprising of the white citizens of Wilmington. Hayden writes his narrative with the point of view of an old man telling two young men about what he had seen and heard about the lead up to and the riot itself. The 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission used Hayden's narrative in 2006 as a reference. Philip Gerard's book *Cape Fear Rising* introduced a new attempt to challenge the commonly held narrative of the Wilmington Race Riot. Philip Gerard's *Cape Fear Rising* became the next in line to the narrative of the Wilmington Race Riot.¹⁰

Philip Gerard published *Cape Fear Rising* in 1997 which was the first to open new questions about the Wilmington narrative in fifty-eight years. His novel follows the story of Sam Jenks, a cousin of Hugh MacRae, from Philadelphia to Wilmington, including his experience in the race riot. Gerard creates his narrative by placing Hugh MacRae at the center of the violence. He also accredits a great deal of blame on J. Allan Taylor, while explaining that William Kenan, George Rountree, and Walker Taylor, each being a conspirator in the Wilmington riot along with Hugh MacRae, had protested the conspiracy. Gerard does not challenge the narrative of Waddell that uncontrollable violent actors in Wilmington had exceeded Waddell's goal of destroying the *Daily Record*. In general, Gerard did not challenge the popular narrative in a great capacity, but his novel did perform two important duties. First the novel opened up dialog on the topic with comments coming from Walker Taylor III, George Rountree III, and the family of Hugh MacRae, calling the book well written, but with various instances of inaccuracies.¹¹ The novel also made another very important leap forward in not only the recognition of the riot and coup, but in the memorialization by using real names, places, and events. Gerard was able to blur the

¹⁰ Philip Gerard, *Cape Fear Rising* (Durham: Blair Publishing, 1997).

¹¹ Philip Gerard, *Cape Fear Rising* (Durham: Blair Publishing, 1997).

lines between fiction and non-fiction enough that dialog began, thus challenging the memorialization through increasing attention.

Timothy B. Tyson wrote his book *Democracy Betrayed* in 2000, the next challenge to the popular narrative of the Riot and Coup. His book is a collection of writings on the Wilmington Race Riot, mostly articles. This collection holds several narratives that range from H. Leon Prather's "We Have Taken a City" to Laura F. Edwards' "Captives of Wilmington," both which move the story of Wilmington into the academic realm. Prather has since expanded his work into a larger book, but Edwards has not. Edwards challenges the narrative of Waddell and explains that historians have become captives of Wilmington as it has become good drama and not good history. Edwards explains that retelling the Wilmington violence through the eyes of African-America working class would open up lost alternatives. Tyson's challenge has received more attention as its also present in the Wilmington Race Riot Commission Report of 2006.¹²

H. Leon Prather's book *We Have Taken a City: The Wilmington Racial Massacre and Coup of 1898* was published in 2006, a few months prior to the release of the official report of the North Carolina state government. Prather's book became a primary source for the Riot Commission and has been considered the most balanced account of the riot, by both African-American activists in Wilmington and the family of the Wilmington white elite, such as the MacRaes. Prather's account details the roles of minor characters not discussed by other narratives and histories. Prather's writing challenges the narrative of Wilmington by asserting the inherent violence that was growing in Wilmington before the actual Riot and Coup took place. Prather also connects the Wilmington of 1898 to the Wilmington of 2006, which is something

¹² Timothy B. Tyson, *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy*.

that the rest of the histories did not do.¹³ His connections reside primarily in the economic conditions of Wilmington's current African-American population and the conditions of African-Americans after the riot and coup.

The *Wilmington Race Riot Commission Report* was created and published in 2006 after popular reaction rose with Philip Gerard's book. This Report collected various accounts of the Riot and Coup and created the now, current narrative of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état. The Report's challenges emerge from its political, social, and economic findings. The report found that the racial violence perpetrated in Wilmington was done by an organized Democratic white elite that resulted in the death of upwards to sixty people as well as the banishment of twenty targeted individuals and the exodus of 2,100 others. The report also challenges the narrative about Alex Manly's, editor of the Daily Record and accused instigator of the riot, role in the riot. The report asserts that even if Manly had not written his editorial the riot would have happened. The report states that the government at all levels failed to respond to the violence or the overthrow. On the economic and social side of the Riot and Coup the report also provides a missing piece of the narrative that previous histories or narratives had not. The report shows that Wilmington's black citizens suffered post riot in a variety of ways. The black community of Wilmington faced declines in economic opportunity, funding for schools, literacy rates, and the economic strength of black owned businesses. Overall, the *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission Report* is perhaps the most thorough and accurate depiction of the riot, whilst also challenging and adding to the narrative of the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898.¹⁴

¹³ H. Leon Prather, *We Have Taken a City: The Wilmington Racial Massacre and Coup of 1898* (Wilmington: Dram Tree Books, 2006).

¹⁴ North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission* (Final Report May 31, 2006), <http://history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/report.htm>.

The historiography of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup of 1898 follows a long and controversial history. Alfred Moore Waddell's historical argument and the argument of the Riot Commission show the drastic and long transition that the historiography of the Riot and Coup has experienced. The argument that the Riot and Coup was the responsibility of the lower classes of Wilmington to the argument that the Wilmington white elite had conspired to kill and remove many prominent blacks of Wilmington from both political and economic power shows this transition. The historiography of the Wilmington Race Riot has begun to receive more and more attention, but still deserves more attention in order to flesh out the belief of the taking of Wilmington by the Republicans and blacks, retaking of Wilmington by the Wilmington white elite, and the institutional memory of the Riot and Coup in Wilmington and across the state of North Carolina.

The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 has begun to garner more and more attention from the academic world, but still remains an under-researched and shadowed past in the history of Wilmington and North Carolina. My work here specifically challenges the memory of 1898 and in terms of the greater literature, acts as a continuation of the 1898 Race Riot Commission Report, extending the argument that the 1898 Race Riot Commission began, while also presenting a new interpretation of the cause of the violence.

CHAPTER 1

WILMINGTON IS LOST: CONCEPTIONS OF LOSS AFTER THE END OF THE CIVIL WAR IN WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

For three days in January, Union guns fired on the last hope for Wilmington and the Confederacy until on January 15, 1865, Fort Fisher fell and so the story of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état of 1898 begins. With the defeat at Fort Fisher and the fall of the Confederacy, Wilmington was faced with the aftermath of the Civil War. In this aftermath decisions that were made and actions taken would lead to the outbreak of racial violence in 1898 as the groups of the white population in Wilmington fought to retake a city that they viewed was taken from them. By discussing the fall of Fort Fisher and the Confederacy, Wilmington during Reconstruction, the emergence of the Populist Party and backlash to this, and the rise of the Red Shirts, the “taking” of Wilmington by both the North and the African-Americans of Wilmington will be shown. At the outbreak of the war, Wilmington was thriving and had grown to be North Carolina’s largest town, but by the beginning of 1865, the city was the last and most important port of the Confederate States of America.

The North Takes the City

North Carolina seceded from the United States and joined the Confederate States of America on May 20, 1861. At the time of the outbreak of the American Civil War, Wilmington was known as a “pleasant, orderly, and moderately busy port.”¹ With the war pulling many adult men away or killing them and many of the women and children being sent further inland, the city was left to strangers who conducted the business affairs of the city.² This influx of strangers into the

¹ Rod Gragg, *Confederate Goliath: The Battle of Fort Fisher* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2006), 4.

² Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 5.

city can be seen as the first instance of Wilmington being taken from those that believed they owned the city. Wilmington had grown to the largest city in North Carolina and it was a major port for blockade-runners during the war. As the war drew to a close, Fort Fisher remained one of the last Confederate strongholds and an effort was made to take the fort at first on Christmas of 1864.

Fort Fisher has been known as the Southern Gibraltar as its massive barriers made of sand and wood to prevent any easy capture of the fort and therefore Wilmington itself. Fort Fisher shows one of the key “takings” of Wilmington as the Union literally occupied the city. In terms of the importance of Wilmington, the ultimate defeat of Confederates at Fort Fisher led directly to the fall of Wilmington, and two months later the Confederacy itself. General Benjamin Butler and the Union Navy attempted to capture Fort Fisher, but were repulsed on December 27, 1864 by General Robert Hoke. After the First Battle of Fort Fisher, General Alfred Terry replaced Butler. Terry ordered a continuous bombardment of the fort from January 12 to January 15. After this bombardment, an all-out ground assault was made on the fort that eventually succeeded in taking the fort on January 15, 1865. Upon the capture of Fort Fisher, General U.S. Grant ordered a hundred gun salute.³ Shortly after the capture of Fort Fisher, Fort Anderson, further up the Cape Fear River, was captured. Wilmington would fall soon after on February 22, 1865. Less than two months later, General Robert E. Lee had surrendered to General Grant at Appomattox Courthouse. Upon the capture of Wilmington, the city was put under command of General Joseph Hawley. An important moment to note is that, “Terry had no intention of seeing Wilmington put to the torch as Sherman had done to Atlanta, Columbia, and numerous smaller cities. Wilmington, with its shady streets, towering steeples, and graceful mansions, would be

³ Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 239.

spared.”⁴ While Wilmington was seemingly “taken” and under Union occupation, the city was not subjected to what Atlanta and Columbia were as General Sherman made his March to the Sea, suggesting that Wilmington was not nearly as bad off as some other occupied southern cities.

After the war had ended, the former Confederate States were placed under military control. North Carolina and Wilmington fell under Military District Two. During this period, the South was faced with another invasion, or “taking.” This “taking” is best described by Rembert W. Patrick when he wrote, “The people’s attitudes are more difficult to assess than the material factors of a revolutionary age. During the war a majority of Southerners had unbound faith in the righteousness of their cause and the support of their God. Defeat shattered illusions.... Reluctantly, most white Southerners accepted defeat. They clung, however, to imagined glories of the past - to their lost cause and their military heroes - they romanticized the Old South into an illusion.”⁵ These imagined glories of the lost cause would convince much of the white population across the South and North Carolina that the taking of their home was an affront to a justified cause.

North Carolina under Reconstruction offered the first look at not only the taking of a people and a state, but also the reaction to this taking. One of the biggest issues that the white population of Wilmington faced was the arrival of carpetbaggers and scalawags. Carpetbaggers were Northerners that moved down to the South after the end of the war, while scalawags were white Southerners loyal to the Union, who supported Reconstruction and the Republican Party. In North Carolina, both carpetbaggers and scalawags became a problem when Milton S. Littlefield

⁴ Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, 247.

⁵ Rembert W. Patrick, *The Reconstruction of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 10.

and George W. Swepson abused the state's railroad industry for nearly \$17,500,000 in bonds.⁶ This instance and others like it both terrified and infuriated white southerners as they saw Northern invaders and Southern traitors trying to cheat them from their money and property. North Carolina's white population would rise up against these perceived injustices with a violent backlash, the Ku Klux Klan.

The white population did attempt to retake the South with the terrorist group, the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan was formed in Pulaski, Tennessee by young, former-Confederates who had become, "bored with enforced inactivity."⁷ This group reputation expanded to other cities and states across the South. In each of these groups, the personality of the leader would largely become the personality of the group itself. J. Michael Martinez states, "While the Pulaski Klan was little more than a social club, the modified KKK promised to be something different. In a short time, it became an outlet for resisting Reconstruction through secret, armed disobedience."⁸ While some of the early KKK groups were purely social and nonviolent, the other groups did "target white Northern leaders, Southern sympathizers, and politically active blacks."⁹ In North Carolina, the KKK rose to power like the rest of the South, however the group stayed primarily in the countryside. Alamance, Caswell, Rutherford, Cleveland, Sampson, Lenoir, and Jones counties all experienced outbreaks of Klan violence, but Wilmington was not directly hit by the Klan. However, Wilmington's citizens, especially black citizens, could have easily been driven to Wilmington from these neighboring counties, specifically Sampson County. Both Lenoir and Jones County are in the same coastal area as Wilmington as well. With that being said,

⁶ Patrick, *The Reconstruction of the Nation*, 145.

⁷ J. Michael Martinez, *Carpetbaggers, Cavalry, and the Ku Klux Klan: Exposing the Invisible Empire during Reconstruction* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 8.

⁸ Martinez, *Carpetbaggers, Cavalry, and the Ku Klux Klan*, 16.

⁹ Martinez, *Carpetbaggers, Calvary, and Ku Klux Klan*, 24.

