Chapter 8: Rebuilding

- For Wilmington's African American community, the consequences of the violence of November 10, preceded by months of white supremacy rhetoric and followed by institutionalization of Jim Crow oppression, are difficult to measure but did include political and economic change.

- African Americans lost their political standing as a result of the 1898 campaign and violence. Disfranchisement followed in 1900; the Republican Party severed its ties to its black voters.

- Research using city directory and census data, shows that Wilmington's African American entrepreneurs and skilled workers suffered economic setbacks after 1898 but slowly rebounded. Low-paid laborers were the largest category of workers.

- Out-migration following the violence negatively affected black's ability to recover.

- Blacks who remained in the city created self-supporting community clusters within predominantly black neighborhoods with black businesses for black customers.

- Black property owners were a minority of the overall black population in the city before the riot, but property owners were more likely to remain in the city. No proof of white seizure of black property has been found, and surviving records demonstrate that African Americans continued to buy and sell property after 1898 without coercion or losing money.

- The African American leaders who remained in the city following the riot were older than their white counterparts, and, as they aged, leadership patterns changed for the respective communities.

- Analysis of city residential patterns for transition areas between majority black neighborhoods and majority white neighborhood identified several highly integrated neighborhoods before the riot. After the riot, integrated neighborhoods were smaller, and transition areas between white and black neighborhoods were pushed away from the city center.

- Changes for African Americans included an end to traditional Jonkonnu Christmas celebrations. Emancipation Day celebrations were cancelled in 1899 but revived in later years.

- An African American collective narrative developed to recall the riot and placed limitations on black/white public relationships. White stories of the riot claimed that the violence was necessary to restore order. The white narrative was perpetuated by historians.

- Wilmington's race riot marked a new epoch in the history of violent race relations in the U.S. Several other high-profile riots followed the model set by Wilmington, most notably Atlanta (1906), Tulsa (1921), and Rosewood (1923). All four communities dealt with the aftermath of their riots differently. Although whites in Tulsa and Atlanta addressed the violence, murders, and property destruction soon after the riots, Wilmington whites provided compensation only for the loss of the building housing Manly's press.

Chapter 8: Rebuilding

"To build may have to be the slow and laborious task of years. To destroy can be the thoughtless act of a single day." -Winston Churchill

The toll of events such as those that occurred in Wilmington cannot be easily measured. To understand the impact of such a traumatic event on a city is a multifaceted, difficult effort. How did the violence of November 10, preceded by months of white supremacy rhetoric sponsored by the Democratic Party and followed by years of Jim Crow oppression, veiled threats, and further violence—affect the city's African American residents? Consequences for that sector of the community were wide ranging and touched all facets of life: political, economic, and cultural.

Political Consequences

The political ramifications of the coup were clearly visible by the spring of 1899, when the newly elected, Democratically controlled legislature convened and the city held municipal elections. Further evidence of the firm grip the Democrats had on Republican and black voters was the solid victory of Democratic candidates and the disfranchisement agenda in the 1900 elections. Disfranchisement removed from the voter pool the majority of African American voters—the broad political base of the Republican Party. After sound defeat at the polls and the passage of the disfranchisement amendment, the Republican Party acknowledged that it must disavow its connection to its black voter base and make itself "lily-white." Without the large black voter base, Republicans lost the ability to elect statewide officials, and, as part of their efforts to reinvent the party, they chose to refrain from distributing patronage positions to African Americans. The placement of prominent African American leaders in lucrative and influential patronage positions had long been an important method of advancement in Wilmington and the state, but, after the 1900 elections, the practice was effectively ended.[1] It has been argued that once African Americans lost their political voice, they re-focused their energies on economic and educational progress.[2]

Economic Consequences

To address the economic impact of 1898 on Wilmington, the North Carolina Office of Archives and History worked with the Institute of African American Research at the University of North Carolina

---

[1] Robert Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners Black Economic Success in North Carolina, 1865-1915*, 105-6. Kenzer also posits that because no blacks held seats in the state legislature or held the power to vote objectionable politicians out of office, legislation favorable to black interests was rarely introduced, and resistance to legislation such as Clarence Poe's land segregation scheme of 1915 was nonexistent. Although African Americans had no votes in the legislature, black leaders managed to influence sympathetic politicians in a variety of ways. Booker T. Washington opposed Poe's scheme and worked with other black leaders to make sure the bill failed. Adaptation to the political framework imposed upon blacks by whites became key to ensuring that blacks received a modicum of benefit from democratic government. Collector of customs for the port in Wilmington was one of the highest-paying patronage positions in the state.

[2] Hayumi Higuchi, "White Supremacy on the Cape Fear," 140; Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners,* 125. Kenzer observed that blacks of all socio-economic backgrounds were able to attain college educations and, as a result, pursued careers in business and private enterprise rather than trades. He concluded that achieving higher education for all blacks, regardless of pre-emancipation status, was a unifying goal for the community rather than one that divided upper and lower classes of blacks.

Tabulation of Summary Data from the 1897 and 1900 City Directories

	1897			1900		
	Total	*Black*	*White*	*Total*	*Black*	*White*
Population	7,673	49%	51%	8,124	44%	56%
Occupation Listed	6,481	3,478	3,003	5,703	2,497	3,206

Of the total population listed in the city directory, a slightly smaller number listed their occupation in their entry. It is assumed that if no occupation was listed, the individual was not employed. A more detailed study of the directory data will be made available upon completion of work by Tod Hamilton.

at Chapel Hill to study city directories and census data. [3] Economics doctoral student Tod Hamilton took the lead in the project and oversaw data entry and managed the databases to provide the Wilmington Race Riot Commission with multiple reports concerning the data for Wilmington. A summary of Hamilton's directory findings can be found in this chapter and more detail can be found in the Appendix.

New in-depth, computer-aided analysis of the 1897 and 1900 city directory data provided revealing information about the city's economic environment for the black community. Entries for both races in the residential section of the directory ,including all associated information such as occupation and addresses for businesses and residences, were entered into a database. [4]

Concern was expressed that the data may have been skewed along racial or gender lines by the publishers when the directory was compiled. However, after review of the data, it was clear that the directories were relatively reflective of the city's racial diversity both before and after the violence of 1898. [5] Because of this conclusion about the city directory data, and because the directories are the only known data sets containing information about black employment so soon before and after November 1898, they were used to draw some conclusions about the impact of both the violence and the white supremacy campaign on the city's African American economic outlook. [6]

Consolidation of the data into 15 occupational categories reflective of the peculiar business climate associated with Wilmington's port status demonstrates that the city offered a diverse working environment for the city's African

---

[3] The first comprehensive study of occupations using the city directory was done by Hayumi Higuchi for a master's thesis at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1980. Another study of the city directory data was completed by Sue Cody for a thesis at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington in 2000. Further study of city directory data was performed for this project in 2002, prior to the joint project with UNC-CH. Cody cited the considerable drawbacks to using the directory data. Cody surmised that the directories were incomplete lists of city residents and were, at best, only a sample of citizens, skewed by race, gender, geography, and age.

[4] This portion of the study did not take into account gender or age since those two variables were not provided by the directories. However, some occupations traditionally held by women have been identified, and some marginal conclusions about their

work experiences can be drawn from the directory data.

[5] Both directories were compiled by the same company. It can be assumed that the data collection methods that would skew whether or not someone was entered into the city directory were similar for both directory years. It is therefore safe to assume that people from any given occupation or neighborhood would be equally as likely to be included or excluded from both directories, making the directories mutually comparable.

[6] The only other available information on occupation would be from the census, but the 1890 census was destroyed by fire in Washington, D. C.

Americans. [7] In 1897, a total of 3,478 African Americans recorded their occupations in the directory. Of those, the two largest categories were washerwomen, butlers, or other domestic houseworkers (1,087) employed by white households and the general laborers (1,326).[8] It is unknown

what types of work were most represented by men who reported their occupation as laborer, but laborers generally received low pay, had minimal degrees of job security, and are typically classified as unskilled. These two categories—laborers and domestics—together represented 68 percent of the city's African American employment.

DeRossett House, ca. 1872. Although the image is of the grand house and family, just inside the photo can be seen the family's washerwoman with her basket.
Image: North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

[7] When working towards a classification scheme for grading occupations, most economists have used the standards developed by the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. However, those standards do not easily apply to Wilmington. One example can be seen in the category of unskilled labor, which included stevedores, draymen, and laborers. In Wilmington, many stevedores received higher pay than day-laborers and occupied a higher social status because of their jobs at Sprunt's cotton compress. Further, draymen were self-employed and often owned their wagons and horses, placing their working status above laborers and some stevedores. Additionally, building trades represented a long-standing tradition of carpentry by some of the city's most respected and wealthy African American families. For this study, stevedores, carpenters, and those in maritime and railroad trades were singled out to reflect the specific roles those occupations played in the overall life of the city. Food service workers were singled out to study because they represented an up-and-coming trend in the city and reflected some of the first post-1898 entrepreneurial movements.

[8] Of the 1,018 domestic workers, 971 were employed in jobs such as washerwoman, housemaid, maid and cook—jobs traditionally reserved for African American women who worked for white employers in white homes. There were 511 cooks and 421 washerwomen or laundresses in the 1897 city directory. Oral histories of many African American families are peppered with memories of at least one family member who worked for a white family. The pay was low but afforded a guaranteed income, which helped families when male incomes were either nonexistent or were unstable due to seasonal employment. Other interviewees recalled that it was an important status symbol to work for a prominent, wealthy white family and recalled that employment with pride. The category also includes nurses. It is unknown if the modern interpretation of the occupation of nurse as a trained health service provider is appropriate for all individuals. Alternative interpretation of the term could be that these women provided child- or elder-care services in white homes, implying less educational training and pay. Wilmington did have a hospital at the time, but

the composition and number of its staff is unknown. A newspaper account from the day of the violence indicated that the hospital staff was predominately white. For oral histories by Wilmington African Americans, see the Behind the Veil Project at Duke University or the files of the Cape Fear Museum, Wilmington, North Carolina.