Wilmington was seemingly surrounded by Klan violence.¹⁰ The U.S. government stepped in to prevent further KKK action. With a series of actions on May 31, 1870, February 28, 1871, and April 20, 1871, the federal government reestablished the Fifteenth and Fourteenth Amendment, placed national elections under Federal jurisdiction, and imposed fines and prison sentences on anyone associated with the Klan. Across the South, “Almost 500 people were charged in Mississippi, more than 350 in North Carolina, and a smaller number in other states.”¹¹ These chargers were rarely what they seemed, as many became a part of the political game in this New South. Patrick states, “Arrests were made more to intimidate Conservative-Democrats and support Republicans than to punish the guilty; second, even with selected juries, it was difficult to place 12 men in the jury box who would render a verdict on the evidence presented... Trials held at Raleigh, Columbia, Charleston, Jacksonville, and Oxford attracted particular interest in the North and South, and many of the convicted Southerners served their relatively short terms in prison at Albany, New York.”¹² As the predecessors to the Red Shirts, the Klan shows a violent snapshot of the white population in the South. With the Klan seemingly suppressed by the Federal government, the Democrats understood that they needed to reestablish home rule in the South. Patrick writes, “Essential to the restoration of home rule was political control of Negro voters and elimination of white Republican leaders.”¹³

This statement by Patrick rings ever true in terms of the Wilmington Race Riot that would come twenty some years after the Force Bills or Ku Klux Klan Acts. The KKK was glorified by Thomas Dixon, who wrote the novel *The Clansman* in 1905. This book became a hit across the

¹⁰ William S. Powell, *Encyclopedia of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

¹¹ Patrick, *The Reconstruction of the Nation*, 157.

¹² Patrick, *The Reconstruction of the Nation*, 157.

¹³ Patrick, *The Reconstruction of the Nation*, 159.

South and showed a clearly romanticized and distorted version of the KKK. Thomas Dixon was not the most gifted writer, but he understood the mood among whites in the North and the South. He incorporated the idea of whites needing to retake the South, North Carolina, and Wilmington as he “wrote of a noble Southland where oppressed white families rose above the indignities of Reconstruction to defeat the immoral, tyrannical Powers That Be.”¹⁴

In 1870, North Carolina was restored to Democratic control like the rest of the South. The state did suffer through a brief conflict known as the Kirk-Holden War. Patrick writes, “In his attempt to destroy the Ku Klux Klan, (Governor William W.) Holden gave Colonel George W. Kirk extensive powers to arrest men suspected of violence. Kirk’s ruthless use of power and the excesses of his soldiers brought on the so-called Kirk-Holden war. Eventually the federal courts intervened to check Kirk and the Democrats won the legislature in 1870. It promptly impeached and removed Holden, thereby elevating Lieutenant Governor Todd R. Caldwell to the governorship. Although Caldwell was elected governor in 1872, the Republican organization remained powerful in North Carolina.”¹⁵ As Reconstruction came to a close, a few white businessmen in Wilmington amassed a large amount of wealth in the city with Democratic control of the city. However, even with Democratic control of the city, the population was still a majority Republican and black, forcing the Democrats to accommodate the demands of the population.¹⁶ Rembert W. Patrick writes, “Fifteen years after Appomattox, visitors reported the South crushed, wretched, and still licking its wounds... Mobile appeared to be a city of the past; Galveston’s population was declining; and Savannah, Wilmington, and New Bern were

¹⁴ Thomas Dixon, *The Clansman* (New York City: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1906).

¹⁵ Patrick, *The Reconstruction of the Nation*, 160.

¹⁶ North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission* (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, 2006), 30.

struggling to hold the status quo.”¹⁷ The loss of status quo is clearly a loss of control in the city as business and political control was lost by the Democrats by 1896.

By the close of the 19th century, Wilmington’s black population had already grown to the majority in the city, outnumbering the white population 11,000 to 8,500, and had grown prosperous, earning themselves both important businesses and political power, such as seats on the Board of Aldermen.¹⁸ This political and economic shift is the greatest example of what the leaders of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup called Negro Rule. Black aldermen indicated that even after Reconstruction ended, whites had not yet retaken Wilmington. Despite the racial violence by the Ku Klux Klan and the beginning of the Jim Crow Laws, “the early 1890’s appear to have been a period of marked political activity among the Negroes and of common effort by Negro and white against exploitation, second in our history only to the decade of Reconstruction.”¹⁹ With the development of the black culture in Wilmington came the cultivating of churches. Wilmington had several churches before the war, but after the war had ended black congregations split from these original churches and formed their own churches that would always be seen as a target for the violent factions that popped up in Wilmington before the Riot.²⁰

As Timothy B. Tyson wrote, Wilmington blacks had a higher literacy rate than the white population, but nevertheless black achievement was always fragile. As long as whites maintained real power, black achievement was allowed. Black economic gains also provoked whites who

¹⁷ Patrick, *The Reconstruction of the Nation*, 243-244.

¹⁸ *1898 Riot Commission*, 33.

¹⁹ Anna Rochester, *The Populist Movement in the United States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 60.

²⁰ *1898 Riot Commission*, 30.

competed with them, and wealthy whites encouraged conflict between poor whites and blacks.²¹ Patrick also wrote on the concept of the black literacy rate and education in North Carolina, suggesting that, “Even when the beloved redeemers saved southern civilization from “African barbarity” and reduced school appropriations, the ire of their constituents eventually forced more liberal support for public schools.”²² Black achievement was, in the eyes of the Riot and Coup Leaders, taking the most important power away from the white elite in Wilmington, economic and political power.

Fusion of the Republicans and Blacks: The Populist in North Carolina

Even after Reconstruction, black political participation remained vibrant in Wilmington and only grew in power with the Populist uprising. Nationally, the Populist Party was a third party in U.S. politics. The party formed out of a farmer’s alliance against banks, railroads, and monopolies. Across the country, the party leaders began to understand that the party would have to face racial issues. In the 1892 campaign cycle, Tom Watson, a leader in the Populist Party, grasped this fact as he mentioned that the vote was not the only subject at stake. He believed that black voters and the Populist Party faced a common enemy in the economic powers he felt were keeping them down.²³

In North Carolina, unlike other states, the Populist Party fused with the Republican Party and put forth a, “Fusion ticket, a combination of Populist and Republican interests.”²⁴ This partnership came about from a western North Carolina distrust of eastern and Democratic

²¹ Timothy B. Tyson, “The Ghosts of 1898,” *The News and Observer*, 2006, 4.

²² Patrick, *The Reconstruction of the Nation*, 237.

²³ Rochester, *The Populist Movement in the United States*, 59.

²⁴ H. Leon Prather, “The Red Shirt Movement in North Carolina 1898-1900,” *The Journal of Negro History* 62, no. 2 (April 1977): 174.

policies that the western farmers, in particular, felt catered to railroads and banks.²⁵ After the elections of 1890, the Farmer's Alliance in North Carolina was a hot topic for both the Democratic Party and Republicans. The Wilmington Riot Commission writes, "Because of the political power of the Alliance, Democratic Party leaders saw the need to incorporate many Alliance goals into their platform. Although the Democrats sought to add the farmers' suggestions to its bill of proposed reforms, none were ever fully addressed. As a result, a split developed within the Alliance, ending its effectiveness as an organization. The more radical members left the Democratic Party to form the Populist Party by the 1892 election. Members of the new Populist Party held that the Democratic Party's reforms were less than effective and that control of the state's affairs needed to be removed from the hands of bankers, big business, and attorneys." Thus, Republicans swept into the Populist Party and began to pull farmers away from the Democratic Party and reenergize the black vote.²⁶ This economic dissidence created the Fusionist Party and this terrified the Democratic Party. This terror was realized when the Republican and Populist Party tickets won every seat that they contested. Daniel Russell called the victory, "the most extraordinary political achievement of the period."²⁷ Democrats understood their only hope was to create issues that would cross party lines, creating a strategy of politics based strictly on race. With this issue, in terms of Democrats, Charles Aycock and Furnifold Simmons led the charge.

Charles Aycock was born in 1859 in Wayne County, North Carolina. Aycock became heavily involved in Democratic Party politics and he was elected Governor of North Carolina

²⁵ Timothy B. Tyson, "The Ghosts of 1898," 5.

²⁶ *1898 Riot Commission*, 36.

²⁷ *1898 Riot Commission*, 38.

from 1901 to 1905 as the first “education governor.”²⁸ While giving a speech in Laurinburg, North Carolina, the Democrats welcomed Aycock as their star speechmaker. Aycock stated, approvingly, Wilmington was, “the center of the white supremacy movement.”²⁹ Born in 1854, Furnifold Simmons was the Democratic Party Chairman from 1896 to 1900, after which the North Carolina Legislature appointed him until 1913 to the United States Senate for 30 years.³⁰ Simmons was the mastermind of the white supremacy in North Carolina.³¹ He is quoted as being, “a genius in putting everybody to work- men who could write, men who could speak, and men who could ride- the last by no means the least important.”³²

By the time the 1898 election had arrived, the Populist Party was not at full strength as they had been earlier. By 1896, while the Republican-Populist majority was an increasing majority in the legislature, most of those seats went to Republicans and the Populist’s numbers dropped slightly.³³ The Democrats used this Fusionist Party “problem” as the launch pad to racial violence. Democrats used the Fusionist Party takeover as a distraction from the powder keg of racism about to explode in Wilmington. That is not to say that the Democratic Party did not conceive the Fusionists as a problem, but the Democrats absolutely did push hard for race to be the focus of the elections and violence that erupted in the city was aimed at African-Americans, not towards Populists, generally. To consider the Fusionist Party as the main issue behind the Wilmington Race Riot is to play into the institutional memory created after the racial violence ended.

²⁸ Tyson, “The Ghosts of 1898,” 6.

²⁹ North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission* (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, 2006), 58.

³⁰ Tyson, “The Ghosts of 1898,” 6.

³¹ After 1913, Simmons won each reelection until his defeat in 1931.

³² Tyson, “The Ghosts of 1898,” 6.

³³ Rochester, *The Populist Movement in the United States*, 106.

Democratic and Fusionist Backlash

With the emergence of the Populist Party, Democrats launched a platform appealing to irrational passions, passions that came from the misconception that Blacks and Republicans had taken Wilmington from them. In order to appeal to these irrational passions, Democrats constantly used the newspapers and stump speeches to incite racial violence. As Timothy Tyson writes, “They cast any achievement or assertion by African-Americans as merely an effort to get close to white women.”³⁴ Josephus Daniels, the editor of the *News and Observer* in Raleigh, used Norman Jennett to create political cartoons depicting African-Americans. Tyson writes, “Jennett’s masterpiece was a depiction of a huge vampire bat with ‘Negro rule’ inscribed on its wings, and women beneath its claws, with the caption ‘The Vampire That Hovers over North Carolina.’ Other images included a large Negro foot with a white man pinned under it. The caption: ‘How Long Will This Last?’³⁵ In various stump speeches, Democrats accused blacks of being big, burly, brutes. In other newspaper accounts, Democrats reacted further against African-Americans in the state and Wilmington. In the Raleigh *News and Observer*, Daniels wrote, “The battle has been fought; the victory is within our reach. North Carolina is a white man’s state and white men will rule it, and they will crush the party of Negro domination beneath a majority so overwhelming that no other party will ever again dare to attempt to establish Negro rule here.”³⁶ In Wilmington, the *Morning Star* wrote, “The white men of Richmond County showed their

³⁴ Tyson, “The Ghosts of 1898,” 7.

³⁵ Tyson, “The Ghosts of 1898,” 7.

³⁶ “Chairman F.M. Simmons Issues a Patriotic and Able Address, Summing Up the Issues, and Appealing Eloquently to the White Voters to Redeem the State,” *News and Observer*, November 3, 1898.

determination to rid themselves of Negro rule by their grand rally today. A thousand men wearing red shirts gathered here from points as distant, Maxton, and Gibson and paraded for ten miles through the Negro precincts of the county. It was an object lesson, which will have its good effect upon the Negro, for it showed that the white men do not propose to longer endure the domination of the black race in this section.”³⁷ Each of these newspaper accounts addressed the conception of the “taken” city of Wilmington by “Negro Rule.” In response to the Democratic newspapers, the Populist Party newspapers continued to accuse the Democrats of an economic form of slavery. The *People’s Paper* wrote, “Money must rule. Intelligence, patriotism, virtue, religion - these are nothing. Corporations, trusts, combines - these be your gods, oh Israel. The poor struggling farmer raising his five cent cotton and striving in his humble way to serve as best he can his country and his God does not own the property and he must not rule - he must serve.”³⁸ As the newspapers battled and the racial tensions rose in Wilmington, a violent faction of the Democratic Party arrived, the Red Shirts.

Manly and Felton: Media Leads to Violence

Alex Manly was a mixed race descendent of former North Carolina Governor Charles Manly as well as being owner and editor of the only black newspaper in the state, *The Daily Record*. Manly’s editorial response to Rebecca Felton’s speech ignited the fire of riot in the city of Wilmington. Rebecca Felton was the wife of United States Congressman William Harrell Felton of Georgia. Felton was very politically active and would later become the first and only woman to serve as Senator from Georgia. Felton gave a speech in Georgia that called for the

³⁷ “White Men Show Determination to Rid Themselves of Negro Rule,” *The Morning Star*, Richmond County, November 2, 1898.

³⁸ “Those Who Own the Property Should Rule,” *The People’s Paper*, Charlotte, November 4, 1898.

lynching of black men who lusted after white women and were accused of rape. In an editorial published on August 1898, Manly responded by saying, “White women of poorer classes are not any more particular in the matter of clandestine meetings with colored men than are the white men with colored women.” Manly also responded by saying, “Every Negro lynched is called a ‘big, burly, black brute’ when in fact many of those who have thus been dealt with had white men for their fathers and were not only not ‘black’ and ‘burly’ but were sufficiently attractive for white girls of culture and refinement to fall in love with them as is very well known to all.”³⁹ Manly’s last response was perhaps the most damning for him to the white population in Wilmington. Manly called for the white population to teach purity and virtue. He went on to state that it was no worse for a black man to be with a white woman, than a white man be with a black woman.⁴⁰ After his response to Felton, Manly was threatened with lynching by the whites of Wilmington. Upon recognizing the threat to Manly’s life, armed black men surrounded *The Daily Record* to protect Alex Manly, but they were quickly dispersed by police before violence broke out.⁴¹

Red Shirts and White Government Unions

The Red Shirts present the first signs of a white uprising to take Wilmington back from the blacks and Populists-Republicans. Red Shirts were founded in Mississippi and South Carolina during Reconstruction and, by no coincidence, appeared where the black population was a majority and prospering in the 19th century, helping to achieve the final overthrow of Reconstruction by extremely violent means in both Mississippi and South Carolina. As Helen G.

³⁹ *1898 Riot Commission*, 39.

⁴⁰ *1898 Riot Commission*, 40.

⁴¹ Some, including the Chief of Police believed that the Democrats had put Manly up to the article or “he ought to be put in the asylum for crazy.” (1898 Riot Commission, Chapter 4.)

Edmonds writes, “The movement presumably had its origins in South Carolina where the Negro population exceeded the white, and at a time when Benjamin R. Tillman was ascending the crest of political popularity with his extreme anti-Negro attitude.”⁴² Tillman was a South Carolina governor and Senator born in 1847. He was born into the white elite of South Carolina, as before 1860 his family owned 86 slaves.⁴³ Tillman served in the Confederate army, but was inactive for two years due to a cranial-tumor that cost him his left eye. As Radical Republican Reconstruction begun in South Carolina, Tillman opposed it. After the passage of the Ku Klux Laws by Congress in 1871, Tillman joined a so-called rifle club known as the Sweetwater Saber Club. These rifle clubs were paramilitary organizations that would become the Red Shirts. In Tillman’s home of South Carolina, he used the Red Shirts to insure that Wade Hampton and Democrats won the 1876 gubernatorial election. Tillman played a predominant role in both the Hamburg and Ellenton massacres, earning a reputation among his district’s political elite.⁴⁴ In the Hamburg Massacre Francis Butler Simkins states, “Another savage incident was the execution of Simon Coker, the mulatto state senator from Barnwell, who was accused of making ‘a very incendiary speech.’ Captain Nat Butler, the one-armed brother of the general, selected two of Tillman’s men as executioners. The victim was shot as he was on his knees in prayer; one of Tillman’s men put another shot in the head of the prostrate form for fear the mulatto was

⁴² Helen G. Edmonds, *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003)148.

⁴³ Thirty of these slaves were African born and had been illegally smuggled into the state. Francis Butler Simkins, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman, South Carolinian*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1944), 30.; Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 16.

⁴⁴ “Benjamin Ryan Tillman,” Clemson University, accessed February 2, 2019, https://www.clemson.edu/about/history/bios/ben-tillman.html#_ftn5.

‘playing possum.’⁴⁵ Tillman’s Red Shirts, unlike the Ku Klux Klan, had absolutely no issues showing their face.

In North Carolina, the Red Shirts were rebuilt and began a new reign of terror. Tillman and the Red Shirts arrived in Fayetteville, North Carolina on October 21, 1898. H. Leon Prather writes, “When he appeared in Fayetteville, according to local papers, from 7,000 to 10,000 people stood in heavy rain to see the parade and hear him speak.”⁴⁶ Tillman’s speech in Fayetteville urged the white men of North Carolina to vote with Democrats, or as the *Semi-Weekly Messenger* wrote, “As Tillman said in his speech, the division of the whites under such circumstances is beyond comprehension to outsiders, But, as he also said, whatever the cause and whoever may be to blame, we are at the crossing of the stream, and it is the duty of the whites to rally to the only white man’s party in the field. The moment such a reunion is seen to have occurred, the race issue and the consequent tension will cease.”⁴⁷ Prather also spoke extensively on the parade that occupied Tillman’s speech. He wrote, “Such figures, no doubt, are an exaggeration, but it is safe to assume that the crowd was large and enthusiastic. The procession was led by over two hundred ‘Red Shirts,’ followed by a float drawn by four fine horses and occupied by twenty-two beautiful young ladies in white, representing the twenty-two precincts of Cumberland County. Next came the carriage containing Mayor Cook, County Chairman Huske, Major E. J. Hale and Senator Tillman.”⁴⁸ Tillman became known not only for his violent faction, but also for his violent speech against the African-American population across the South. Tillman, in reaction to Booker T. Washington being invited to the White

⁴⁵ Simkins, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman*, 66.

⁴⁶ Prather, *The Red Shirt Movement in North Carolina*, 175.

⁴⁷“What North Carolina Editors Are Saying,” *Semi-Weekly Messenger*, Wilmington, N.C., November 8, 1898.

⁴⁸ Prather, *The Red Shirt Movement in North Carolina*, 175.

House, stated, “the action of President Roosevelt in entertaining that n----- will necessitate our killing a thousand n-----s in the South before they learn their place again.”⁴⁹ All of these instances of Tillman’s Red Shirts perpetrating violence shows the powder keg that was bound to explode in Wilmington with a violent faction like the Red Shirts being present.

With Red Shirts in North Carolina, violence quickly broke out. The Red Shirts intimidated and attacked black citizens and Republicans in Wilmington as well as patrolled the streets of Wilmington every night upon their arrival.⁵⁰ In reaction to this terrorist organization invading the state, Governor Daniel Russell issued a statement proclaiming, “I do further command and enjoin it upon all good and law abiding citizens not to allow themselves to become excited by any appeals that may be made to their passions and prejudices by the representatives of any political party whatsoever; but to keep cool heads, and use their good offices to preserve the public peace and to protect every, humblest citizen in all his rights, political, and personal.”⁵¹ The Red Shirts completely ignored this and marched into Wilmington on November 3, 1898. They were accompanied with a parade through town as the already growing unrest in the city was expanded.⁵² In response to Russell’s statement and a brief cabinet meeting held by President William McKinley to decide if he could send federal troops into Wilmington, *The News and Observer* printed, “Of course, the President has no power to send Federal troops into the State until the Governor has made requisition for them and shows that he is unable to handle the situation with the forces at his command, and again, Governor Russell could not call for Federal troops until the supposed rioting had actually occurred and he was able to show that he had

⁴⁹ Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 259.

⁵⁰ Tyson, “The Ghost of 1898,” 7.

⁵¹ Raleigh, “Statement by Governor Russell,” *The Caucasian*, October 27, 1898.

⁵² Prather, *The Red Shirt Movement in North Carolina*, 179.

exhausted all the efforts of the State to suppress it. Then, too, the President could not send in troops unless the United States mails were interfered with.”⁵³

As Fort Fisher fell and Wilmington was subject to federal occupation the stage was set for a Riot and Coup that would explode in Wilmington on November 10, 1898. In the aftermath of Civil War, Wilmington’s white elite made decisions to attempt to retake a city that they felt was viciously taken from them by Northern invaders and Southern traitors, who turned the black population against them. The fall of Fort Fisher and the Confederacy, Wilmington’s time under Reconstruction, and the emergence of the Populist Party, allowed the “taking” of Wilmington by both the North and the blacks. With the rise of the Red Shirts, white Wilmington residents were ready to explode with a violent and deadly cost to the prospering black population of the city.

⁵³ Prather, *The Red Shirt Movement in North Carolina*, 177.

CHAPTER 2

TAKING BACK THE PORT CITY: THE ELECTION OF 1898, RACE RIOT, AND COUP D'ÉTAT

On November 10, 1898, fire and smoke filled the Wilmington, North Carolina, sky as the *Daily Record* building was engulfed in flames. As this fire was extinguished, another fire burned across the city where seventy some African-Americans were shot dead on the streets by a white mob. Wilmington fell as the city was retaken by the white elite and Democratic control was reestablished in the city. The Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état are demonstrations of how Wilmington and North Carolina were taken back from Fusionists-black control, whether that taking was a mere perception or not. To begin, election day was the first step in a series of actions that would become known as one of the successful coup d'état in United States history.

First Step to Losing a City: Election Day of 1898

On Election Day, November 9, 1898, peace was maintained as bars were closed by the Wilmington Board of Aldermen and the vigilance committee patrolled the city streets. Red Shirts prevented black citizens from voting and the Democratic Party claimed victory in the county elections. These Democratic gains were largely orchestrated before the election. Wilmington Democrats understood that if the Republicans were allowed to run black candidates, the Democratic Party would lose. Therefore, Democratic Party leaders, namely William Chadbourn and Flavel Foster, urged Republicans not to place candidates on the ballot. Governor Russell met with James Sprunt, owner of a cotton compress in the city, in order to come to a compromise. Russell convinced the Democratic Party to remove some candidates that were too far to the extreme and replace them with more moderate candidates. George Z. French, leader of the Republican Party in Wilmington, agreed to remove the Republican ticket from the ballot after

pressure was put on him by Democratic leaders and Governor Russell.¹ On Election Day, paramilitary groups, such as the White Government Unions and Red Shirts, roamed around the city and patrolled polling places. The White Government Unions and Red Shirts were largely instructed by their commanders to not look the white voters in the face even if they knew their name and that they were voting as another person.² Red Shirt leader Mike Dowling later stated that they were tasked with getting Republican vote counters drunk and invading a Republican majority precinct to replace Republican votes.³ Governor Russell had returned to Wilmington to cast his own vote and had boarded a train to the city. Walker Taylor and E.W. Sawyer accompanied Russell in his voting and on the train ride. While on this train ride, Russell's train was boarded by Red Shirts twice. On one of these boardings, future Governor of North Carolina Cameron Morrison, who has a residence hall at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill named after him, led the Red Shirts but warned Russell of the boarding and hid him away as men up the train were planning on lynching him.⁴ Democrats won in Wilmington by close to 6,000 votes and a quiet relief fell on the city's poor white population. Jane Cronly wrote, "I awoke that morning with thankful heart that the election had passed without the shedding of the blood of either innocent or the guilty."⁵ Her optimism would quickly be dashed the next day.

On the night of the elections, Hugh MacRae and the Secret Nine created the Committee of 25, who gathered at Thalian Hall and selected Alfred Moore Waddell as chairman. Waddell and the Committee created the White Man's Declaration of Independence, which was presented

¹ North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*. Final Report May 31, 2006. Accessed February 3, 2019, <http://history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/report.htm>.

² *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 108.

³ *Union Republican*, Winston Salem. March 15, 1900.

⁴ *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 108.

⁵ Timothy B. Tyson, "The Ghosts of 1898," *The News and Observer*, 2006, 9.

by Hugh MacRae at the meeting.⁶ This document began by stating that the Framers had never anticipated for black people to participate in government. Furthermore, “We, the undersigned citizens of the City of Wilmington and County of New Hanover, do hereby declare that we will no longer be ruled, and will never again be ruled by men of African origin. This condition we have in part endured because we felt that the consequences of the War of Secession were such as to deprive us of the fair consideration of many of our countrymen. We believe that, after more than thirty years, this is no longer the case.”⁷ In this Declaration was a call for Alex Manly to leave town, the *Daily Record* to be destroyed, and the removal of the mayor, chief of police, and the Board of Aldermen.⁸ Waddell and the Committee of 25 then met to select who they perceived were the leaders of the black community and formed the Committee of Colored Citizens (CCC). Waddell demanded that the CCC meet them at 6:00 P.M. that night. This meeting was controlled by the white Committee of 25, who presented the Declaration as an ultimatum.⁹ The CCC wrote a response and an attempt was made to deliver the letter, but armed white patrols prevented the young black man from delivering the response to Waddell. With this ultimatum given to the CCC, the Secret Nine decided to move on overthrowing the local government with this distraction.¹⁰

Wilmington Fills with Smoke and Fire: The Daily Record is Burned Down

After meeting with the Committee of Colored Citizens, Waddell spent the night in his home waiting for their reply. Wilmington was full of both state militia and other factions, some

⁶ 1898 *Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 114.

⁷ Committee of Twenty-Five, *White Declaration of Independence*, Greenville: East Carolina University, 1898.

⁸ 1898 *Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 115.

⁹ 1898 *Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 116.