African American Occupations by Category from 1897 and 1900 Wilmington City Directories

Occupation Category (sample occupations listed)	1897	1900
Laborer Laborer, Scavenger, Janitor	1,326	1,524
Domestic Butler, Cook, Steward, Waiter, Laundress	1,087	133
Railroad Worker Car Coupler, Porter	198	131
Cargo/Transport Trades Drayman, Driver, Stevedore, Teamster	179	150
Skilled Artisans/Trades Blacksmith, Brickmason, Printing trades, Watchmaker, Plumber, Stonecutter	145	105
Building Trades Builder, Carpenter, Contractor, Painter	143	133
Service Barber, Butcher, Boot and Shoemaker, Hostler, Merchant Tailor	119	82
Retail Grocer, Huckster, Provisions, Salesman	63	57
Professional Attorney, Educator, Minister, Doctor	59	67
Foodservice Baker, Cook-shop, Restaurant, Saloon	45	32
Government Postal Worker, Health Officer, Police	39	9
Industrial Engineer, Machinist, Miller	35	43
Clerical Bookkeeper, Clerk, Manager	21	19
Maritime Boatman, Sailor, Ship Carpenter	10	11
Cotton Industry Grader, Sampler, Tier	9	1
Total Occupations	3,478	2,497

The remaining 32% of the city's black workers in 1897 were employed in skilled, retail, service, government, and professional occupations. Of these, the greatest number were associated with the railroads, building trades, skilled trades, and with work associated with the port as stevedores, draymen, and drivers.[9] These categories together were represented by 665 workers, well over half of the non-domestic workers or unskilled laborers in the city.[10] Two of these categories, skilled artisans and building trades, represented areas that traditionally offered prosperity to African Americans in the city. Some of the city's oldest and wealthiest African American families such as the Howes, Norwoods, Howards, and Sadgwars had their roots in the city's building trades well before the Civil War, and fathers passed the trade to

---

[9] Stevedores and draymen were a unique category of workers in Wilmington. Traditionally considered unskilled workers by the U. S. Department of Labor, these workers were held in high esteem in Wilmington because of their importance to the port. For the import/export trade, the faster these men could load or off-load a ship meant real money to the brokerage and manufacturing firms in the city and elsewhere in the world. Their skills were prized and because of the importance of the trade, bonds were required of stevedores to ensure that their work would be done in a timely manner and that their employees would be promptly paid. This concept adds another level of confusion to the understanding of the stevedore/drayman trade. Stevedores are generally understood to be the workers who loaded and off-loaded the ship cargoes. Draymen and teamsters transported cargo between the docks and homes, railroad depots, or warehouses throughout the city. Draymen commanded one horse or mule, and teamsters used a team of animals to pull larger loads. Draymen worked toward purchase of their equipment in order to maximize profit and the purchase of other drays to hire other drivers to work for them.

[10] There were a total of 3,478 black workers reported in the city. Of that number, 2,344 were domestic workers or laborers. The remaining workforce, 1,134 workers, was dominated by this skilled category of railroad workers, building tradesmen, skilled artisans and tradesmen, and port drivers.

sons for many generations. Similarly, the Hargrave family had long been in the city as blacksmiths and prospered for many generations until the advent of the automobile age made their trade obsolete.[11] However, unlike the Hargraves, skilled artisans and tradesmen whose professions included plumbers and tailors, would persist in the city as it evolved into the modern age.

Another group of workers, those who worked in retail, service, and restaurant occupations, would lead the African American community into the twentieth century. These workers were most often self-employed and entrepreneurial, working as barbers, grocers and butchers but also were supported by others who worked as boot and shoemakers, hostlers, provisions

dealers, and sales clerks. The food or restaurant business was an integral part of the industrial city, providing meals for workers through a variety of facilities known as cook-shops, eating houses, or restaurants.[12] Some of these shops were located in close proximity to the business district in order to serve the lunchtime needs of workers.

Government workers were relatively few in 1897 (39), and the number changed over time because the campaign of 1898 specifically targeted those types of employees. These types of jobs included postal workers, who were appointed through the patronage system, and city and county employees who worked the police, health, and fire departments.

Washerwoman, 1920s
Image: New Hanover County Public Library

Street vendor or washwoman, 1920s
Image: New Hanover County Public Library

---

[11] For a history of some of the major builders in the city, see Bishir, "Black Builders in Antebellum North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* (October 1984) and *The Bellamy Mansion, Wilmington North Carolina*: A*n Antebellum Architectural Treasure and its People,* (Wilmington, N.C.: Preservation North Carolina, 2004); "Landmarks of Power: Building a Southern Past in Raleigh and Wilmington, North Carolina, 1885-1915" *Southern Cultures,* (2000), as well as relevant sections of Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle.* For a good history of the Hargrave family's business, see Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle* and Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners*.

[12] Charles Fisher, in his oral history of Wilmington, recalled that before he was born in 1919 his mother would make sandwiches and pies to take by wagon to sell to the workers at the cotton compress. The workers would then pay his mother for their lunches on the weekends. The funds earned by his mother's lunches supplemented the money made by his father who worked as a wood dealer, most likely a seasonal job. Charles Fisher Oral History File, Cape Fear Museum, Wilmington, N. C.

As a result of the power wielded by the state's African American congressman George White, North Carolina had more black postmasters than any other state. While Wilmington's postmaster, William Chadbourn, was white, he was a Republican and had made it a policy to reward local blacks with well-paying jobs in the post office as clerks and carriers. Black postmasters, letter carriers, and clerks became targets of the white supremacy campaign of 1898, and, after Democratic victories in 1898 and 1900, the number of black postal workers steadily declined. [13] There were nine postal workers in the city in 1897 and by 1900, the number had dropped to four.

The occupational category with the highest level of status and economic impact was the professional category. Professional positions required a higher level of educational training, and men and women in those positions were well-known throughout the city. In 1897 there were 59 professionals in the city. Of that number, the largest groups were educators (33) and ministers (15).[14] Most of the educators were female teachers but there were also three principals, including at least one woman, and one "professor." There were only five doctors in the city and only one African American attorney was listed in the city directory for the year.

---

[13] Benjamin Justesen observed that black postal workers were targeted by the white supremacy campaign because they were the "most widely visible of all federal appointees outside Washington" and they "received their jobs because of their political connections." Benajmin Justesen, "Black Postmasters and the Rise of White Supremacy in North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review*, (April, 2005), 193-227.

[14] There were three principals, one professor and twenty-nine teachers, most were women.

Changes in the 1900 City Directory

By 1900, the city directory reflected the dramatic changes that swept through the city as a result of the 1898 white supremacy campaign and the violence of November 10. The directory contained occupational listings for 2,497 African American workers, almost 1,000 fewer than the 1897 directory. A comparison of the directories shows the immediate changes that took place in the city as a result of the white supremacy campaign, the violence, the mass exodus, and the attempts by whites to change hiring practices to favor white employees over black. At first glance, it is obvious that there was a downward shift in all directions when occupations are tied to status and economic factors. There were fewer skilled tradesmen, domestics, builders, clerical workers, retail, service, and railroad workers, but there were more laborers, professionals, and industrial workers.

White supremacy banners hang along the wharf behind Maffit's Chandlery. Physical reminders of white unity against "negro domination" persisted into the 20th century. Many black-owned businesses left the core of the downtown commercial district in the years following the violence and black retail employees lost jobs to white clerks and workers.
Image: Lower Cape Fear Historical Society.

African American Occupation Changes in the 1897 and 1900 City Directories

Occupation Category (sample occupations listed)	Loss (-) or Gain (+)
Laborer Laborer, Farmer, Scavenger, Janitor	(+)
Domestic Butler, Cook, Steward, Waiter, Laundress	(-)
Railroad Worker Car Coupler, Porter	(-)
Cargo/Transport Trades Drayman, Driver, Stevedore, Teamster	(-)
Skilled Artisans/Trades Blacksmith, Brickmason, Printing trades, Watchmaker, Plumber, Stonecutter	(-)
Building Trades Builder, Carpenter, Contractor, Painter	(-)
Service Barber, Butcher, Boot and Shoemaker, Hostler, Merchant Tailor	(-)
Retail Grocer, Huckster, Provisions, Salesman	(-)
Professional Attorney, Educator, Nurse, Minister, Doctor	(+)
Foodservice Baker, Cook-shop, Restaurant, Saloon	(-)
Government Postal Worker, Health Officer, Police	(-)
Industrial Engineer, Machinist, Miller	(+)
Clerical Bookkeeper, Clerk, Manager	(-)
Maritime Boatman, Sailor, Ship Carpenter	(+)
Cotton Industry Grader, Sampler, Tier	(-)

The largest category of workers was by far that of the laborers, representing 1,524 workers. One significant change can be seen in the dramatic reduction in the number of domestic employees, down to 133 from over 1,000. The domestic worker category rivaled the laborer category in numbers in the 1897 directory but the numbers are distinctly lower in the 1900 directory. It is unclear why this number is so much lower. Most jobs classified as domestic that were listed in the directory were for cooks, a role traditionally reserved for women. However, more domestic jobs were listed in the 1900 directory than in the 1897 directory that were considered typically male roles (butler, waiter, bell boy, etc). The disparity in this category is even more vivid when traditionally female jobs are viewed across categories. The numbers of cooks, nurses, teachers, laundresses, and maids declined significantly, and the percentage of men working in domestic jobs increased slightly.[15]

---

[15] It is unclear why the numbers of women working in domestic jobs declined at such a high rate. Speculation has arisen that perhaps the white employers sought to hire white female workers in their stead. A study of the city directory for white domestic laboring workers does not support that conclusion. It has also been surmised that women of all occupations were under-represented in the 1900 city directory. However, it must also be noted that a rise in commercial steam laundries coincided with the drop in the numbers of black washerwomen. There were a few small Chinese laundry operations as well. The Wilmington Steam Laundry was operating in 1897 and grew in prominence. Another laundry service, City Laundry, was founded around 1906. African American laundresses typically required a week to clean a household's laundry by hand and would pick up and deliver the laundry themselves. The City Laundry began to advertise that they could pick up by 10:00 in the morning and deliver by 4:00 in the afternoon. Such competition surely affected the client base for many laundresses. For information on the changing lives and work of laundresses, see Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War*,

Although most categories of workers dropped in numbers, some categories such as clerical, retail, and the service industry, lost fewer workers than did the skilled artisans, cotton industry, and railroad worker categories. The number of industrial workers increased, possibly reflective of the city's changing nature as an industrial city that needed skilled industrial workers, regardless of race. Employment in the maritime trades also increased by a single worker, but the occupational titles reflected in the broad category reflected some growth in maritime trades for black workers. In 1897, maritime workers were deck hands and boatmen. By 1900, some workers had achieved the higher paying, more rewarding, status of captains and pilots.