¹⁰ 1898 *Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 118.

violent. Governor Russell had called up the 2nd North Carolina Volunteer Infantry to fight in the Spanish-American War, but they had been sent home on furlough. Captain Donald MacRae was concerned over the return of his troops to an already tense atmosphere. MacRae warned Captain James of the Wilmington Light Infantry that, “in as delicate as way as possible that it would advisable to ‘water’ any stimulants which may be provided for the boys.”¹¹ The addition of these troops with the already tense city only created a more combustible atmosphere. Upon not receiving a response by the CCC, Waddell left his home at 8:00 A.M. and proceeded to the Wilmington Light Infantry (WLI) Armory where he was met by around 500 men, ready to destroy the press at the *Daily Record*. Waddell then led the group along with Mike Dowling, F.H. Fechtig, W.C. Galloway, A.B. Skelding, and E.S. Lathrop.¹² As the men marched away, Walker Taylor, leader of the WLI, sent a telegram to Governor Russell, calling the situation serious and stating that his Infantry awaited commands.¹³ Waddell’s mob marched east on Market and turned onto Seventh Street into the *Daily Record* office and destroyed the press while looking for Alex Manly, who had published his infamous article a few months before this.¹⁴ Shortly after the press was destroyed fire broke out accidentally when kerosene lamps were knocked over by the mob. Black firefighters were called to put out the fire but were stopped by W.T. Savage on orders of the Fire Chief in order to make sure that the building was destroyed. Upon their arrival, the firefighters were met with shouts and insults, although Harry Hayden

¹¹ North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, Final Report May 31, 2006, <http://history.ncdcr.gov/1898-wrrc/report/report.htm>. 123.

¹² *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 125.

¹³ Taylor understood that the WLI could not participate in the march, although they were asked.

¹⁴ *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 126.

claimed that he had never seen more heroism in men before.¹⁵ With the building destroyed and Manly out of the city, Waddell led the mob back to the WLI building and attempted to disperse the violence, stating that the men had performed their duty and should stand ready in case something were to break out again, but his words fell on deaf ears.

Hell Broke Loose: Violent Mob Invades Brooklyn

Waddell's mob began their trek home and came upon the cotton compress of James Sprunt on Front Street and between Walnut and Red Cross Street. Armed white men walking back from the burning of the *Daily Record* met the several hundred black workers who had just been informed that whites were lighting fires and firing weapons.¹⁶ Sprunt attempted to keep his workers from leaving the plant and was quickly joined by Roger Moore, George Rountree, and Junius Davis to convince the men to stay. The armed white men stood across the street and threatened that if Roger Moore did not maintain control of the workers and order shots to be fired into the crowd, they would be forced to do so. Moore responded that he was appointed to command citizens in this area and while he was in charge there would be no bloodshed.¹⁷ George Rountree demanded that the rapid fire gun be brought to the compress to intimidate people into peacefulness.¹⁸ Sprunt and others offered to walk the men home, but most ended up being escorted by armed white men. Many of these men would be escorted into the eye of the storm in the mixed neighborhood of Brooklyn.

Violence erupted when these workers and other residents of Brooklyn returned to their homes. Groups of black and white citizens stood across the street from one another and shouted

¹⁵ Harry Hayden. *The Story of the Wilmington Rebellion* (Wilmington: *Wilmington Morning Star*. 1936.) 15.

¹⁶ *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 131.

¹⁷ *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 131.

¹⁸ *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 132.

back and forth at each other. This group of black citizens moved down the street to W.A. Walker's Store while the white citizens moved closer to St. Matthew's English Lutheran Church. Several conflicting reports claimed that either side fired first. George Rountree later filed an affidavit for William McAllister that stated, "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."¹⁹ Other reports such as those given by the black citizens claimed that whites had shot first. This claim seems to be more likely since whites had been stockpiling weapons and detectives had found that the black citizens were not gathering weapons. No matter who fired first, the point was clear that the black citizens could not and did not match the firepower of the whites. The men that were not killed or injured ran west on Harnett Street to escape the violence. Hayden recounts that some claimed that a black citizen was killed and thrown into the Cape Fear River, a theme that is still repeated today.²⁰ William Mayo, a white citizen, was injured. Mayo's wounding rallied the armed whites to kill any black person they saw. Daniel Wright, a black man, was accused of shooting him. Wright was hunted down at his house, his house was set on fire and he was forced out. Wright was brought to the center of the riot and hit with a gas pipe. Lynching threats were made by the mob, but Wright was given a chance to run for his life. He made it about 50 yards and was shot by about 40 guns. Wright was rushed to the hospital where doctors described that they had never seen anyone with so many gunshots remain alive for so long. He lived for about two days, but later died.²¹ Hugh MacRae then moved to control the rioting white citizens and to keep his brother, Captain Donald

¹⁹ Charles Gallagher and Cameron D. Lippard. "Race and Racism in the United States: An Encyclopedia of the American Mosaic." Santa Barbara: Greenwood Printing. 2014.

²⁰ Hayden, *The Story of the Wilmington Rebellion*, 17.

²¹ *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 137-138.

MacRae, from assuming control since he was still a federal officer.²² Roger Moore and Walker Taylor had anticipated the violence and positioned contacts throughout the city to notify them if violence did come. The contact at Fourth and Harnett was Bernice Moore. J. Allan Taylor, a member of the Secret Nine, instructed Bernice Moore to ring the riot alarm and alert the WLI which quickly began to move into Brooklyn.²³

Once Governor Russell granted Walker Taylor control over Captain T. C. James he moved the infantry into Brooklyn. Commander George Morton of the Naval Reserves stationed in the city prior to the outbreak of violence also attempted to take control, but could not find the Mayor or a police officer until he found Deputy Sheriff G. Z. French. French, probably under duress, told Commander Morton to, “use all force at your disposal to quell the existing violation of the peace in this city.”²⁴ Morton’s men would later fall under the command of Captain T. C. James and would march into Brooklyn with a Hotchkiss rapid-fire gun. Captain James stated to the men, “Now boys I want to tell you right now I want you to load and when I give the command to shoot, I want you to shoot to kill.”²⁵ Several other groups were also on standby to move into action, namely the Red Shirts. Once the alarm was sounded these groups quickly moved into areas of violence. Perhaps the most intimidating component of the WLI was the rapid-firing Colt machine gun capable of firing .23 caliber rounds at 420 per minute.²⁶ Captain William R. Kenan, for whom UNC Chapel Hill’s football stadium is named, commanded the squad across the 4th Street Bridge. Captain Kenan’s squad killed around 25 black men at the

²² Hayden, *The Story of the Wilmington Rebellion*, 17.

²³ *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 136.

²⁴ *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 137.

²⁵ *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 142.

²⁶ Prior to the outbreak of the Riot, local businessmen had purchased the gun as an intimidation force which they paraded to the black community on November 1.

intersection of Sixth and Brunswick Street.²⁷ Attorney William Henderson claimed later that the machine gun had targeted one home where 3 more black citizens were killed.²⁸ Rumors that had circled around the city before the riot held that the local black churches were being used as arsenals. Due to this, the machine gun squads would intimidate the churches and force them to comply with searches.²⁹ The WLI and machine gun squads also completely destroyed a fence after the squad abandoned the gun and chased a black man, leaving one person on the gun who in turn opened fire destroying the ten foot tall fence.³⁰ Josh Halsey was suspected of firing at the WLI in the Manhattan Park Area, was chased down and shot down near his home. William Robbins later testified that he was ordered to shoot Halsey, but when he refused he was told not to show any fear or he would be shot. Josh Halsey was then shot.³¹ After the machine guns had intimidated the black citizens, sporadic gun fire erupted out of the city, but the violence had largely passed. With the city settling back down to a quite tension, the Secret Nine put its plan for a coup d'état into action.

Coup from Violence: Overthrowing the Wilmington Local Government

As the violence was taking place across the city, control of the Wilmington city government still remained in the hands of the Fusion Party, a fact that would not change until the following year. Democrats would not accept this wait and began to put the second part of the plan to retake the city with the removal of these Fusionist government officials.³² The Coup followed this violence, as George Rountree took charge of convincing the Fusionists to resign or

²⁷ *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 144.

²⁸ *Indianapolis Freeman*, Indianapolis. December 3, 1898.

²⁹ *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 146.

³⁰ *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 149.

³¹ *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 149.

³² *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 122.

leave town, a task that was almost certain with the violence in the streets. At a meeting of the Committee for Twenty-Five, Rountree assured the group that he would have the resignation of the Mayor and Board of Alderman on the grounds that the group select a new government.³³

John D. Bellamy was also an influential member of the group that met in the morning of November 10, 1898. Bellamy had recently been elected U.S. Representative for North Carolina and was one of the richest men in the city. He passed on information that members of the Board of Aldermen, Mayor Silas P. Wright and Chief of Police Melton were prepared to resign as well.³⁴

By 4:00 p.m. each member of the board had resigned their posts and voted in the members of the Committee of Twenty-Five until the time came for Mayor Wright to resign. Wright resigned claiming that the businessmen of the city were unhappy with his performance and he agreed to resign. C. H. Ganzier, J. W. Kramer, William H. Sprunt, Hugh MacRae, J. Allan Taylor, Charles W. Worth, Preston L. Bridges, B. Frank King, and A. B. Skelding were selected as the new Board of Alderman for the city. The Board was sprinkled with members of the Committee of Nine as well as Group of Six. Edgar Parmele replaced Melton as Chief of Police. Melton would later claim that at least 100 to 200 armed men stood in the city hall as an intimidation force. To cap off the Coup D'état Alfred Moore Waddell was selected as the new Mayor by his new Board of Aldermen. Waddell then released a statement to the country stating the legality of his electoral victory, "As to the government we have established, it is a perfectly

³³ *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 122.

³⁴ Timothy B. Tyson, "The Ghosts of 1898," *The News and Observer*, 2006.

legal one.”³⁵ With this “election” the leaders of the Riot and Coup moved to remove the leaders of the black community.

In the following days, Waddell and his Board of Alderman moved on the members of the black community, specifically the members of the Committee of Colored Citizens. Leading this banishment charge was J. Allan Taylor.³⁶ Taylor took his small army to commit this second expelling after the removal of the Board and Mayor. The leaders of the coup were shocked as this second banishment was largely out of their control as personal vendettas were served by Taylor and his crew against men such as Thomas Miller who was owed money from several white citizens of Wilmington.³⁷ Hundreds of black citizens were scared and forced into the swamps surrounding the city. Thomas Miller was one of those removed from the city in the following days because as Timothy Tyson writes he was, “one negro that we could not make keep quiet and he talked and talked until Ed McKoy’s gun went click click and when we told him to shut up, he kept a little quieter.”³⁸ Roger Moore is one of the few examples of a white Wilmington citizen standing up against the mob, albeit momentary. Many believed during the riot and coup that Moore was the only one that could control the mob. When Moore was called on to prevent a lynching at the local jail he blocked the jail door for twelve hours, daring anyone to attack those inside. Moore’s wife would later claim, after his death, that Roger Moore and J.

³⁵ Alfred M. Waddell. “*The Story of the Wilmington, NC Race Riots*,” *Collier’s Weekly*, 26 November 1898.

³⁶ Jerome A. McDuffie. “*Politics in Wilmington and New Hanover County, North Carolina, 1865-1900: The Genesis of a Race Riot*,” Kent: Kent State University, 1979. 719-720.

³⁷ *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission*, 155.

³⁸ Tyson, “The Ghosts of 1898,” 11.

E. Matthews were the real leaders of the “revolution of 1898,” however this is unlikely, as no other sources credit Moore and Matthews as the leaders.³⁹

President McKinley received a telegram from Thomas Settle on November 10th informing him of the riot. After receiving word from Settle, McKinley held a cabinet meeting to discuss the riot. The only information McKinley received about the riots came from newspaper accounts. McKinley refused to send aid without an official request from Governor Russell. McKinley did receive letters from fearful blacks in Wilmington. One of those citizens wrote, “I call on you the head of the American Nation to help these humble subjects. We are loyal we go when duty calls us. And are we to die like rats in a trap? With no place to seek redress or to go with our Grievances?”⁴⁰ While McKinley’s government failed to react, thousands of men, women, and children were forced into the swamps of Wilmington with night temperatures dropping to below freezing or as the *Messenger* reported, “sufficiently cool to cause suffering.”⁴¹

Riot in the News: Reaction to the Violence

Reaction to the riot and coup took on many forms, as both blacks and whites were left with the aftermath. A Black minister at the African-American Central Baptist Church named Reverend Kirk J. Allen called for ministers around Wilmington to answer for their inability to act. Allen said, “It was clamored among the political campaigners that in the eastern portion of North Carolina, the white people were under Negro rule. They took advantage of this scarecrow, and held it up before the white friends of the Negro in all their political speeches, using also the

³⁹ Susan Eugenia Beery Moore, *Susan Moore to The Wilmington Messenger*, undated, Letter, Series: MS130, William Madison Randall Library, Roger Moore Papers.

⁴⁰ *Learn NC*. “Letter from an African American citizen of Wilmington to the President.” University of North Carolina. November, 13, 1898.

⁴¹ *1898 Race Riot Commission*. Chapter 5. 151.

Manly article to create anger among the loyal and conservative white citizens.”⁴² Other black reactions were largely silenced or non-existent due to the fear of backlash. However, white reaction was quite outspoken. Newspapers like the *News and Observer*, *Semi-Weekly Messenger*, and the *Morning Star* praised the riot and when a parade was held in Raleigh in celebration of the “victory” the *Morning Star* called it, “a formidable demonstration of the resources for the maintenance of order.”⁴³ The *Semi-Weekly Messenger* reported that, “During the riot and the succeeding twenty-four hours self-constituted committees overhauled a number of objectionable Negroes and some of the white republican leaders and gave them the choice of leaving the city or taking the consequences. In several instances summary violence was only prevented by cooler citizens. About a dozen Negroes who incited the Negroes to violence or had evil influence were ‘banished,’ a term used by the Rough Riders, as the regulators style themselves.”⁴⁴ These reactions as well as countless others show the positive reaction to the violence by white people and how the North Carolina newspaper propaganda had completely bought into the idea of “negro rule” needing to be overthrown, whether it was true or not.