An interesting shift occurred within the professional category in the 1900 directory. Although the overall figure increased, the detailed data is mostly reflective of a loss of educators. By 1900, there were only 16 educators identified in the directory as compared to 33 in 1897. The city had lost only one African American principal and the "professor" remained. The overall decrease in the number of education professionals was offset by an influx of ministers; the city saw an increase to a total of 40 ministers across denominations from 13 in 1897. It is unknown why so many ministers came to the city following the violence, particularly since the number of churches remained constant.[16]

African American Entrepreneurship

Analysis of the directory data compiled by Hamilton shows that a number of the city's African American entrepreneurs, men and women who owned and operated their own businesses or worked independently, experienced a decline in occupational status in the years immediately following the riot. However, the evidence shows that a few other entrepreneurial-minded individuals managed to overcome challenges and improved their lot by opening new businesses in the year following the violence.[17]

In order to more fully comprehend the business nature of the city, the computerized directory lists generated by Hamilton at the Institute of African American Research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill were again consulted. In both directories there were a considerable number of entries for men and women who provided a second address for their businesses. In 1897, there were 102 business addresses provided for African American establishments such as grocery stores, barbershops, restaurants, butcher shops, shoe shops, and other establishments that required a storefront. By 1900, however, the number dropped to 78, indicating a significant decline in the number of black-owned businesses with secondary addresses in a business district. In 1897, most addresses for black-owned businesses were in the primary business district along South Front, North Second, Market, and Princess Streets. By 1900, the orientation of the black businesses had changed. Not only were the businesses different, but many were also relocated. The greatest numbers of businesses were in the traditionally African American

---

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 53-57, 208.

[16] More study of the ministers, on an individual level, both before and after the riot, is needed in order to determine if new ministers arrived in the city from elsewhere after 1897 or, instead, that current residents became ministers.

[17] Cody and another researcher in the Office of Archives and History, Dennis Daniels, studied the business section of the city directory to find trends in business ownership among African Americans before and after the violence. Both researchers saw a reduction in overall occupations and numbers of businesses. For a more detailed analysis of city directory data, see Appendix.

neighborhood of Brooklyn along North Fourth Street. Although some businesses remained in areas popular in the 1897 directory, the overall numbers were significantly lower. For example, in 1897, there were 76 black businesses located along street in the city's central business district. By 1900, the number was down to 33. A slight increase was seen in the numbers of businesses located in the Fourth Street business district. By 1946, the African American community had worked to revive its black businesses and boasted 196 businesses, ranging from 63 grocers and 22 barbers to 6 doctors and 50 beauty parlors. Reverend J. Irving Boone of Central Baptist Church led an effort to advertise the successes of the city's black entrepreneurs. As such, Boone published directories of black businesses in the city in 1945 and 1946. Boone profiled some of the business leaders, and others touted their history in the city in their advertisements. Shaw's funeral home still operated in the city, having been in business for 50 years and had branched into operating funeral parlors in 10 other cities. Some of the business leaders arrived after 1898. For example, the Red Cross Shoe Shop and the People's Shoe Shop had been in operation for over 25 years. A survey of the directory demonstrates that many of the black businesses established for black consumption managed to prosper and survive over decades following the violence.[18]

Most of the city's black workers, however, were laborers employed by whites. These workers were the ones most affected by the white supremacy campaign's promises of jobs for white workers. Skilled

workers saw the most losses in the city over the years following the coup. By the time the 1902 city directory was printed, skilled, semi-skilled, and transportation workers had been displaced, and the number of unskilled and unemployed workers had grown. Cody surmised that when combined with the changes to the city's demographics as a result of a continuous out-migration by blacks, black residents were either forced from higher status, i.e. higher paying jobs, to those of lower pay as unskilled workers, or, "those in higher-status occupations left and blacks migrating into the city took unskilled jobs." [19]

Professional positions in the city were dominated by attorneys, doctors, teachers, and ministers before the violence. Of the leaders banished from the city, most were from these categories. As a result of the banishment and intimidation campaign, four attorneys left the city, and no African American attorney practice law in the city until 1902. By 1902, the professional blacks in the city were still predominately teachers and ministers plus three doctors. Mid-level professional jobs, mainly those of postal clerks, were also affected. In 1897, there were nine blacks affiliated with the postal system in various positions and by 1902 only two remained. [20]

Out-migration from the city posed problems for both white employers and the local black community. A continued exodus of black workers plagued the city into 1899

---

[18] R. Irving Boone, ed., *Negro Business and Professional Men and Women: A Survey of Negro Progress in Varied Sections of North Carolina* v. 2 (Wilmington, by the author, 1946); R. Irving Boone, ed., *Directory of Negro Businesses in Wilmington and Southeastern North Carolina* (Wilmington: by the author, 1945).

[19] Cody, "After the Storm," 99-100. Cody also acknowledged that it was possible that methods of data collection for the city directory changed over time and comparison across directories is not a dependable paradigm. The issue of migration will be discussed further later in this chapter.

[20] Postal workers had been targeted by the white supremacy campaign as especially dangerous workers since they came in daily contact with white women in public situations. The documented black postal workers of 1902 were employed in behind-the-scenes jobs and did not deal with the public. Cody, "After the Storm," 106-108.

and the turn of the century.[21] Author and former Wilmington resident Charles Waddell Chesnutt told a Boston newspaper in March 1901 that his sources in the city told him that since the "massacre," as blacks called it (whites called it the "Revolution"), over 1,500 of the "best blacks" had left the city.[22] The "best blacks" referred to by Chesnutt were most likely entrepreneurs who closed their businesses and moved because they saw better opportunities in other parts of the state or nation.

The 1900 census reflected the out-migration of the city. The city's black population dropped by over 900 people in the ten years between 1890 and 1900, and, for the first time since the Civil War, whites outnumbered blacks in the city. While the black population decreased during these years, the white population increased. The out-migration from Wilmington and New Hanover preceded the nationwide Great Migration by almost a decade, but, as some historians have noted, racial violence such as that experienced in Wilmington may have been a contributing factor as important to

the impetus to leave as that of an economic downturn.[23]

Comparative review of the 1880 and 1900 census for other states shows that the numbers of blacks born in North Carolina yet living in other states increased substantially in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Other states such as New York, Virginia, Delaware, and Maryland also saw an increase in the black populations from North Carolina. The state with the largest overall increase in the number of blacks born in North Carolina was Pennsylvania—the number of North Carolina blacks living that state jumped from 629 in 1880 to 4,862 in 1900. New York followed a similar pattern with 1,270 in 1880 to 5,866. The

---

[21] For the problems that the out-migration caused James Sprunt, the city's largest employer of African American labor at his compress, see Chapter 7.

[22] *Boston Evening Transcript*, March 20, 1901. A study of the Great Migration by Carter G. Woodson has pointed out that the African Americans who packed and left the south beginning in 1916 were most often the better-educated and skilled workers. Chesnutt's observation about Wilmington's early out-migration forecasted the coming trend. Statistical study of migrant groups during the Great Migration supports Woodson's theory—one out of every six literate blacks left the South between 1890 and 1920. Carter G. Woodson, *A Century of Negro Migration*, 147; Alferdteen Harrison, ed., *Black Exodus: The Great Migration from the American South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 46; E. Marvin Goodwin, *Black Migration in American from 1915 to 1960: An Uneasy Exodus* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 10.

[23] During the Great Migration which began in 1916 and lasted until roughly 1930, thousands of African Americans left southern states for northern cities. Most historians and government studies pointed to economic factors as the main reason for the migration – wartime industry needed laborers. However, further study has shown that many of the migrants sought to find less hostile environments in which to live, work, and raise families. For a good overview of the Great Migration, see Alferdteen Harrison, ed., *Black Exodus: The Great Migration from the American South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991). Stewart Tolnay and E. M. Beck, in an essay in Harrison's *Black Exodus*, contended that blacks exposed to "high levels of lethal violence" chose to leave. Harrison, *Black Exodus,* 31. The U. S. Department of Labor published a study of the migration in which the Department determined that the migration was due to "general dissatisfaction with conditions, ravages of boll weevil, floods, change of crop system, low wages, poor houses on plantations, poor school facilities, unsatisfactory crop settlements, rough treatment, cruelty of the law officers, unfairness in courts, lynching, desire for travel, labor agents, the Negro press, letters from friends in the North and finally advice of white friends in the South where crops had failed." U. S. Department of Labor, *Negro Migration in 1916-1917* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919), 11-12. It is very plausible that all of these types of troubles cited as reasons for the Great Migration could be translated into the types of reasons that Wilmington's residents decided to leave after the violence of 1898 and the imposition of segregation.

influx of African Americans from Wilmington into Brooklyn stirred New York ministers to action and made headlines in local papers. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* noted that there was an increasing number of blacks from the south because of "unsettled conditions" there. [24]

Most of the African American workers who left the city were employed as laborers, cooks, washerwomen, porters, and nurses. The void left by the removal of these workers from the city was partially filled by other workers moving into the city. One major business in the city, that of the naval stores and turpentine industry, suffered as a result of the exodus. In 1901 the *Messenger* included a brief article to explain an "Exodus of Turpentine Hands." The article stated that two "coach loads of negro turpentine hands" left the city for Florida's turpentine regions. The article also reported that other black workers would soon follow this first set and that "labor [was] already scarce" and the exodus would "make the scarcity all the greater." Sprunt's cotton compress operations suffered the loss of workers earlier than the turpentine trade. By August 1899, Sprunt had shortages of employees because over half of his workforce was in New York city, employed as hotel workers. A former black worker from Wilmington told a *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reporter that he did not think many of Sprunt's former employees would return to the city because "they can't get over the idea that their lives will be threatened again" if they returned to Wilmington. The article continued that women and girls had also left Wilmington and their exodus had resulted in a "lack of domestic servants" and that white

women "say they can't get help now." The article also stated that many of the refugees now living in New York owned homes in the city that they couldn't sell or rent, and that they had lost money in "bank troubles" in the city. [25]

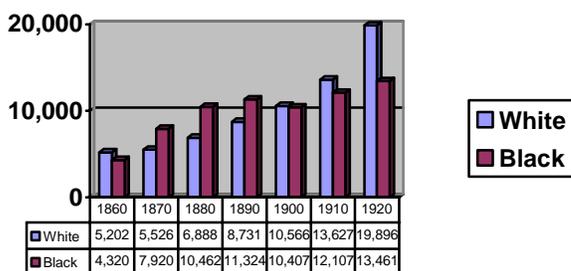| Percent of NC-born residents in given states that were non-white		
State	1880	1900
New York	56 (1,270)	68 (5,866)
Pennsylvania	45 (629)	74 (4,862)
District of Columbia	63 (497)	62 (1,891)
New Jersey	52 (306)	77 (3,586)
Ohio	62 (2,376)	60 (1,998)
Virginia	44 (10,213)	50 (27,994)
Connecticut	65 (334)	67 (876)
Delaware	23 (17)	53 (89)
Massachusetts	72 (645)	72 (2,573)
Rhode Island	73 (118)	66 (297)
Louisiana	77 (4,708)	79 (3,867)
Maryland	39 (484)	49 (1,622)
South Carolina	40 (7,942)	24 (6,654)

A concentration of refugees from Wilmington can be found in Whitesboro, New Jersey. Congressman George Henry White realized that men and women living in Wilmington could not prosper in a post-1898 environment and encouraged northward migration. White's vision of a black town for Wilmington refugees was realized in 1901 when his organization, the Afro-American Equitable Association, purchased land in Cape May county New Jersey for settlement. Whitesboro emerged as an example of the success of black towns and their residents when all worked to developed "group self-reliance and solidarity that enriched local civic pride,

---

[24] *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (New York), January 30, 1899. The article discussed growth in the A.M.E. church in Brooklyn as a result of the influx of African Americans who had been members of a large A.M.E. church in Wilmington that had a building worth $40,000. The church referenced in the article was probably St. Stephen's.