Reaction to the riot and coup d’état ranged from North Carolina to New York. In the *Goldsboro Weekly Argus*, the riot was described as resulting in the death of nine black men and injuries to two white men. The paper also describes that after word was received by the governor, he sent about five hundred men, but they were turned away.⁴⁵ The *Gold Leaf* in Henderson, North Carolina also reacted to the riot and coup. They wrote, “Those in office saw that the

⁴² Kirk J. Allen. “*A Statement of Facts Concerning the Bloody Riot in Wilmington, N.C.*” Documenting the American South. University of North Carolina. 2002.

⁴³ Tyson, “The Ghost of 1898,” 12.

⁴⁴ “Why Certain Persons Were Made to Leave the City-The Manner of their Expulsion.” *The Semi-Weekly Messenger*. November 15, 1898.

⁴⁵ “Race Conflict: Nine Negroes Killed and Two White Men Wounded.” *Goldsboro Weekly Argus*. November 17, 1898.

forbearance of the white people was at an end; and so they gave up their places to more competent men. Meanwhile troops from Maxton, Kinston, Clinton and other places had been ordered by the Governor to repair to Wilmington to help preserve the peace.”⁴⁶ By calling the government officials, who were duly elected and removed by a violent mob, incompetent it follows the same reaction as Alfred Moore Waddell. Reports from *The Sun* in New York City also played into Waddell’s narrative by claiming that peace and order had to be reinstated by the Wilmington elite. The Sun wrote, “Peace and order have been restored, and five hundred special policemen, many mounted and on bicycles are patrolling the streets. About five hundred armed citizens and militia from Fayetteville, Kingston, Goldsboro and elsewhere are here to help maintain order.”⁴⁷ About a month later, *The Sun* also wrote that after the riot was over and Manly had escaped to New York City there was a meeting. *The Sun* wrote, “There are about 700 or 1,000 colored citizens in the Greater New York whose homes were formerly in North Carolina, and many of these have declared their determination to support the paper. At a meeting of the Society of the Sons of North Carolina, held in Brooklyn on last Sunday evening, Mr. Manly spoke on ‘The Press Today,’ and it is said it was then that it was decided definitely to start a paper in New York.”⁴⁸

One last reaction that offers an important insight into the reaction of the rest of the country to the Riot is the scrapbook of newspaper articles by Alex Manly. In one instance the *New York Journal* wrote, “A negro about forty-seven years of age, giving the name of George

⁴⁶ “Revolution in Wilmington: Determined Action of Citizens and Tax Payers.” *The Gold Leaf*. November 17, 1898.

⁴⁷ “Mob Law Rules a City: New Government in Wilmington, N.C.; Six Negroes Killed.” *The Sun*. November 11, 1898.

⁴⁸ “Manly to Start a Paper Here: To be Called the Record and to Publish the Doings of Afro-Americans.” *The Sun*. December 8, 1898.

W. Brown, who arrived here today from Wilmington, N.C. via New Bern and Elizabeth City, was attacked and badly beaten near the Norfolk Post Office by several young men, who took him to be Manly, the negro editor who was driven out of Wilmington Thursday.”⁴⁹ This account, kept by Manly, shows the violent reaction that his mere rumored presence could cause. Alex Manly did not speak out about the Riot itself, but did speak on his editorial. “Mr. Manly still retains a cautious reticence, and refuses to talk about the Wilmington trouble. He says the editorial of August 18, as given in the Record, contained a full and complete refutation, not only of Mrs. Felton’s speech, which called it forth, but also the communication over her signature, published today. He asserts that Mrs. Felton makes statements which she cannot prove by facts or figures, any more than he can prove that crime is on the increase in New Jersey.”⁵⁰ Manly’s collection of only newspapers shows his mindset while escaping and how the riot was seen across the country.

With the outbreak of the riot and coup d’état the overthrow of the Wilmington local government was complete. Wilmington’s population had flipped to a majority white and thousands of black citizens were forced out of the city. As the city settled back to a quiet peace North Carolina was controlled by the Democratic Party who used this control to disenfranchise African-Americans and created an institutional memory of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup.

⁴⁹ “Norfolk to Send Negro to New York.” *New York Journal*, November 11, 1898, <https://www.capefearmuseum.com/exhibits/manly-scrapbook/>.

⁵⁰ “Manly Defends His Race.” New Jersey: N/A. <https://www.capefearmuseum.com/exhibits/manly-scrapbook/>.

CHAPTER 3

INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY: AFTERMATH OF THE WILMINGTON RACE RIOT OF 1898

The Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état of 1898 created a smoldering fire that continues to burn, through institutional memory, in Wilmington. The Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état of 1898 have been institutionalized as memory through various means and this institutional memory has left major issues in the city of Wilmington and the state of North Carolina. This institutional memory has been created by elections, fictional writings, speeches, and the naming of parks and building names. In recent years, this institutional memory has been challenged and could, should, continue to be challenged by the city, state, and historians. After the city of Wilmington had fallen to a quiet submission, the State of North Carolina began its formation of an institutional memory.

Disenfranchisement: A North Carolina State Institution

After the end of the banishment campaign in Wilmington, the state of North Carolina was still left with a black voting population that could easily negate everything done by Waddell and others in Wilmington. To prevent this, George Rountree proposed an amendment to the state constitution, which would establish literacy tests and poll taxes on potential voters. Ironically, the black population of Wilmington still had a higher literacy rate than the white population. This literacy issue offered a huge problem for the white elite of Wilmington, who in turn conceived the Grandfather Clause to allow poor illiterate whites to vote.¹ In order to maintain the poor white vote for the Democratic Party in North Carolina, Rountree introduced the Grandfather

¹ Timothy B. Tyson, "The Ghosts of 1898," *The News and Observer*, 2006, 12.

Clause. This clause protected these illiterate, poor whites by establishing if a lineal descendent of a man was eligible to vote before 1867, then that man did not have to take the literacy tests.² These literacy taxes were also, generally, not applied to all people as they were meant to be. This change in racial codes is not to say that Jim Crow Laws did not exist before the Riot and Coup occurred, but these violent events allowed them to be enforced to a great extent, especially in Wilmington. These changes to the state constitution also had consequences in voter turnout. “In 1896, 85.4 percent of North Carolina’s electorate had cast a ballot. By 1904, less than 50 percent would vote.”³ Timothy B. Tyson wrote, “It was nothing less than a counter-revolution against interracial democracy, and it reverberated far beyond the state” has described this consequence and others.⁴ A counter-revolution that Tyson describes was memorialized by the State as a method to disenfranchise the black population of North Carolina. The memory continues further into fictional writing, primarily to Charles Chesnutt’s *Marrow of Tradition* and Thomas Dixon’s *Leopard’s Spots*.

Wilmington’s Fictional Memory: Chesnutt and Dixon

Charles Chesnutt’s *Marrow of Tradition* is perhaps one of the two most famous fictional accounts of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D’état of 1898. Charles Chesnutt was born in 1858 in Cleveland, Ohio, the son of two free blacks from Fayetteville, North Carolina. He was trained as a lawyer and supported his family as such, but he aspired to support them with his writing, but his work did not receive large critical acclaim, including his work on Wilmington.⁵

Chesnutt combines information from the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and other acts of

² Tyson, “Ghosts of 1898,” 12.

³ Tyson, “Ghosts of 1898,” 12.

⁴ Tyson, “Ghosts of 1898,” 12.

⁵ William L. Andrews, “*Charles W. Chesnutt*” (Documenting the American South: Chapel Hill, 1989).

violence across the South. Chesnutt focuses on the riot through the plot crafted by Major Carteret, General Belmont, and Captain George McBane who decided to seize control of the city of Wellington, a fictionalized version of Wilmington, through force.⁶ Chesnutt takes on not only the racial issues of the riot and coup, but also the class system undertones echoed through his characters of Dr. Miller and Josh Green, both African-American, but one seeking revenge, while the other helps the main protagonist of the novel Major Carteret.⁷ Chesnutt holds these men to blame for inciting the violence, but also supports Alfred Moore Waddell's statement that the lower classes rose up against the black community of Wilmington.⁸

Chesnutt anticipated that *Marrow of Tradition* would become the next *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but reception of Chesnutt's work was largely negative.⁹ The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* called the novel, "uncharacteristic of the South, thereby creating a false perspective when regarding from the viewpoint of real life." Another review of the novel came from Katherine Glover in the *Atlanta Journal*. She called the novel a, "silly riot, criticizing the characterization of every African American as virtuous and every white as villainous."¹⁰ Jae H. Roe has perhaps the best observation of what Chesnutt attempts to do with his work here. Roe states, "What *the Marrow of Tradition* illuminates is how the dominant class has always sought to perpetuate and manipulate working-class racism, and how alive and deep the old wound is, how relevant the tragedies it sowed remain today as it sows yet others. If the urgency expressed in the novel's last line, which states "There's time enough, but none to spare," reflects the urgency and passion of

⁶ North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission* (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, 2006), 420-421.

⁷ Charles W. Chesnutt, *Marrow of Tradition*.

⁸ 1898 Riot Commission, 422.

⁹ Matthew Wilson, *Whiteness in the Novels of Charles W. Chesnutt* (Oxford, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2004), 100.

¹⁰ 1898 Riot Commission, 423.

the South's fierce holding on to vestiges of a more secure past it also reflects the urgent need-then as now- for collective resistance."¹¹ Charles Chesnutt, however, failed to reach out to the imagination of his readers and therefore Alfred Moore Waddell's narrative continued to create the memory of the Race Riot and Coup.¹²

Thomas Dixon was the next author to make his take on the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état. Dixon was born on January 11, 1864 and raised in North Carolina. He was a Baptist minister, who, like others, carried his message to the North. In his sermons, Dixon constantly referred to the Spanish-American War in reference to the United States in international affairs. Race was a reoccurring theme in those sermons.¹³ Dixon wrote his book *the Leopard's Spots* as a strong defense of the Wilmington elite, calling the violence a revolution against "Negro Rule." The best example of Dixon's view on the violence is a letter he wrote to Alfred Moore Waddell's widow. In this letter, Dixon told Gabrielle Derosset Waddell that he (Dixon) was thankful for the former mayor and admired him very much. He also wrote assurance that the work that Mr. Waddell and the other Wilmington "Revolutionist" had performed was of the utmost importance to the "preservation of our civilization."¹⁴ Dixon's writing helped create a new narrative for the collective memory of the riot. Dixon repositioned the violence from primarily about the lower class rising up against the black community to a moment of revolt against a Northern and black invasion. His book reinterpreted the defeat of the Fusion government and the violence itself as an "essential part of the sectional reunion and national progress. The Civil War, Radical Reconstruction, and Fusion politics were uncharacteristic

¹¹ Jae H. Roe, "Keeping an "Old Wound" Alive: The Marrow of Tradition and the Legacy of Wilmington," *African American Review* 33, no. 2 (Summer, 1999): 242.

¹² 1898 Race Riot Commission, 423.

¹³ 1898 Race Riot Commission, Appendix M, 423.

¹⁴ 1898 Race Riot Commission, Appendix M, 424.

periods in Southern history, and whites resorted to whatever means necessary to restore the traditional racial order.¹⁵ Dixon's *Leopards Spot* claimed the riot as a return to normalcy or a retaking of the city. Dixon's writing became and still is in some cases the dominate, institutionalized memory of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état of 1898.¹⁶ Dixon's and Chesnut's writing, while vastly important to the institutional memory, does not include an important aspect of the Race Riot and that is the memory of the black community.

Black Memory of the Riot

Black memory of the Riot in 1898 presents a set of difficult issues. One of the most important issues with this is that black reaction to the violence in Wilmington was either ignored or suppressed, except in a few instances. This black memory is therefore not as extensive as the white memory and has not been allowed to make the type of impact it could have made on the institutional memory until recently. Even with these roadblocks, a black memory of the Wilmington Race Riot can still be identified. Black memory can be identified through newspapers outside Wilmington, letters from citizens removed from Wilmington, and writings from black leaders, such as W.E.B. Du Bois.

In the immediate aftermath of the riot and coup, several prominent black citizens were removed by the white mob from Wilmington. These people wrote letters to President William McKinley explaining the riot and coup and asking for aid. An important characteristic of the letters is the fact that many of them are not signed, remaining anonymous. One letter writes, "As you would protect our citizens in foreign lands so prove to them that you will protect them here

¹⁵ 1898 Race Riot Commission, Appendix M, 425.