[25] *Wilmington Messenger*, January 5, 1901; *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (New York), August 25, 1899.

purpose, and duty." A review of the census for Whitesboro and Cape May County in 1900 and 1910 reveals the names of many African Americans born in North Carolina who had relocated the region. Further, many of those listed can be tied to Wilmington roots. Surnames such as Sadgwar, Fales, Yarborough, Green, Scott, Spaulding, Pearsall, and Merrick all have clear ties to Wilmington. One banished man, McClain Lofton, is found in Cape May in 1910.[26]

The initial shock to the economic system for the African American community was overcome by those who remained and rebuilt an infrastructure that supported the black community from within. Difficult to document, but evident from study of city directory and census data, is a small influx of African American workers into the city following the turn of the century.[27]

Wilmington Population by Race

	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920
White	5,202	5,526	6,888	8,731	10,566	13,627	19,896
Black	4,320	7,920	10,462	11,324	10,407	12,107	13,461

With the help of new and old residents, black businesses developed in predominantly black neighborhoods and catered to black customers. The community clusters became self-contained, self-supporting units of interdependence and sustainability for their residents. As recalled by one longtime resident of the city, black neighborhood businesses in the era of Jim Crow were places blacks could go to get credit in hard times and places where they knew they would not be made to feel uncomfortable on the basis of skin color.[28] Through the development of such adaptive networks, the African American business community rebounded in the early 20th century, and compelled one author to conclude that by 1915 Wilmington represented a "relatively attractive business environment." [29] It is important to remember that a corollary of an economic system in such a community is that neither the business owner nor the customer grew financially and both remained within a rather small circle of debt and wealth.

Further study of the African American economy of Wilmington in the early twentieth century has shown that the immediate downturns of the late 1890s and early 1900s were being reversed by the advent of the first World War.[30] For example, by 1915, over 31 percent of the city's businesses were operated by blacks whereas in 1897, that figure was just over 20 percent. The most substantial growth in black businesses, evident from a study of the 1915 directory, was in the number of

---

[26] Clement Alexander Price, "Home and Hearth: The Black Town and Settlement Movement of Southern New Jersey," in Wendel A. White, *Small Towns, Black Lives: African American Communities in Southern New Jersey* (Oceanville, New Jersey: Noyes Museum of Art, 2003), 172-173; 1900, 1910, 1920 census for Cape May County, Middle Township, New Jersey.

[27] According to the census, the African American population of the city increased after 1910 but at a slower rate than that of the white population. Godwin, *Black Wilmington,* 19.

[28] Countless oral history interviews with lifelong residents of the city recount fond memories of community support through neighbors helping neighbors in difficult times, in child rearing, economic support, church activities, and a broad spectrum of other social and cultural activities. Among the oral history interviews are those compiled by the Behind the Veil Project at Duke University.

[29] Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners,* 65.

[30] John L. Godwin, *Black Wilmington and the North Carolina Way*, 14.

African American grocers.[31] This finding supports the theory that neighborhood businesses developed to support localized needs. The mobilization efforts associated with the shipyards and the war effort then began to play a role in African American employment, with sizable numbers working in skilled trades again.

One of the groups that remained in the city was the small number of African Americans homeowners. These black property owners were encouraged to hold their ground. The local newspaper advised: "I counsel not to leave your bought and paid for homes and whatever little is dear and belongs to you …. If you possess any property in Wilmington don't sell just now. Keep it till things tone down and you can get a fairer price if you sell at all."[32] As one researcher found, black property owners were less likely to leave and were most able to adapt to the changed political and economic landscape of white supremacy. Carrie Taylor Wright, daughter of African American deputy collector of customs John E. Taylor, explained that her father remained in the city after the violence because he "had all his earnings here. My grandfather was here. He owned all the property, so there was no reason for him to leave. This was home." [33]

Property Ownership

The best way to understand the African American community's ability to increase and maintain wealth before the violence of 1898 is through analysis of property ownership. Statewide, about 4,000 African Americans owned real estate in 1870 and the number steadily increased as the years progressed. However, on average, most African Americans did not own the house or property where they lived. That said, urban property ownership among African Americans in North Carolina did increase at a faster rate than rural property ownership between 1875 and 1895.[34] Pushing the increase in urban ownership were the efforts of local groups, within towns like Wilmington, that sponsored their own organizations to assist local workers in acquiring property through mortgages. By 1897, 1,016 African Americans owned real estate in the city.[35] Tracing ownership of and transfer of property by African Americans is extremely problematic since property could be transferred in a number of ways that were not documented in the deed books. [36]

---

[31] Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners*, 65.

[32] Wilmington *Morning Star*, November 15, 1898.

[33] Cody, "After the Storm," 156; Transcript of interview with Carrie Taylor Wright, February 8, 1981, Oral History Files, Cape Fear Museum, Wilmington, N.C.

[34] Kenzer noted that "every ten years from 1865 to 1915 black landowners as a whole would gain ownership of about 1 percent of the value of real estate in North Carolina, even though the black percentage of the state population would actually decline." He observed, however, that "adverse social, economic, and political circumstances prevented most blacks from becoming landowners by 1915." Another study has shown that in North Carolina the number of blacks owning homes jumped from 15 percent of the population to 26 percent of the population owning homes by 1910. In 1910, Wilmington ranked sixth in the state in black home ownership rates behind leading towns such as Elizabeth City, Fayetteville, Kinston, New Bern, and Washington, and was well ahead of Charlotte and Durham. Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners,* 10, 20, 34; Loren Schweninger, *Black Property Owners in the South, 1790-1915* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1990), 180-181; U. S. Department of Commerce, *Negro Population, 1790-1915*, 473.

[35] Cody, "After the Storm," 124.

[36] As an example, Robert Kenzer noted that of the 293 black men who owned land in Halifax County in 1870, none were mentioned in recorded deeds in the county for the period between emancipation and the census. Other methods for transfer of property could be through gift, court transaction, bequest, and quit claims, among a host of other obscure methods. Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners*, 11.

Some previous discussions of the riot have touched on the claims by Wilmington's displaced African American residents that their property was seized and given to poor whites. One often-cited source of their claims is a vivid scene described in *Hanover, Or Persecution of the Lowly, A Story of the Wilmington Massacre*, the thinly-veiled fictional account published in 1900 by David Bryant Fulton.[37] Soon after the riot, Alex Manly speculated that whites conspired to deprive African Americans of their property. Manly's son Milo perpetuated his father's claims as late as 1977 and cited losses for his father and wealthy Wilmington black business leader Thomas C. Miller.[38]

For researchers, the accepted method for researching property ownership and transfers is by following deed transactions. However, Milo Manly expressed the concerns of African Americans when he stated that checking deed records and other legal materials in the New Hanover County court house would prove fruitless because records had been "altered or stolen or lost" to the point that it could never be proven that his father and others ever owned disputed property. Whether Manly's claims are founded in truth is open to debate; however, for the purposes of this and other projects, what is left in the written records is all that survives from the period to provide an understanding of African American property ownership in the city both before and after the riot.[39] One fact also cannot be overlooked—by 1900, the number of African Americans owning real estate in the

---

[37] Excerpt from *Hanover*: "She had reached the gate of her cottage, from which she had fled on the night of November 10 to escape insult and murder. A white woman sat upon the steps knitting, her children playing in the yard. The colored woman stood and momentarily gazed in amazement at the intruder upon her premises. 'Well, whart du you want?' said the white one, looking up from her work and then down again. 'That's the question for me to ask. What are you doing in my house?' . . . 'Niggers don't own houses in dis here town no mo'; white uns air rulin' now' . . . 'You poor white trash; I worked hard for this house, and hold the deed for it, so you get out!'" David Bryant Fulton, *Hanover: Or the Persecution of the Lowly, A Story of the Wilmington Massacre,* 110.

[38] Milo Manly, when asked about his father's property, said that it was sold for failure to pay taxes, although Alex Manly tried to prove he paid the taxes on the property. Sue Cody researched Manly's deed records and found reference to one property in his name prior to the riot. That property was held jointly with Frank Manly and John Goins. The men purchased the property between Dawson, Wright, Ninth, and Tenth Streets in 1897 for $100, mortgaged it for $20 in 1899, paid off the mortgage in 1902, and then transferred it to Manly's father-in-law F. C. Sagwar in 1907 for $10. Manly and his wife Carrie acquired another property in Wilmington in 1907 but later transferred the property to other family members in four transactions between 1909 and 1915. Miller's holdings were much more extensive and cannot be easily summarized. For a review of Miller's real estate holdings before and after the riot, see

Appendix A. Cody, "After the Storm," 118, 135; Prather, *We Have Taken a City,* 159-161; General Index to Real Estate Conveyances, New Hanover County, North Carolina State Archives; A.L. Manly et al to George Lutterloh, February 4, 1899, New Hanover County Deed Book 34, page 628.

[39] A series of duplicate deeds, arranged by block, can be found in the William B. McKoy Collections of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society. The deeds are not indexed and some are in fragile condition. McKoy, attorney for the city, mortgage companies, and insurance firms, also was an integral part of the development of the White Government Union in the city during the 1898 campaign. Since discovery of the collection and its contents, some have speculated that McKoy contrived plans to duplicate mortgages for African American properties and slowly dupe African Americans out of their properties by a variety of methods. The collection is voluminous and unindexed and a thorough study of its contents would be a valuable contribution to an understanding of the development of early twentieth-century Wilmington. It is unclear how many of the mortgages were for whites or blacks, or if, as some suggest, the names on the mortgages are of real or imaginary people. McKoy also interfiled family histories, business records, political records, and other information in with the deeds. Further research in this collection is needed to understand McKoy's role.

city dropped to 1,004, an overall loss of only twelve landowners from the year before the riot.[40]

A detailed analysis of the deed books was started by Sue Cody in 2000.[41] Cody sought to find out if blacks owned much land in the city before 1898 and if they were forced to sell their land after the violence for a loss. Because Wilmington was such a large city with a large sample of landowners, even within the African American community, Cody chose to narrow her scope of research by several methods. First, Cody studied deed transactions for African Americans who owned real estate according to the 1897 tax records. She then further limited her study by analyzing property purchases and sales in the seven years prior to the riot and the seven years following the riot for names beginning with A through J. Her initial study led her to conclude that "African Americans owned a significant amount of property both before and after the violence and that there was not a significant spike in the number of sales immediately following the violence."[42] Cody further found both gains and losses in the sales of property by African Americans following the riot for all categories of property

holders—banished, voluntary migrants, and those who stayed. Cody's work was continued for this report from the remainder of the alphabet and the findings were similar.[43] The official records do not support a conclusion that Wilmington's black property owners were forced to sell their holdings en masse in the seven years following the riot, nor did they, on average, lose money when they sold property.

The surviving records, primarily deeds, do not support the claim that was originally made in 1898 and perpetuated into the modern era that whites openly redistributed black property among themselves. However, other, less clear, methods of divesting property from black members of the community should be investigated. One example is that African American and white businesses such as funeral homes and others accepted mortgages for payment from members of the African American community.[44] If someone defaulted on repayment of the mortgage, the businesses or money lenders could then confiscate the property, sell it, and deduct for their services the amount owed from the sale with the residue going to the borrower who could not pay his debt.

A partial explanation for the property seizure myth may rest in the fact that, after 1898, African American property seized and sold for nonpayment of a debt often would fall into the hands of white purchasers through legal actions. Perhaps such activity evolved into a memory of wide-ranging changes in black ownership of property; that is, a few examples grew to be perceived as the norm instead of the exception.

---

[40] Cody, "After the Storm," 124; New Hanover County Tax Records, 1900.

[41] Cody speculated on how troublesome forgery of the complete set of New Hanover County deed books would be and determined that such an undertaking would be daunting, difficult, and impracticable. Cody, "After the Storm," 141-2.

[42] Cody also studied three specific groups of people within the city: men of the Committee of Colored Citizens, those in the culled "A-J" deed list who were out of town at the time their property was sold as well as property transfers of those were banished. Cody concluded that most of the men of the Committee of Colored Citizens were not affected by property loss after the violence and did not suffer losses as a result of devaluation or sale. Cody's sample yielded sales for gains and losses by those who left the city following the violence and sold their property from a distance. Cody, "After the Storm," 119-120, 127, 133.

[43] For more details of the deeds analysis, see Cody, "After the Storm" and Appendix L.

[44] Shaw Funeral Home engaged in such a practice, and its proprietors continued to acquire and sell properties after the turn of the century. A detailed analysis of all of the Shaw deeds would be necessary to determine how many were related to mortgages for repayment of services rendered by the funeral home.

Census Analysis

Tod Hamilton, an economics doctoral candidate affiliated with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has initiated a study of census statistics for the Wilmington area over all years for which data is available. Hamilton's preliminary findings are found in this chapter, and a full report of his analysis can be found in the appendix. The tables below contain summary statistics for the Wilmington area's black and white population, as well as the overall black and white population for the state.[45] Hamilton's findings provide insight into the situation facing Wilmington's population as it moved into the twentieth century. These findings pull together, in statistical format, what can be learned from the census about the city's economy, working environment, educational opportunities, and social framework.

Wilmington's African American community always prided itself on its educational heritage and the impact that educators had on the city's students. The statistical data show that the educators—despite a reduction in the number of teachers, wages, and overall funding for school management following the 1898 campaign—succeeded in providing the basics of education in less-than-ideal situations.[46]

The first set of variables shed light on Wilmingtonians' literacy rates. The city's African American population was above the state average for full literacy in 1880 but fell below the state average in 1900, only to surpass the state average again by 1910 and in 1920. Wilmington's illiterate black population numbered near or above the statewide average until 1920 when it had a smaller percentage of illiterate blacks than the rest of the state. Wilmington whites consistently remained well above the state average for full literacy and below the state average for the number of illiterate individuals. The New Hanover County educational system—although it underwent a significant reduction in funding for black schools—managed to produce a significant number of literate African Americans.

---

[45] Hamilton assembled the information using data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) compiled by the Minnesota Population Center at the University of Minnesota. The sample used for this study is a 1-in-200 national random sample of the population. Consequently, the sample size is small. The sample consisted of 173 individuals in Wilmington and the surrounding area in 1900.

[46] For more on reductions in school funding and the city's educational system, see Chapter 7.

Data for Wilmington African Americans Compared to North Carolina African Americans

Variable	1880		1900		1910		1920	
	Wilm.	**NC**	**Wilm.**	**NC**	**Wilm.**	**NC**	**Wilm.**	**NC**
Fully Literate	20%	17%	35%	37%	58%	57%	73%	67%
Partially Literate	6%	7%	6%	8%	2%	6%	1%	2%
Non-Literate	74%	75%	59%	55%	39%	37%	25%	30%
Owned/Mortgaged Home	--	--	35%	27%	27%	34%	43%	35%
Occupational Score	9.60	8.67	8.06	9.5	8.97	9.99	10.44	9.75
SEI (social/economic index)	7.20	6.66	7.07	8.1	7.77	9.14	9.72	9.43

Data for Wilmington Whites Compared to North Carolina Whites

Variable	1880		1900		1910		1920	
	Wilm.	**NC**	**Wilm.**	**NC**	**Wilm.**	**NC**	**Wilm.**	**NC**
Fully Literate	78%	71%	88%	79%	92%	85%	95%	90%
Partially Literate	3%	7%	3%	5%	2%	4%	.2%	1%
Non-Literate	19%	23%	9%	15%	5%	11%	5%	9%
Owned/Mortgaged Home	--	--	50%	60%	55%	58%	53%	60%
Occupational Score	9.74	8.51	8.53	9.80	12.01	10.89	12.85	11.37
SEI (social/economic index)	11.29	9.28	7.90	11.40	14.79	12.60	16.20	13.92

The second data set provided detail concerning home ownership. More individuals within Wilmington's African American population than elsewhere in the state owned homes, as can be seen in the 1900 figures. Again, this number indicates that large numbers of the city's black property owners were not being pushed into selling their holdings immediately after the violence. However, a slump in ownership can be seen by 1910, with the area's average home ownership rate falling below the state average. The slump was overcome by 1920, with, once again, more African Americans in Wilmington than in other portions of the state owning property.

For the city's white population, the figures for ownership remained relatively constant, rising slightly in 1910 but declining slightly in 1920 while white ownership in the rest of the state held steady with only slight variation over the three decades. The increase in white ownership was 5 percent in 1910 whereas the decrease in black ownership was 8 percent. (Further research in deed books is needed to see if there is a correlation between a decline in black property ownership and an increase in white ownership.) The trend was

Comparison of Home Ownership for Wilmington Area and State

Variable	1900		1910		1920	
	Wilm.	NC	Wilm.	NC	Wilm.	NC
Owned/Mortgaged Home (African American)	35%	27%	27%	34%	43%	35%
Owned/Mortgaged Home (White)	50%	60%	55%	58%	53%	60%

reversed by 1920, with the black losses of 1910 wiped away and gains jumping to well over the 1900 level. White ownership saw a 2 percent decline that year.

The last two data sets are figures assigned by economists based upon occupations and a calculation derived from occupation and other indicators to provide the social/economic index score (SEI). The occupational scores are developed based on a ranking system that places a higher score, or number, for higher paying, higher status jobs. Therefore, occupations such as attorney, doctor, or teacher have higher scores than those of laborer, maid, or janitor—the higher the score, the higher the pay. Similarly, the SEI scores are reflective of the social and economic status that is tied to an occupation—the higher the score, the more respected that individual (or group) will be in the community.

The average occupational score and SEI for Wilmington-area African Americans in 1900 and 1910 was lower than that of the rest of the state's African American workers, this likely reflects both the white supremacy's campaign promise to hire white workers over black, and the exodus from the city of many skilled workers who sought employment elsewhere. By 1920, the scores had increased to above the state average, probably indicative of the influx of industrial workers and related occupations during the wartime buildup. These figures show that the majority of Wilmington's black workers were employed in low paying jobs with little prestige when above the statewide figure by 1910 and maintained the increase through 1920. Again, the jump could well be due to the strong focus placed on improving the plight of white workers compared to their counterparts in the rest of

Data for Wilmington African Americans compared to North Carolina African Americans

Variable	1880		1900		1910		1920	
	Wilm.	NC	Wilm.	NC	Wilm.	NC	Wilm.	NC
Occupational Score	9.60	8.67	8.06	9.5	8.97	9.99	10.44	9.75
SEI (social/economic index)	7.20	6.66	7.07	8.1	7.77	9.14	9.72	9.43

Data for Wilmington Whites compared to North Carolina Whites

Variable	1880		1900		1910		1920	
	Wilm.	NC	Wilm.	NC	Wilm.	NC	Wilm.	NC
Occupational Score	9.74	8.51	8.53	9.80	12.01	10.89	12.85	11.37
SEI (social/economic index)	11.29	9.28	7.90	11.40	14.79	12.60	16.20	13.92

the state. The occupational score for the Wilmington area's white workers was below the state average in 1900 but jumped well white workers following the 1898 campaign. It is interesting to note that the occupational score and SEI for both Wilmington's black and white residents were in close proximity in 1900, with only a few tenths separating the two scores. By 1910, the disparity between the two sets of scores is much larger, with Wilmington's black population staying at much the same level. By 1920, the numbers for the occupational score were slightly closer, with whites still working in more higher paying jobs than blacks. The SEI score difference, however, is great in that year, with nearly 7 points separating the two races, indicating that whites enjoyed a higher status level and economic return with their jobs.