¹⁶ 1898 Race Riot Commission, Appendix M, 425.

in their own homes. One who is even afraid to sign his name.”¹⁷ A second characteristic of the letters to McKinley is the variety of places the letters come from. This variety comes primarily from the fact that hundreds of people were forced out of the city. The other reason comes from the fact that the riot and coup had clearly made national news. Each of these characteristics show the black memory of Wilmington. The memory created is that of fear. The fact that multiple writers feared putting their name down on the letters they were writing to the President of the United States shows a clear fear in the black community of Wilmington. Another important example of the black memory of Wilmington comes from the reaction of black ministers after the violence had settled.

Black churches were constantly worrisome for the white population as they were seen as the perfect place to stockpile weapons and feed insurrection. This belief was also the case in Wilmington. Even prior to the violence, the white population investigated black churches for weapons, but found none. During the riot, ministers were forced to open their church doors to the white rioters for them to search the church for not only weapons, but also for hideouts. As the city settled back down to a tense quiet, several black ministers began to speak up. One such minister is Reverend J. Allen Kirk. Kirk called for local ministers to answer for their inability to act on the violence as well as protested the violence. He wrote in a statement that, “thousands of women, children, and men rushed to the swamps and there lay upon the earth in the cold to freeze and starve.”¹⁸ Another one of the black minister reactions was that of Reverend Charles S. Morris whose speech to the International Association of Colored Clergymen addressed the

¹⁷ Letters Written to President McKinley in the Immediate Aftermath of the Racial Violence of 1898. University North Carolina-Wilmington. November 14, 1898.

<http://people.uncw.edu/schmidt/Misc/1898/Letters%20to%20Pres.%20McKinley.html>.

¹⁸ Kirk J. Allen. *“A Statement of Facts Concerning the Bloody Riot in Wilmington, N.C.”* Documenting the American South. University of North Carolina. 2002.

question of “negro domination.” Reverend Morris stated, “We hear the answer on all side Negro domination. I deny the charge. It is utterly false, and no one knows it better than the men who use it to justify crimes that threaten the very foundation of republican government; crimes that make the South red with blood, white with bones and gray with ashes; crimes no other civilized government would tolerate for a single day. The colored people comprise one third of the population of the State of North Carolina... Can nine Negroes dominate one hundred and sixty white men? That would be a fair sample of the tail wagging the dog.”¹⁹ Morris’s statements show the crafting of a black memory. Unfortunately, the black memory became one of defense against the claim of “negro domination” instead of one demanding the remorse of the white population of Wilmington. Because of this tactic the white memory crafted by people such as Alfred Moore Waddell was able to flourish under the low amount of scrutiny. Newspapers outside of Wilmington show another clear black memory in Wilmington.

Looking at *The Richmond Planet* shows reactions from black citizens, creating another initial black memory. One important characteristic of this newspaper is the surprising lack of details. John Mitchell Jr., the editor, does not include any details on how many died or who exactly was responsible, except for Governor Russell, who he blames for not sending in troops. Another characteristic of *The Richmond Planet*’s report of the riot and coup is a lack of mention of Alfred Moore Waddell.²⁰ This omission creates another black memory of the riot and coup. The memory here is one of fear once again. With this fear, the editor does not mention vital

¹⁹BlackPast, “Rev. Charles S. Morris Describes The Wilmington Massacre of 1898,” accessed August 21, 2019, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1898-rev-charles-s-morris-describes-wilmington-massacre-1898/>.

²⁰ “The Loss of North Carolina,” *The Richmond Planet* (Richmond, VA), Nov. 12, 1898.

details in his report. In comparing black newspapers in the South to the North, a different memory is created.

The Appeal in Saint Paul, Minnesota is an example of a black run newspaper writing on the riot and coup from a Northern perspective. The Northern perspective shows less fear and more of a memory of confrontation. This memory of confrontation is clear when *The Appeal* writes, “In North Carolina there exists insurrection, domestic violence, unlawful combination and conspiracy of one class of citizens to deprive another class of their rights of suffrage.”²¹ This description of the riot and coup is far from *The Richmond Planet*. In exchange of fear, *The Appeal* presents a memory of confrontation as they more specifically call out the men that are taking away the right to vote. *The Appeal* also blames President McKinley instead of Governor Russell. The next voice towards the African-American memory would be that of Charles Aycock.

Charles Aycock gave a speech at the Negro State Fair in 1901. In this speech he said, “The colored people of North Carolina are entitled too much credit for what they have done. At the close of the Civil War there were many who had grave apprehension as to the conduct, which would result from the freedom of the Negro. I am glad to be able to state that that apprehension proved to be unfounded. Your conduct in the main has been admirable. You have surpassed expectations.”²² These comments show Aycock’s views of black progression in North Carolina are very similar to Du Bois’ in that the issues with the outbreak of violence in Wilmington relies on the inadequacies of the black population in North Carolina and Wilmington. Aycock represents how the white population viewed shared black population such as Dubois’ views,

²¹ “Telegram to President McKinley,” *The Appeal* (Saint Paul, MN), Nov. 12, 1898.

²² Charles Brantley Aycock, “A Message to the Negro” (speech, Raleigh, 1901), *The Life and Speeches of Charles Brantley Aycock*, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/connor/connor.html#p247>.

offering a unique view of interpretation through both a white and institutional perception as Aycock was Governor of North Carolina at the time of his comments. The black memory is found in other instances of violence in Wilmington, specifically with the Wilmington Ten and even more recently with a young graduate student at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington.

Wilmington once again erupted in fire and violence on February 6, 1971 when Mike's Grocery was firebombed during desegregation in Wilmington schools. Blame was immediately placed on nine black men and one white woman, each around the age of a teenager. Among these young people arrested was a leader of the Commission of Racial Justice, Benjamin Chavis. Each were arrested and tried by District Attorney Jay Stroud, who "did everything in his power to prevent the 10 from walking free — from bribing a false witness to feigning sick because nine of the 12 jurors selected were African American."²³ Soon after the jury was reorganized to include ten whites and two blacks. This reorganization skewed jury returned a decision that sent each of the ten to jail. Across the country, protests formed and Wilmington itself erupted in gunfire. White citizens ran through the city, shooting at black citizens and black snipers shot at police officers. The National Guard patrolled streets and a Methodist minister called a meeting of black parents to discuss why the violence had erupted. At this meeting, the black parents continuously made mentions of what had happened and what had caused all of this. The Methodist pastor from Wilmington area and father of Timothy Tyson, was confused and asked the parents to explain. One black parent stood and pointed at the Cape Fear River and said, "They say that river was full

²³ Alyssa LaFaro, "Proving Innocence: Lessons from the Wilmington Ten," December 12, 2016, University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill, <https://endeavors.unc.edu/proving-innocence-lessons-from-the-wilmington-ten/>

of black bodies.”²⁴ This moment shows the best example of a black memory of the Riot and Coup. In this memory, the political background of the Riot and Coup did not matter; what mattered is the fact that the white elite had risen up and killed some of the black population in cold blood just for beginning to prosper in the city. This black memory equates black prosperity with an inevitable white uprising and violence. Dr. John Hope Franklin, an African American Historian from Duke University and a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom also gave remarks on the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898.

Dr. John Hope Franklin stated in a video remarks to the NAACP meeting in Wilmington on October 12, 2007 that, “The Wilmington Race Riot is very relevant to today because it, first it lives through history, second the history is somewhat distorted about that period and many periods later, and thirdly it’s relevant, because we haven’t changed as much as we need to change.”²⁵ Dr. Franklin goes on to state that the riot was goaded into a riot, because of the atmosphere and was largely created artificially by White leaders. He also states that the riot was a revolution, because the white leaders of the city had overthrown and run out the duly elected city government members. Dr. Franklin’s remarks remain in line with what had come a year before him in the Wilmington Race Riot Commission of 2006, but unlike other African-American perspectives on the riot and coup, Dr. Franklin uses the terminology of “revolution,” a term that had largely been used by the white community in their memory of the violence, but not by the African-American community. In a turn of events, the terminology had begun to flip, where the African-American community uses terms such as riot, coup, and revolution to explain

²⁴ Timothy B. Tyson, *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 3.

²⁵ “Historian John Hope Franklin On the 1898 Wilmington Riots,” Youtube video, 3:31, Jim Buie, October 13, 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWkCnd6F_2I&feature=youtu.be.

the events, whereas “defenders” of the white leaders use the term of uprising, or that the white community threw off some sort of oppression.

Another instance of the black memory of the riot and coup coming out is in the story of a graduate at the University of North Carolina named Will.²⁶ Will’s story follows the more common scene of a young black man being stopped by police and having a general distrust between the police officer and young man. Will was stopped by an officer in October of 2017 and describes the instance as, “What made me nervous was that he was nervous too. It was almost like we were both thinking about all the history between African Americans and police. And, you know, he’s probably thinking that I’m nervous and I’m already thinking that he probably thinks I’ve done something. So this makes this really nervous situation where neither of us can talk. And yes, I could understand him being nervous, but it made me not trust him.”²⁷ The nervousness that Will describes from the officer comes from a general anxiety between the ruling government of the city and the black population, perhaps from guilt. The author of Will’s story writes, “I’m not frightened or anything, I say describes Will’s own nervousness. But I am aware.”²⁸ This awareness comes from a background of white violence against the black community in Wilmington. Will’s story is the perfect example of the black memory, a memory created by fear; a fear that even with black prosperity now a common occurrence that a certain type of people in Wilmington and across the state of North Carolina who uphold the institutional memory will always challenge prosperity.

²⁶ Will’s last name is not given in order to offer some secrecy in who he is.

²⁷ David Gessner, “Dangerous Ground,” *American Scholar*, September 4, 2018.

²⁸ Gessner, “Dangerous Ground.”

White Memory of the Riot

The white memory of the Riot and Coup harkens back to the writings of Alfred Moore Waddell, who blamed an uprising of the lower classes against the black community as the cause of the riot and refused to take blame for perhaps inciting the violence. This belief by Waddell makes any letters written to Waddell a valuable form of memory to show how his words were received and how he had constructed a memory even mere hours after the end of the riot and coup. In a letter from a citizen of Baltimore a memory was crafted that stated, “I beg to congratulate you on the reward of the struggle in dear old North Carolina and to express the hope that having now put their shoulder top the wheel the decent element among Carolinians will never stop until they have dragged the dear old state out of the slough of black mud and degradation with which she was fast sinking.”²⁹ This letter shows Waddell’s claims that the population of Wilmington had taken control of the city and had dragged the city down, although this was clearly not the case. Waddell had influence and this influence helped craft a memorialization as soon as word had reached the public. This memory changed over time, but Waddell created the first white memory.

Soon after the end of the violence, John D. Bellamy took office as a North Carolina delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives. His election was then contested by Oliver H. Dockery. This case has been published for the public and is another prime example of the white memory. Bellamy was asked if he was present at the time of the “revolution” and Bellamy’s answer shows the effect of Alfred Moore Waddell’s narrative, as his answer is very close to that of Waddell’s. Bellamy states, “I was present in tins city, but was not- present at the change of the city officials, though I have a general knowledge of what took place, and I think yon

²⁹ J. M. Laweron to Alfred Moore Waddell, November 11, 1898.

incorrectly call it a revolution; the city authorities, composed of Mr. Wright as mayor, and the board of aldermen, found, that they were incompetent to preserve order and take care, of the property of the city... Mr. D..L. Gore, one of the members of that board, came to me and personally asked me if I would see some of the gentlemen in charge of matters in Wilmington and suggest to them that if they would put or select property owners and men of intelligence on the board of aldermen—such men as he suggested to me then, naming them—that the then present board would resign, one by one, and turn the city affairs or government over to the citizens of Wilmington... I know that one by one the old board of aldermen voluntarily resigned and a new member was elected to fill his place until the old board entirely went out and a new board came in. It; was done decently and in order, without any friction, and under the advice of the most learned lawyers of the city.”³⁰ Bellamy’s statement here is almost exact to what Waddell had stated following the riot and coup. Waddell and Bellamy both asserted that the removal of the Wilmington city government was both necessary and requested. The white memory of the riot became one of denial of wrongdoing and assertion in the justice of their actions, allowing for the memory to flourish over a black memory that was simply trying to prove the white justification wrong.

Another, less researched aspect of the memorialization of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D’état is the attempts of the Republicans in Wilmington to create their own narrative of what occurred in the city. Postmaster W. H. Chadbourn wrote a Senator J. C. Pritchard a month before the riot and coup occurred. Chadbourn wrote, “I had thought at first that it was merely the usual political cry and the fight for the offices, but I am now convinced the feeling is much

³⁰ Contested Election Case of Oliver H. Dockery vs. John D. Bellamy, Sixth Congressional District of North Carolina (1898), <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p249901coll37/id/3208/rec/1>.

deeper than this, as it pervades the whole community, and there seems to be a settled determination on the part of the property owners, business men and taxpayers that they will administer city and county government.”³¹ While Chadbourn did write this before the riot and coup, it still adds to the memorialization. Chadbourn was one of the few Republicans to write about what was happening in Wilmington at the time of the riot. This memorialization shows how the Republican Party and others in Wilmington were noticing the rising tensions as well as how they were attempting to create an early memory and characterization of the build up to the riot and coup.