Case Studies

Demographic study of some of the key participants in 1898 shows that a shift took place in the city over the decade following the riot. A primary reason for this shift was that of the 33 men who were members of the Committee of Colored Citizens summoned by whites, most were over the age of 40, with the largest majority of the men over 50. Many of the men on the committee remained in the city and withstood the changes in society created by the whirlwind of 1898. Some of the men, such as Daniel Howard, John G. Norwood, and Thomas Rivera, were longtime leaders of the community and died within a few years of the riot, leaving their estates to children or relatives who then moved from the city once their connection to Wilmington's stable past was gone.[47]

Within the white community, most participants in the Democratic Party campaign were also over 40 although the average age of the men who were part of the Secret Nine was 37. Many of these leading white men were related to each other either by blood or marriage, further strengthening their ties to each other and the community. The aging black population with entrenched history in the city was replaced by a younger group with less of a connection to the city's infrastructure, and the younger white population built upon its already tight network of family and business relationships.[48]

Case studies of seven of the major African American targets provide a tangible understanding of the amorphous concept of shifting economic roles. Analysis of Daniel Howard, John G. Norwood, Isham Quick, Thomas C. Miller, John Goins, Elijah Green, and John C. Dancy provides insight into many of the changes that faced Wilmington's residents after 1898. Of these men, only one, Thomas C. Miller, was physically banished by the white leaders of the mob and coup d'etat on November 10. John Goins, an employee of Alex Manly's *Record*, left the city because of his association with the paper. The rest of the

---

[47] Daniel Howard died in 1909 and left the bulk of his substantial estate to be divided equally among his living children. By the 1910 census, only two of his sons were living in the city, and both were renting

their homes instead of living in property they owned as a result of their father's estate division. John Norwood's children were also scattered after 1898, with only two of his sons living in the city in 1900. By 1910, all of his sons were living in northern states. Rivera's adopted son, Thomas, moved his father's undertaking business to Durham in 1906, the year his father died. For more information on these and other African American families, see Appendix A.

[48] Approximate ages for the men were taken from the 1880 and 1900 census. Men such as Junius Davis, John Crow, Hardy and Henry Fennell, William R. Kenan, James Sprunt, William B. McKoy, Donald and Hugh MacRae, Iredell and Thomas Meares, Roger Moore, George Morton, Walter Parsely, George Rountree, Walker and J. Alan Taylor, Alfred M. Waddell, and Charles Worth were all inter-related through intermarriage or blood kinships.

men were impacted in various ways by the changes wrought by the violence and the unfriendly climate that followed.

Daniel Howard

Daniel Howard rose to prominence in Wilmington in the 1870s and 1880s. He led the Giblem Lodge, took an active role in Republican politics, led Emancipation Day celebrations, and served on various boards. He backed local black entrepreneurs in railroad development and life insurance enterprises. He also helped to establish the Metropolitan Trust Company, one of the most successful black enterprises in the city. Howard's occupation changed over time from drayman in 1870, to county jailer in 1880, to house carpenter in 1900. Howard owned property valued at almost $2,900 in eight locations in the city according to the 1897 tax listings. According to the 1900 tax listings, he retained his properties, which either held their value or increased slightly.

Howard died in 1909 at the age of 74, and in his will he divided his estate among his first and second wives and several children. Howard's will emphasized that his children should "share and share alike" and included a provision for the sale of some property so that the funds could be evenly divided among the siblings. Therefore, some of Howard's long-term property wealth was diminished for subsequent generations because some property was sold, and as other properties were subdivided as many as four or fives times. Consequently, the wealth and prosperity Daniel Howard had worked so hard to develop after Emancipation dissipated soon after his death and did not filter down to his children. By the 1910 census, only two of his sons were in the city ,and neither owned the homes where they lived. One son lived with his father-in-law while working as a carpenter, and the other

was a "scavenger" and lived on the outskirts of town in a rented house. However, one of Howard's sons, Benjamin, did reflect the changes brought on by improvements to the city's African American community after World War I. In 1924, he followed his father's example, helping to establish the Colored Chamber of Commerce. By that time, he had assumed a position as a letter carrier for the United States Postal Service and was paying a mortgage on his home. [49]

Howard's detailed estate record, provided by his executor for an explanation of income and expenses, is a telling snapshot of the city. Howard's estate saw income from his investment in the Virginia Life Insurance Company, the Wilmington Saving Trust Company, and the Atlantic Banking and Trust Company, as well as from the members of Giblem Lodge and property rentals and sales. The estate record indicates that Howard invested in both African American and white businesses and banks. Disbursements from his estate reflect a dependence on white professionals, but yet an attempt to use African American sources whenever possible. Howard used both white and black doctors for his treatment but relied on whites for his groceries, legal services, and the *Evening Dispatch* for newspaper services because, presumably, those services were not adequately supplied by the black community. Even though the African American business community had developed to service the needs of black residents, many, such as Howard, had to

---

[49] Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle,* 4, 23, 239, 294, 301-2, 319, 491; United States Census, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920; Daniel Howard will and estate records, New Hanover County records, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina; New Hanover County Tax Records, 1897, 1900, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina.

seek white businesses to accomplish their tasks.[50]

John G. Norwood

John G. Norwood was also a leading member of the community, serving as senior warden to St. Mark's Episcopal Church and as a longtime member of the Board of Directors of Pine Forest Cemetery. Norwood owned a great deal of land in Wilmington, totaling over $3,000 in value in 1897. By 1900, however, his property values had dropped to just over $2,700. Norwood was a carpenter throughout his life, and he provided educational opportunities for his seven children, enabling them to become carpenters, politicians, teachers, and musicians. In 1900, Norwood was 72 years old, and his son Charles, a carpenter who had been unemployed for the last six months, was living with him. One of his other sons was living in the city, owned his own home, and worked as a mail carrier. Norwood died in 1906 and in his will decreed that his property would be divided among his widow and children. By the 1910 census, none of his sons were living in the city. Two lived in New York, one lived in New Jersey, and another lived in Philadelphia. The sons rented their homes and held various jobs, including salesman, carpenter, letter carrier, and collector at the customs house in Philadelphia. Just as Howard's estate was divided among his sons, such was the fate of Norwood's property. However, Norwood's sons and their families were all gone from the city within four years of their father's death and had improved their lives somewhat, working in professional and semi-professional fields in several different northern states. For Wilmington, however, the male branches of the Norwood family

tree—potential generations of leadership in the community—were gone.[51]

Isham Quick

Study of Isham Quick and his family provides another avenue by which to understand the impact of 1898. Quick was born in South Carolina and had moved to Wilmington by 1867. It is unclear if he was a slave or a freeman before the Civil War (there were a large number of men and women of the Quick family that were free in 1860 South Carolina). By 1870, Quick was working as a drayman and had acquired real estate valued at $300. Quick remained a drayman for the rest of his working life and was able to support a large family throughout his lifetime, sending his children to school as he continued to acquire more property. Throughout his life, Quick acquired and sold multiple properties throughout the city, though in both the 1897 and 1900 tax records, he was listed as owning only two properties. The properties were valued at a total of $800 in 1897 but declined in value by 1900 to a total worth of $750.

Quick died sometime after 1910 and by the 1920 census, his children were less active than their father in business affairs. Most of his family remained in the city after their father's death, although one son, Isham, may have moved to New York by 1910. Two of his sons were working as draymen, and another was a porter with the Atlantic Coastline Railroad and two were renting their homes. Quick's wife and son William were able to maintain ownership of some property according to the census and

---

50 Daniel Howard estate records, New Hanover County estates, North Carolina State Archives.
[50] Daniel Howard estate records, New Hanover County estates, North Carolina State Archives.

[51] Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle*, 446-7; United States Census, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920; John G. Norwood estate records, New Hanover County Estate Records, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina; New Hanover County Tax Lists, 1897, 1900, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina.

1915 tax list. One of Quick's daughters, Cornelia, had moved in with William F. Dodd as his "adopted daughter" and was working as a nurse. No copy of Quick's will has survived in the official county records but, just as with Norwood and Howard, the property he acquired through hard work did not pass on the next generation. It is unclear how or why these next generations were unable to become property owners like their fathers, particularly when they inherited property by estate division.[52]

Elijah Green

Elijah Green provided a unique portrait of a man who remained in the city and prospered despite the changes forced by the white supremacy campaign. Green was employed as a stevedore at the Sprunt-owned cotton compress and was able to keep his job, eventually earning the title of foreman at Sprunt. Green was a trusted Sprunt employee and a leading African American. As a result, he was enlisted by Sprunt in August 1899 to travel to New York and Philadelphia in order to persuade as many as 100 of Sprunt's former workers to return to the city with promises of employment. It is unclear how many workers he encouraged to return. Green was part of a large extended family that included many well-connected leaders in the African American community. He owned his home and other properties in the city both before and after the riot and was able to overcome personal tragedy (all three of his children preceded him in death by 1900) to help his extended family by opening his home to nieces and nephews. Green died at the age

of 75 in 1930 and left his estate to his wife Emma. Green was an active member of his church, Price Chapel A.M.E. Zion, and, before the 1898 campaign, was an active member of the Republican Party. [53]

Thomas C. Miller

Two of the men in the case study were removed from the city by the effects of the riot. The first, Thomas C. Miller, was forcefully banished and managed to find a life for himself in Norfolk, Virginia before his death in 1903. A native of the city, Miller developed considerable holdings by the time of his eviction from the city.[54] Although Miller left the city on November 11th, his wife, adult son, and minor children remained in Wilmington. His wife, Annie, was also a native of the city and worked to manage Miller's vast property holdings on his behalf after he left. Despite the distance and difficulties, he recorded some deeds after he left and she won a court case as executrix of his estate.[55] Annie managed

---

[52] In depth studies of all of the deeds associated with the fathers and their offspring might provide insight into how the sons were divested on the properties over time. United States Census, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930; New Hanover County Tax Lists, 1897, 1900, 1915.

[53] Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle,* 399; United States Census, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920; *New York Times*, August 26, 1899.

[54] According to the 1897 and 1900 tax lists, Miller owned property valued over $3,000 in 1897 and by 1900, his property was valued at just over $5,500. Miller continued to buy and sell land after his banishment although the rates and quantities of transfers were greatly reduced when compared to his pre-November 1898 activity. New Hanover County Tax Lists, 1897, 1900; Cody, "After the Storm," 136-140.

[55] State Archives, New Hanover Estates Records, Thomas Miller: Annie Miller, wife and executrix of Miller's estate, took legal action on behalf of his estate in 1903. The first was against Andrew and Mary Pierce for non-payment on mortgage loan, her attorney was Marsden Bellamy. She won the suit and the land was sold to Walker Taylor for $675.00. Miller was due $537.27 on the account but was paid only $486.68 after payments to court ($23.95), past taxes ($139.37) and attorney fees ($25.00) were paid. The sheriff removed Pierces from property so Taylor could occupy it. In a second case, Annie Miller also

the estate for Miller's heirs in both North Carolina and Virginia. At least some of his children remained in the city and his son, Thomas, seemed to benefit in a small degree from his father's wealth. Thomas Miller, Jr. lived in his father's first home on North Sixth Street until his death in 1913 and his heirs sold the property in 1947.[56]

Miller was left distraught by what happened to him on November 10th and 11th and undoubtedly felt betrayed by men, black and white, that he had known since childhood. In a 1902 letter Miller discussed both business matters and his treatment with the white clerk of court, John D. Taylor. Miller asked Taylor to "pardon . . . the way I write . . . but when I think about it all knowing I am not Guilty it all most drives me mad – just to think how my own people could treat me as they have without a Cause knowingly. Oh my God." Miller had explained that he was treated "worse than a dog" but that he was "doing well" although he was not allowed to come to the city to his mother's funeral. Miller ended the letter as a "heartbroken" man. [57] Miller surely knew

that he was still an example for other blacks in the city because an 1899 article in the Wilmington *Messenger* stated that "there are two elements . . . among the negroes . . . the kindly, affectionate, faithful, sober, well-meaning class and the low, vicious, unprincipled, saucy, bullying dangerous class . . . there are not many Tom Millers among them, but when revolutions set in the Toms are politely invited to pack and go and keep going." Miller's body was returned to the city after his death for funeral services and burial at Pine Forest Cemetery.[58]

John Goins

Another man who was forced to leave the city in search of a new life following the violence of 1898 was John Goins. Goins was not a native of the city and was one of the youngest men affected by the riot. Only 29 at the time of the riot, Goins had worked himself up from a

---

filed suit against A.J. Taylor for non-payment of a loans owed by him to Thomas Miller dating from 1894, 1895, 1896. There are no records in the file as to the conclusion of the case.

[56] New Hanover County Public Library, T. C. Miller House File, Thomas Miller, New Hanover County Estate Records, North Carolina State Archives, New Hanover County Administrator's Bonds, North Carolina State Archives, New Hanover County Tax Lists, 1897 and 1900, North Carolina State Archives, New Hanover County Deed Book Index for Grantees and Grantors, North Carolina State Archives, Thomas Miller Death Certificate, City of Norfolk Death Records, Library of Virginia; Annie E. Miller administratrix of Miller estate and guardian of Charity Miller, City of Norfolk Corporation Court Record of Fiduciary Bonds, Library of Virginia.

[57] T. C. Miller, Norfolk, Virginia, to John D. Taylor, Clerk of Superior Court, Wilmington, July 9, 1902: "I have this day rec'd a letter from Mr. WM Cumming in regards to a Judgment of Mask and Reynolds and in reply I'll say among the few both

white and colored Dr. T.R. Mask has treated me right and I mean to treat him the same as I have all ways did others and if god be my helper I shall continue to do so not withstanding the way I have been treated etc for I have been treated not like human but worse than a dog and someday the Lord will punish them that punished me without a Cause. I am Well and doing Well the only thing that worries me is just to think that I were not allowed to come to my Mothers funeral she being 95 years of age and the oldest Citizen on Wrightsville sound just to think of it will last me to my grave if I were guilty of any Crime or was a Criminal it would not worri me in the least but oh my god just to think it is enough to run a sane man insane. Col I hope you will pardon me for the way I write you but when I think about it all knowing I am not Guilty it all most drives me mad – just to think how my own people could treat me as they have with out a Cause knowingly. Oh my god. Col please [cancel] the Judgment against Dr. Mask & Reynolds – I remain your heart broken Servant as usual/ T.C. Miller" New Hanover County Correspondence, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina.

[58] The article discussed preventing independent thinkers in the black community from prospering. Wilmington *Messenger,* November 30, 1899. Wilmington *Star*, March 27, 1903.

background as a South Carolina farm laborer with little education to working with Manly's press. By 1900, he was living with the Manly brothers and other "exiles" from North Carolina in Washington, D. C. and was working as a commercial printer. He remained in the city and continued to work as a printer for the next several decades, eventually finding a wife and securing a stable life for himself as a self-employed printer. Goins exemplified the improved conditions met by many men who fled the city as a result of November 10, 1898. A young man, Goins found another life in another city and built upon the business foundations he established in Wilmington. Other young men who left the city after the riot and found opportunity to prosper in other parts of the country were attorneys William Henderson and Armond Scott.[59]

John C. Dancy

Another highly successful African American who was present in the city at the time of the riot was John C. Dancy. Dancy was part of a larger family from Tarboro and enjoyed wide political connections and mutual respect of whites and blacks before the riot and had just come to the city for his second term as Collector for the Port in 1898. Because of his status as a federally appointed employee with political connection in Washington, D. C., Dancy escaped the violence of 1898 since the white leaders of the coup knew interference with Dancy would certainly result in federal intervention. Dancy left the city for a short while around the time of the violence but returned to serve his term as Collector until he was appointed to be the Register of Deeds for the District of Columbia by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1902.

Dancy became an influential spokesman for African Americans respected by many on both sides of the color line. In his speeches Dancy emphasized the need for African Americans to focus on improving the race as a whole even as he lauded the efforts of a wide spectrum of other leading blacks from Booker T. Washington to Frederick Douglass. Quite wealthy by the time of his death in Washington in 1920, Dancy exemplified a leadership formula that defined the limits of his accommodation of the tenets of white supremacy rhetoric. His connections and desire to bridge the gaps between the races extended to his son who became a leader in the Urban League.[60]

Mapping the City

Japanese scholar Hayumi Higuchi, while in graduate school at UNC-Chapel Hill in the 1970's, studied the changes in residential patterns in the city using the city directories from 1897, 1902, and 1905.[61] Higuchi found that in 1897 the core of the city was dominated by whites in a triangular pattern beginning with Ninth at Market working outward to Second at Dawson and at Campbell. One small exception could be found in two neighboring streets, North

---

[59] United States Census, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920; Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle,* 462-3; Cody, "After the Storm."

[60] Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle,* 384-6; Booker T. Washington Papers, Livingstone College; John C. Dancy, Jr., *Sand Against the Wind*, 60-71, 75; Louis T. Harlan, ed., *Booker T. Washington Papers*, v.5, 123-4; Powell, William, ed., "John C. Dancy," *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography.*

[61] Higuchi plotted every residence in the directory by race and then determined the percentage of race by street to understand the racial make-up of the city. If a street had fewer than 15% black occupants, it was considered a white street; if a street had 85% or more black, it was considered a black street. Other increments of the percentage of black residents on a street were also marked: 75-84%, 60-74%, 40-59%, 25-39%, 15-24%, 0-14%. The maps were not included in her original thesis but were shared for use in this work. New maps based on her work are included in this report.

Fourth and Princess near Market Street, where the racial mix was evenly distributed among whites and blacks. At the edges of this triangle were transition streets where blacks comprised as much as half of the population before the neighborhood became predominantly black. The transitions between predominately black neighborhoods and majority white neighborhoods were one to two blocks in length with higher concentrations of interracial neighborhoods along sections of South Sixth Street between Ann and Castle Streets and down Castle Street to Third. The area in which a predominately white neighborhood encroached on a predominately black neighborhood was the section of Brooklyn where the fighting broke out on November 10th. More white families than black lived along North Fourth Street but most of the cross streets were either predominantly black or transitional neighborhoods with a mixture of white and black residents. This encroachment and mixing may have played a role in the buildup of tensions that erupted on November 10th. Many of the men who claimed that their wives could not safely walk the streets lived in this neighborhood.

Higuchi analyzed two twentieth century directories in the same manner and noted the most change in occupation patterns by 1905 instead of immediately after the violence. By this time, the predominantly white sections of town had spread out and the transition blocks between the black and white sections were pushed further toward the perimeters of town. The small grouping of integrated neighborhoods along North Fourth and Princess near Market had disappeared. The large number blocks containing both black and white residents along Sixth and Castle Streets also disappeared with the concentration trending more toward a white majority. The area along North Fourth Street in Brooklyn was still a transition zone with slightly more

encroachment by whites into cross streets and onto North Fifth Street.

Overall, Higuchi's findings demonstrated the outflow of the city's African American residents away from the city center and the increase in white population as reflected in the census. Furthermore, she demonstrated the changes reflected in the attitudes toward blacks as neighbors. The city became more and more segregated with the advent of Jim Crow. Prior to the violence of 1898, the core of the city, including the business sector, was dominated by white residents but a few African Americans were able to maintain a foothold with land and homes acquired in traditionally white neighborhoods. However, after the violence of 1898 and the development of a more hostile environment for African American businesses and families, members of the African American community physically stepped back from their white neighbors and moved to the perimeter of the city. Just as the economic climate changed for the city's African Americans as many developed businesses for their own race, their neighborhoods also changed, becoming less integrated and more homogeneous. A new perspective of the violence of November 10th emerged through analysis of Higuchi's work because she demonstrated that the whites and blacks of Brooklyn lived in close proximity to each other in 1898 and became mortal enemies as neighbor shot neighbor.