One of the best examples of the white memory comes from a speech given by North Carolina Governor Joseph Broughton in Wilmington at the launching of the *USS John Merrick* in 1943.

John Merrick was the son of a black slave woman and his father was unknown. He was the creator and owner of the North Carolina Mutual, a major insurance company. Men such as Benjamin Newton Duke and John Sprunt Hill saw him as the connection between the Old South and New South, because he was originally a slave, but was able to pull himself up and become a successful businessman. Merrick died in 1919.³²

At this launching, Broughton stated, “Forty-five years ago, in the city of Wilmington, where this launching is being held, there occurred the most serious race riot in the history of North Carolina. Blood flowed freely in the streets of this city, feelings ran riot and elemental emotions and bitterness were stirred. We have come a long way since that event. There has been no race riot in North Carolina since that time. There has been only one act of lynching in this

³¹ W. H. Chadbourn, *Can Any Reasonable Man Longer Doubt: Negroization of that City* (Durham: Duke Library Repository, October 18, 1898).

³² Walter B. Weare, “Merrick, John” (Chapel Hill: NCPedia, 1991).

State in over twenty years. A record of racial harmony has been made in this State unsurpassed and perhaps unequaled in any state of the American Union.”³³ Broughton’s remarks “raised the specter of 1898 as a cautionary tale for blacks.”³⁴ Broughton’s speech represents an important aspect of the white memory that Thomas Dixon also showed in *Leopards Spot* and that is that the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup was a necessary action that allowed for a better North Carolina after all was said and done. The issue with Broughton and Dixon’s belief here is that North Carolina and Wilmington did erupt in violence again after this ship launching and that a violent, racial undertone can still be seen in the institutional memory created by the city and state.

Institutional Memory

The State of North Carolina has an institutional memory that has been perpetuated, mainly by naming various buildings on the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill’s campus. Aycock Hall is an all-female dormitory on the campus at UNC. This dorm has been named after Charles Aycock, in 1924, a former governor of North Carolina and is the first of North Carolina’s Education Governors. Aycock was born in Wayne County, North Carolina in 1859. He was heavily involved in Democratic Party politics and was governor from 1901 to 1905.³⁵ Aycock was a gifted speechmaker and stated openly that Wilmington was “the center of the white supremacy movement.”³⁶ Another example of the state’s institutional memory is Kenan Stadium, the UNC football stadium. This physical manifestation of institutional memory has experienced a recent change to begin a new memory of the Riot and Coup. From 1927, the

³³ John Broughton, “Address Delivered at the Launching of the Liberty Ship John Merrick at The Shipyard,” Papers of Joseph Melville Broughton, 249.

³⁴ 1898 Race Riot Commission, Appendix M, 425-426.

³⁵ Tyson, “Ghosts of 1898,” 6.

³⁶ North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission* (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, 2006), 58.

stadium was named for William Rand Kenan Sr., who commanded the Wilmington Light Infantry machine gun into Brooklyn and killed what is believed to be twenty-five people.³⁷ William Kenan Jr. donated the money for the stadium in honor of his mother and father, but after discussion with him and his family, the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill History Task Force decided to change the name to be after William Kenan Jr. in 2018.³⁸ This is an example of the institutional memory being challenged, but this challenge is only a drop in the bucket in comparison to what institutional memory still lies in Wilmington.

Institutional memory was also created in the city. This memory was created within the county government itself, as after 1885 the popular election of county commissioners was allowed to continue as, “It was no longer a matter of great concern to the whites.”³⁹ The popular elections were no longer a concern to the whites, as they had removed any threats to the popular election of white officials.

Another example of Wilmington’s institutional memory comes from one specific park, Hugh MacRae Park. Hugh MacRae Park is named after one of the major conspirators of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D’état of 1898. In order to understand the institutional memory of the Riot and Coup, a background of who Hugh MacRae was and what role he played in the riot and aftermath is necessary. Hugh MacRae was born in 1865 to Donald MacRae, a wealthy business owner and descendent of General Alexander MacRae. Hugh graduated from MIT and made a name for himself through his agricultural ingenuity, a talent that would place him in

³⁷ North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, *1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission* (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, 2006), 144.

³⁸ Jane Stancill, “UNC to Change Which Kenan is Honored on Kenan Stadium,” *The News & Observer*, October 4, 2018.

³⁹ Lawrence Enoch Lee, *New Hanover County: A Brief History* (Raleigh: Department of Cultural Resources, 1977), 96.

presidential cabinet conversations.⁴⁰ MacRae also owned multiple business, such as a bank, a trucking company along with the land surrounding Grandfather Mountain. Harry Hayden's pamphlet published in 1936 calls attention to how Hugh MacRae became personally involved in the gathering of a secret organization, the Secret Nine. According to Hayden, a few days before the riot MacRae was speaking to another man on the corner of the intersection of Seventh and Market Street when a wagon drawn by a black man almost ran him over. Supposedly, the wagon had plenty of room to avoid MacRae.⁴¹ After this incident, the Secret Nine, a group of nine white wealthy Wilmington citizens met at Hugh MacRae's home and decided that something had to be done about the "negro attitude."⁴² The Secret Nine continued to meet at another member's home and settled on inciting a riot in the city scheduled for November 10, 1898.⁴³

After the riot was over, MacRae was selected as a member of the Board of Aldermen. He owned one of the largest farm colonies in the state and hired hundreds of immigrants. In Hugh MacRae Park, a plaque has been dedicated in his honor that reads, "This Park was presented by him to residents of New Hanover County to be enjoyed by them. Fellow citizens have dedicated this plaque in memory of a kindly and gracious son of the Old South." Ben Steelman wrote in an article to the *Wilmington StarNews* that MacRae's legacy had been too tainted to allow him to have a park named after him and that the fact that he had specified the park be reserved for "whites only."⁴⁴ In another article to the *StarNews* Justin Pope wrote a sort of defense of MacRae stating, "However, in the 1930's he worked with African-American architect and Wilmington

⁴⁰ Susan Taylor Block, "Clan MacRae," *Wrightsville Beach Magazine*, 2018.

⁴¹ Harry Hayden, *The Story of the Wilmington Rebellion* (Wilmington: *Wilmington Morning Star*, 1936), 5.

⁴² Hayden, 7.

⁴³ Hayden, 9.

⁴⁴ Ben Steelman, "Is Hugh MacRae's Legacy Too Tainted for Park's Name," *Wilmington StarNews*, July 11, 2015.

native Robert R. Taylor, a fellow MIT graduate, on a plan to grant farmsteads to unemployed black city dwellers during the Great Depression.”⁴⁵ Pope attempts to make a compelling point, however, I would equate this argument to Benjamin Tillman writing about a sharecropper that worked for him. He wrote, “A more loyal friend no man ever had. Every child that I have would share his last crust with that negro tomorrow ... I do not know whether I belong to Joe or Joe belongs to me ... we have agreed to live together until one or both of us die, and when I go away, if I go first, I know he will shed as sincere tears as anybody. I would die to protect him from injustice and wrong.”⁴⁶ Just because MacRae and Tillman both had an African-American friend they worked with does not excuse the violent words and actions they took. Hugh MacRae II, grandson of Hugh MacRae has also spoken on the origins of the park multiple times. He stated, “He (Hugh MacRae) felt that the expanding residential area out toward the beaches should have a nice city/county park. He approached the County of New Hanover and offered to give 110 acres for the purpose of a park. The county accepted it and later developed it into a park, and it really has been a great success. The people of New Hanover County value it and enjoy it and it really has turned out to be everything it ought to be.”⁴⁷ Hugh MacRae Park represents an institutional memory being created by the city as they continue to refuse to change the name of the park. Perhaps the best reason why can be explained by the Op Ed response to Ben Steelman’s article. In this collection of opinions most range from very positive to changing the name to very negative. One resident writes, “Leave the name as is. If the name changed, I hope New Hanover

⁴⁵ Justin Pope, “Immigrants Came from Afar to Hugh MacRae’s Colonies,” *Wilmington StarNews*, January 23, 2018.

⁴⁶ Francis Butler Simkins, *Pitchfork Ben Tillman, South Carolinian*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1944), 66.

⁴⁷ Hugh MacRae II, “Interview with Hugh MacRae II,” interview by Sam Bissette, *Voices of the Cape Fear*, August 7, 1995, print, 6.

county has to give the land back to the MacRaes.”⁴⁸ Another resident wrote, “It appears to me this family has done more good and contributed to growth and advancement in technology among other things, of our great city than anything bad. In today’s society there are select few that can only focus on is the bad (indiscretions, racism and the list goes on). We cannot replay history. Our heritage and our history is what it is. Move on!!!”⁴⁹ One last negative response writes, “ Keep the name! It was donated by MacRae as part of his legacy to the community. It is part of the history of Wilmington. Do not re-write history. Do not judge late 1800’s behavior by 2015 standards.”⁵⁰ Each of the comments presents the fact that the city of Wilmington has created an institutional memory that has been adopted by many residents in Wilmington. On the brighter side of this issue, a few in Wilmington write about the riot and coup as the violent outburst it was. One citizen writes, “Regarding whether the name of Hugh MacRae Park should be changed, I say YES, for many reasons you’ve already read concerning the discriminatory, harmful, and polarizing actions of Hugh MacRae. The new name should be unifying as a way of compensating, atoning perhaps, for the sins of the historical figure whose name the park has borne for so many years.”⁵¹ One last important detail to note about Hugh MacRae Park is the fact that white supremacists have shown that they are comfortable in the park.

Timothy B. Tyson wrote of a specific incident he witnessed in the park in 1971 where an organization known as The Rights of White People appeared in the park. He writes that the leader of the group rose up and gave a hate-filled speech. He writes, ‘The n*****s keep talking about how Waddell said in 1898 they were gonna fill up the river with carcasses,’ he said. ‘I

⁴⁸ Si Cantwell, “Opinions Mixed, but Most Say Keep Hugh MacRae Park Name,” *Wilmington StarNews* July 26, 2015.

⁴⁹ Cantwell, “Opinions Mixed,” *Wilmington StarNews*.

⁵⁰ Cantwell, “Opinions Mixed,” *Wilmington StarNews*.

⁵¹ Cantwell, “Opinions Mixed,” *Wilmington StarNews*.

don't know if they did or not. But if this integration and rioting business doesn't stop we're going to clog that river with dead n*****s this time, and I mean it.”⁵² Clearly, Hugh MacRae's name carries a comfortable feeling for white extremists. In the reactions to Ben Steelman's article on Hugh MacRae Park a resident presented what this author believes is the best proposal for the park. He writes, “I would recommend installing an historical marker at the park summarizing Hugh MacRae's contributions to the development of Wilmington, both good and bad.”⁵³ This resident shows that the city of Wilmington may be beginning to challenge the institutional memory that was started by Waddell and perpetuated by Thomas Dixon. This challenge can be seen in the recent movement to remove Confederate monuments.

“Replacing History”: Confederate Monuments and the Movement to Remove Them

In order to understand the Confederate monuments and the movement to replace them, one should understand the background of the monuments and why they began to appear. Gaines Foster's book *Ghosts of the Confederacy* deals with this issue in detail. Foster begins with a background of the Confederate loss. With the surrender of Robert E. Lee and the defeat of the Confederacy in the Civil War, the South was left with a calamity of unknown, but awesome proportions. With this destruction, the citizens of the South began a short-lived questioning of God, but this was quickly replaced with alcohol, drugs, and Jesus.⁵⁴ Foster's statement clearly means that a defeated South had to turn to self-medication to help their depression. This concept of defeat is also a topic that Kirk Savage speaks on in his book *Standing Soldier, Kneeling Slaves*. Savage writes that, “The earliest such memorials were simply shafts often erected in

⁵² Tyson, “Ghosts of 1898,” 15.

⁵³ Cantwell, “Opinions Mixed,” *Wilmington StarNews*.

⁵⁴ Gaines Foster, *Ghost of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 11-22.

town cemeteries and dedicated to soldiers who had died in the war. They were funereal, and for good reason. The sheer extent of death was astounding, far beyond anything ever experienced in American history; almost no community was left untouched. The early monuments attested to this terrible simplicity, condensing the war's meaning into lists of names recorded in stone."⁵⁵ Savage's examination into the early monuments dedicated to the war and the fallen soldiers shows the depression that Foster wrote on in terms of the death the war brought to each individual community including Wilmington. This deep depression across the South was quickly replaced with the concept of the Lost Cause. In order to create this assertion, white southerners had to, "reassure themselves about established conceptions of sex roles that the war had challenged."⁵⁶ They did so by creating hyper-masculine roles and explaining away defeat as out of their hands. This sex role challenge can be seen within the argument between Alex Manly and Rebecca Felton regarding mixed relations streaming from their disagreement that emerged in the editorials of the *Daily Record* as stated in Chapter 2.

This Lost Cause ideology formed from three concepts. First, the legality of secession mainly that it was not a good idea, but was not wrong. The second concept was the institution of slavery. In order to justify this institution, the South took on the ideology that slavery had been the central cause, but it was biblically justified, playing into their coping mechanism of their religion. Kirk Savage writes that, "The shift from slavery to freedom precipitated by the Civil War was the cataclysmic event and the central dilemma of the century, one that continues to shape American Society even today."⁵⁷ Savage also writes that slavery was not simply the

⁵⁵ Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldier, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018) 162.

⁵⁶ Foster, *Ghost of the Confederacy*, 22.

⁵⁷ Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldier, Kneeling Slaves*, 3.

emancipation of a group of people, but also required a cultural transformation that the monuments constructed attempted to explain during Reconstruction and beyond. The last concept is honor. The South convinced themselves that they had not lost their honor and that, most importantly, their soldiers had fought with honor, an ideology that would play greatly into the Confederate monuments. These assertions began to heal the wounds of war, but left scars.⁵⁸ These scars were reopened with the “taking” of Wilmington back from the Republican-Fusionist Party and more importantly, the black population. With the Lost Cause ideology created, the South began to create their Confederate Monuments. While the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 could be considered a victory of the white southerners, the defeat of Confederacy was not. However, this defeat equates to the victory in the Race Riot because in both instances white southerners were faced with trauma and reacted with violence, that being the KKK after the Civil War and the Red Shirts and Riot itself in 1898.

From the 1870s, the Confederate monument movement emerged as an interpretation of the defeat. Local communities began to erect cemeteries, monuments, and establish Confederate memorial days for their dead. Foster writes, “In the process, the memorial movement helped to ensure that the Confederate dead became powerful cultural symbols within the New South- gave power, in other words, to the ghosts of the Confederacy.”⁵⁹ These ghosts are also evident in the institutional memory of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D’état. Wilmington’s ghosts reside in the buildings on the University of North Carolina’s campus and in Hugh MacRae Park. Both of these public properties interpret the Riot, much as the Confederate monuments interpret the defeat of the South in the Civil War. With this Confederate movement, a dilemma has arisen, as

⁵⁸ Foster, *Ghost of the Confederacy*, 22-36.

⁵⁹ Foster, *Ghost of the Confederacy*, 37.

the South has failed to decide who would speak for the ghosts of the Confederacy and to what larger purpose they play.⁶⁰ The Confederate monument movement took on a new concept with the failed Virginia movement. With the death of Robert E. Lee in 1870, a new coalition of Virginians attempting to define the defeat emerged. These Virginians can best be equated to Chesnut and Dixon's fictional writing. The public appeal of the group was always low; however, their influence is evident in the change to the Lost Cause narrative. This new interpretation is known as the Confederate Tradition. This Confederate Tradition holds that the South did not fight a revolution, but a legal war for constitutional principles that were only defeated due to lack of numbers and resources.⁶¹ This reinterpretation follows the narrative of both Dixon and Waddell. By defining the Riot and Coup as an issue of political rights of the white man, Dixon and Waddell could pass off the Riot and Coup as simply restorations of an older political order, a justified one.

The Confederate movement has had its effect of the state of North Carolina in recent years as well. In 2015, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 22. This bill states, "An object of remembrance located on public property may not be permanently removed and may only be relocated, whether temporarily or permanently, under the circumstances listed in this subsection and subject to the limitations in this subsection. An object of remembrance that is temporarily relocated shall be returned to its original location within 90 days of completion of the project that required its temporary removal. An object of remembrance that is permanently relocated shall be relocated to a site of similar prominence, honor, visibility, availability, and access that are within the boundaries of the jurisdiction from which it was relocated. An object of remembrance may

⁶⁰ Foster, *Ghost of the Confederacy*, 37-47.

⁶¹ Foster, *Ghost of the Confederacy*, 47-63.

not be relocated to a museum, cemetery, or mausoleum unless it was originally placed at such a location. As used in this section, the term “object of remembrance” means a monument, memorial, plaque, statue, marker, or display of a permanent character that commemorates an event, a person, or military service that is part of North Carolina’s history.”⁶² This bill effectively institutionalizes the Confederate monuments, and therefore can be argued institutionalizes the memory of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D’état created by Waddell and Dixon. With the bill-defining object of remembrance as any monument, memorial, plaque, statue, or marker, then a park named for Hugh MacRae, who is an important character in North Carolina history, could fall into the categories this bill puts forth. Wilmington clearly faces an uphill battle in challenging the institutional memory, but four different steps have been taken to begin the healing of wounds.

Healing Wounds

Wilmington’s wounds continue to exist, but four challenges to the institutional memory have been made. The first challenge is the 1898 Race Riot Commission. This Riot Commission was created in May 2006 with the task of repairing the wrong of the Riot and Coup. The principal author of this report was LeRae S. Umfleet.⁶³ The commission presented its report in 2006, which has become the primary source for much of the recent scholarly research in the area. The commission also released a series of recommendations for the city and state. They suggested four courses of actions. First, the commission suggested what they called empowerment, which would acknowledge the failure of the democratic system in Wilmington in 1898. Second, the commission suggested economic redevelopment. This redevelopment would pay reparations to

⁶² General Assembly of North Carolina, Session Law 2015-170 Senate Bill 22, Raleigh: North Carolina Legislature, 2015.

⁶³ Tyson, “Ghosts of 1898,” 16.

the heirs of victims of the riot, provide incentives to businesses to relocate to the area affected by the Riot and Coup, and increase minority home ownership in the area.⁶⁴ Third, the commission suggested broader education. They suggested implementing this education initiative by continuing to update the final report, incorporate the report into the Department of Public Instruction's learning curriculum, newspapers acknowledging the role they played into inciting the Riot and Coup, funding a documentary to be made about the Riot and Coup, and increasing support to tutoring of at-risk youth in New Hanover County.⁶⁵ Forth, the commission suggested a commemoration. They suggested that funds be given to the Cape Fear Museum to create an 1898 exhibit, provide the New Hanover Public Library with more funding to make resources about 1898 more accessible, and to erect plaques, markers, and monuments in key locations, statewide, related to 1898. The last step that the commission suggested shows that Wilmington has begun a movement to create a new institutional memory of the 1898 Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état.

The state government of North Carolina has also begun to deal with the wounds of 1898. In 2006, the state legislature released a statement regarding the Riot and Coup. In the statement, the legislature admitted, "Whereas, the effect of that campaign and the Wilmington Riots last far beyond 1898, paving the way for legislation that disenfranchised African-American and poor white citizens, for lynching and violence against African American citizens, and for Jim Crow segregation until the Civil Rights Movement of 1960's."⁶⁶ The state legislature also embraced the Riot Commission's report and expressed sadness that the actions taken in 1898 contradict the

⁶⁴ Tyson, "Ghosts of 1898," 16.

⁶⁵ Tyson, "Ghosts of 1898," 16.

⁶⁶ General Assembly of North Carolina, Resolution 2007-67 Senate Joint Resolution 1572, Raleigh: North Carolina Legislature, 2007.

ideals of the modern state of North Carolina. They also expressed regret that, “violence, intimidation, and force were used to replace a duly elected local government, that people lost their livelihoods and were forced to leave their homes, and that the government was unsuccessful in protecting its citizens during that time.”⁶⁷ With this statement, the state legislature also moved to establish the third challenge to the institutional memory of the Riot and Coup.

The North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program created a highway marker for the Wilmington Coup on the North side of US 17 between Fourth and Fifth streets in Wilmington. This marker has yet to be placed, but an 1898 Memorial Park was established in 2008 by the city of Wilmington with a monument dedicated to victims of the Riot and Coup. Hugh MacRae II, Hugh MacRae’s grandson, aided in the formation of this park and worked closely with the 1898 Wilmington Memorial Foundation. Bertha B. Todd states, “He was one of the first supporters.”⁶⁸ He is also quoted as stating, “But Senator Sam Ervin told me one day in Washington, he says, ‘You know your grandfather may have been the most productive, single citizen to ever live in North Carolina.’ And this may be true, but how he ever did it all is really hard to conceive because he certainly was into 8 or 10 different projects, all of which had a tremendous economic benefit to the state and the South as a whole.”⁶⁹ One can interpret from this statement that the MacRae family was not only well connected, but well loved in North Carolina.

The last challenge to the institutional memory of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D’état is the *Red Cape* movie that was released last year. The movie was shown locally, but is

⁶⁷ General Assembly of North Carolina, Resolution 2007-67 Senate Joint Resolution 1572, Raleigh: North Carolina Legislature, 2007.

⁶⁸ Ben Steelman, Hugh MacRae II, Civic Leader and Mall Builder Dies,” *Wilmington StarNews*, October 9, 2018.

⁶⁹ Hugh MacRae II, Interview, 4.

available on the movie website for wider purchase. The *Red Cape* creates its own memory of the Riot and Coup. The movie creates a seemingly opposite memory contradictory to the memory that Alfred Moore Waddell created. While Alfred Moore Waddell stated that he only acted as directed by the white citizens of Wilmington, the movie suggests that Waddell's role was far larger than he wrote about. Waddell states in the movie, "We will take back what is rightfully ours." The movie also diminishes the role of the Red Shirts in the Riot and Coup. In the movie, the Red Shirts are only briefly mentioned as a violent force that would be willing to lynch Alex Manly. This role of Waddell shows a growing movement to place a majority of the blame onto Waddell, which cannot be entirely justified. Waddell did not order men into Brooklyn, he did not demand *The Daily Record* be burned, and he was not present at the resignation of Mayor Silas P. Wright.⁷⁰ These fabrications do challenge the institutional memory created in the city and state of North Carolina.

The 1898 Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état erupted, but that eruption spread throughout the city and state of North Carolina. The Riot and Coup D'état have been institutionalized as memory through various means and this institutional memory has left major issues in the city of Wilmington and the state of North Carolina. This institutional memory has stretched from parks to state sanctioned buildings at the University of North Carolina and represents a new avenue of thought in terms of the movement to remove Confederate monuments. Wilmington and North Carolina itself have begun to challenge the narrative created about the Riot and Coup, but continue to face an uphill battle of de-institutionalizing violence and creating an accurate, renewed memory of the Riot and those that played a role in the violence.

⁷⁰ *The Red Cape*, Directed Nelson Oliver, Wilmington: The Red Cape LLC, DVD, 2016.

CONCLUSION

With violence breaking out in Wilmington in 1898 hundreds of black citizens were murdered or banished from the city and the future of the city was dramatically changed forever. This violence is still known as a successful Coup D'état in American history and continues to affect not only Wilmington, but North Carolina as a whole. The Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état has been institutionalized by the city of Wilmington and across North Carolina as a memory of a group of elite white citizens retaking the city from the black citizens that had begun to prosper in the city. Wilmington and North Carolina continue to face their own history and must come to terms with a complicated and at times violent past.

Chapter one discussed the background of both Wilmington and North Carolina at length. This chapter argued that in the aftermath of the Civil War there was an outbreak of racial violence in 1898 as the groups of the white population in Wilmington fought to retake a city. By discussing the fall of Fort Fisher and the Confederacy, Wilmington during Reconstruction, the emergence of the Populist Party and backlash to this, and the rise of the Red Shirts, the "taking" of Wilmington by both the North and the blacks was shown. In chapter two, the riot and coup itself was also discussed in full. This chapter argued that Wilmington fell as the city was retaken by the white elite and Democratic control was reestablished in the city. The Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état are demonstrations of how Wilmington and North Carolina were taken back from Fusionists-black control. This chapter also showed the reception of the riot and coup across the country. Chapter three discussed how the city of Wilmington and North Carolina has institutionalized the Riot and Coup across the state. Specifically, the chapter argued that the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état of 1898 have been institutionalized as memory through various means in the city of Wilmington and the state of North Carolina. This institutional

memory has been created by elections, fictional writings, speeches, and the naming of parks and building names. This institutional memory has been challenged in recent years and could, should, continue to be challenged by the city, state, and historians.

Wilmington's next course of action should be to once again reconvene the 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission in order to update on where the city has improved for the black community and what steps the city and state have taken to answer for the recommendations of the first commission. With the continued attention on the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état of 1898, Wilmington and North Carolina can make a new and accurate history that will, hopefully, provide a bridge between the black and white community.

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**APPENDIX A
APPROVAL LETTER**



Office of Research Integrity

November 21, 2019

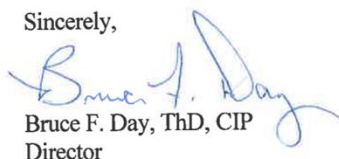
Jacob Thomas
16220 County Airport Rd.
Wellsville, OH 43968

Dear Mr. Thomas:

This letter is in response to the submitted thesis abstract entitled "*The Cape Fear Ran Red: Memory of the Wilmington Race Riot and Coup D'état of 1898.*" After assessing the abstract, it has been deemed not to be human subject research and therefore exempt from oversight of the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The Code of Federal Regulations (45CFR46) has set forth the criteria utilized in making this determination. Since the information in this study does not involve human subjects as defined in the above referenced instruction, it is not considered human subject research. If there are any changes to the abstract you provided then you would need to resubmit that information to the Office of Research Integrity for review and a determination.

I appreciate your willingness to submit the abstract for determination. Please feel free to contact the Office of Research Integrity if you have any questions regarding future protocols that may require IRB review.

Sincerely,



Bruce F. Day, ThD, CIP
Director

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