Societal Change

Every facet of African American life was affected by the events of 1898. One of the first celebrations after the violence would have been the Christmas holiday season and the tradition of Jonnkonnu. Jonnkonnu was a custom dating to slavery in which blacks would dress in outlandish outfits, parade through white neighborhoods,

knock on doors and usually walk away with sweets or coins. The survival of Jonnkonnu in Wilmington after slavery was remarkable and by the 1880's the celebration had peaked in participation.[62] However, the violence of 1898 marked an end to the long tradition as Waddell's Board of Aldermen decreed on December 26, 1898 that "the wearing of disguises of any kind by any person or number of persons, whether in the form of masks or otherwise on the streets or other public places of the city is hereby prohibited." The new law was enforced by police arrest and $10 fine.[63] By mid twentieth century, oral tradition in the community among older African Americans agreed that the end of their Jonkonnu celebrations was due to the violence of 1898.[64] Whites took over the celebrations, with young boys following the "Coonering" tradition and enjoying the ritual for themselves as early as 1905.[65]

A second celebration that was cancelled as a result of the violence was the annual Emancipation Day observance. The celebration routinely took place on New Year's Day each year, with festivities including a parade, speeches and music. By 1874, a permanent organization had been created to organize the event and chairmen annually were selected to plan the celebration. The planning and preparations took place throughout the year and Emancipation Day was seen as a highlight of the year by many who recalled slavery. One of the largest commemorations took place in 1895, with a parade through the center of town and speeches given in a packed Thalian Hall. Wilmington's white newspapers routinely covered the event, but coverage became sporadic after November 1898. It is unclear if the January 1899 celebration, to be led by Andrew Walker, Luke Grady, James Howe, Elijah Green, and John Holloway, took place. The Wilmington *Messenger* noted that the parade was not held, but services could have taken place in churches. The local leaders reorganized and by 1902 the day was once again marked by speeches, parades, and music.[66] Emancipation Day celebrations declined nationwide around 1910 although they persisted in Wilmington with regularity until mid-century. The decline in commemorating the day has been seen by

---

[62] For a detailed description of Jonkonnu in North Carolina, see Elizabeth A. Fenn, " 'A Perfect Equality Seemed to Reign': Slave Society and Jonkonnu," *North Carolina Historical Review*, (April 1988), 127-153.

[63] Laws with similar wording had been passed during the height of the Ku Klux Klan movement in order to discourage the use of masks to protect men who threatened or attacked blacks in the 1870's. This ordinance was clearly designed to affect the Jonkonnu celebrations. Minutes of the Board of Aldermen, December 26, 1898, Wilmington, North Carolina, North Carolina State Archives.

[64] Fenn, "Slave Society and Jonkonnu,"

[65] William B. McKoy, *Wilmington, N. C.: Do You Remember When?* (Greenville, S.C.: Privately Published, 1957), 141-145.

[66] Most Emancipation Day celebrations were held in local churches instead of public spaces such as Thalian Hall. Historian Fitzhugh Brundage has called early Emancipation Day celebrations a way for blacks to "celebrate their history and participate in civic life in ways that had been impossible during slavery." He contended that the commemorations were "an unmistakable challenge to white understandings of the past." Historian Mitch Kachun suggested that, despite racial violence throughout the South, Emancipation Day celebrations persisted "to a greater extent than one might expect." However, Kachun explained that, instead of public spectacles lauding the merits of African American citizenship and pressing participants to push forward in every way, speeches urged "racial harmony" and statements meant to appease whites. Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle,* 3-6; Wilmington *Messenger* January 3, 1899, January 2, 1903; Wilmington *Star*, January 2, 1898; W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Belknap Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2005) 10; Mitch Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations, 1808-1915* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 178-181.

one historian as a normal shift in cultural focus, one in which the community saw a greater purpose in working toward the current issue of regaining access to civil rights that had been taken away.[67]

The effect of the riot on the Masons and other fraternal orders is largely unknown but, since fraternal orders were the cornerstone of community and provided benevolent assistance, it can be surmised that their role became more pronounced and vital to the development of an independent African American community.[68] Masonic lodges in North Carolina opened soon after the Civil War; and the primary members of the lodges were landowners and skilled tradesmen. In fact, more than half of Giblem Lodge's members were landowners. There was a close connection between membership in a lodge and economic success. Communities such as Wilmington that were supported by a strong and active lodge benefited financially. However, Giblem experienced a major shift in membership by the turn of the century. Only five of its officers in 1900 had been members for more than ten years and many of the lodges founding members and established leaders were no longer involved in the organization. Due to the shift in membership, and reflective of the fact that many of the lodges new members lacked institutional memory or were financially secure landholders, the overall economic status of lodge members was lower in 1900

than when the lodge was founded in 1870.[69] Despite the changes of faces within the lodge, Giblem's members aided the business community by housing businesses in its large hall at the corner of Eighth and Princess Streets and renting portions of its other properties to black businesses.[70] Further, the lodge continued to participate as a part of the larger statewide and national organization to provide death benefits to members' widows and children.

A bulwark of the African American community was the network of religious institutions that developed in the city over the decades following emancipation. Prominent churches such as St. Stephen's A. M. E. Zion, St. Mark's Episcopal, and Christ's Congregational (later Gregory) shepherded their congregations through the aftermath of the riot and provided a core of stability for the city's African American community. Just as the black business community learned new methods to adapt to the purchasing power of their customers, churches developed methods to help many of the city's residents through the difficulties of newfound unemployment and poverty well into the twentieth century.[71] Despite financial declines among the city's African Americans, parishioners maintained their churches, keeping the buildings and grounds in good repair and providing consistent improvements. The churches funded their activities through various methods, including local fundraisers as well as

---

[67] Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom,* 260.

[68] Wilmington supported a number of fraternal organizations in addition to the Masons for both men and women. The second largest male organization was the Odd Fellows. Women also created fraternal clubs of their own, most of which were benevolent or charity organizations. For a detailed description of many of the clubs and societies that prospered in Wilmington, see Bill Reaves' *Strength Through Struggle.*

[69] Membership in the lodge was contingent on prompt payment of monthly fees. Failure to pay the fees resulted in revocation of membership. Kenzer found that only about 1/3 of the new members of Giblem Lodge owned real estate whereas almost half of the lodge's founders owned property in the city. Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners,* 69-72.

[70] Kenzer, 73.

[71] St. Mark's Episcopal Church operated several missions in the city including a school on Harnett Street and a supervised summer playground facility on North Eighth. Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle,* 135-6.

sending ministers to visit northern churches and donors. [72]

It is unknown what path local church leaders followed in the months following the riot but the national A .M. E. Zion church, led by men such as North Carolina's Bishop James Walker Hood, sought to bridge the gap between opposing viewpoints within the church as to how African Americans should deal with the "race question." At one extreme was Booker T. Washington who preached temporary surrender of voting and civil rights in favor of educational improvement. Opposing Washington were others such as Timothy T. Fortune who pressed for nothing less than full equality for blacks and justice for those who had been hurt by white mobs. The A.M.E. Zion church chose to encourage a middle-of-the-road path – encouraging education, economic prosperity and dedication to a long-term goal of equality and unlimited freedoms for blacks. [73]

Although several ministers had been targeted to leave the city as a result of their active participation in Republican Party politics, many remained. Of these some likely took a less conspicuous position in political debate or sought to adopt a stance considered less militant in the eyes of whites. In 1915 the ministerial union, which was dissolved in 1898, was re-formed. The new union followed the example set by the earlier group and sought methods to organize the city's churches in order to provide leadership to the community in all matters, religious and civic. [74]

A study of the leading churches in the city, based upon the 1897, 1900 and 1903 city directories, shows that most of the city's African American church congregations survived the violence and continued to function in various sectors of the city. [75] Only one congregation in the city – St. Thomas Catholic Church – was racially integrated in the years surrounding the violence. However, the white members of the congregation turned the church over to its black members in 1911 when the new St. Mary Church was completed. [76] Some

---

[72] In 1899 Mt. Olive was undergoing remodeling. In 1901, St. Mark's raised funds for its programs and for repairs to the chancel and rectory through a presentation of a melodrama at the Opera House and by sponsoring a trip by its pastor to Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia and New Jersey. Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle,* 112, 134.

[73] Bishop William J. Walls, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church: Reality of the Black Church*, (Charlotte, N.C. : A. M. E. Zion Publishing House, 1974), 507-511.

[74] The ministerial union was dissolved after the coup and violence of 1898 because it was perceived by white leaders that the ministers who participated in the union worked to develop Republican Party backing within their congregations as well as to organize a united, and potentially armed, resistance to the white supremacy campaign. As evidence, white leaders pointed to the ministerial union's public support of Alex Manly as well as the fact that several ministers were also leading members of the county's Republican Party. For more on the ministerial union's involvement in pre-election matters, see Chapter 4. Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle,* 143.

[75] Andrew Kraft studied Wilmington's churches in his geographic study of the city. Two of his maps charted the city's white and black churches using the 1897 and 1903 city directories. Comparison of his maps indicated that some African American churches, found in the 1897 city directory either moved or were displaced by white churches by 1903. However, study of the lists of churches in the city shows that he incorrectly identified two churches, St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church and the Fifth Street Methodist Episcopal Church as African American churches when, in fact, they were white churches. A new comparison of the city's churches before and after the violence of 1898 using the city directories, Sanborn maps and Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle* shows that although some churches went through some reorganization and name changes following 1898, the locations and basic religious framework established before 1898 remained in place following the violence. See chapter 1 map of African American churches.

[76] Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle,* 121 – 122; Wrenn, *Wilmington, North Carolina: An Architectural and Historical Portrait,* 224-227.

smaller churches, such as Mount Calvary (also known as Mount Moriah) moved around within the city in the years following the riot before they established a firm base. One immediate problem facing some of the churches was a steep decline in attendance. The congregations of all churches diminished in size in the immediate weeks and months following the violence because of the mass exodus of blacks from the city. Because of the out-migration that occurred following the violence, local oral tradition holds that St. Stephen's lost about 800 members, about half of its congregation.[77]

Collective Memory

As the men, women and children who were in the city in 1898 aged, knowledge of the violence and coup was maintained within the community. The narrative, or explanation, of what happened and why it happened varied according to the age, sex, race, and economic position that narrators occupied in the 20th century. Most white upper class families maintained that the coup and violence were necessary evils and that they did what was necessary to end municipal corruption and dangerous conditions. Some African American families, particularly those that remained in the city through the exodus, informed their

children about the riot and warned children to be wary of whites. Still more African Americans moved to the city after the violence from the countryside to fill the vacancies left by migration. These newcomers, many of whom arrived fully understanding the ramifications of Jim Crow legislation and racial hatred, learned to adapt and live in the city separated from whites in a way never experienced until the cataclysm of November 1898. [78]

The African American story of the riot took shape, in part, as an object lesson on the lengths whites would go to in order to achieve their agenda. The stories also helped to educate future generations about the difficult relationships between whites and blacks in the city, particularly learning which whites were sympathetic to the plight of blacks. For example, Lura Beam, a white northern teacher who arrived in Wilmington to teach African American students between 1908 and 1910, observed that her students "hated the mass of white people but they were proud of learned people, the local cotton king, his home, his family and his horses." She also noted that they had "contempt" for the foreigners in town. Despite financial hardships, her native students were proud of their Cape Fear heritage. [79]

Providing further insight into the culture of post-1898 Wilmington, Beam demonstrated that she also learned to be wary of local native whites. As a white woman and outsider who entered the tense world of post-1898 Wilmington, Beam experienced perils as a teacher and was warned by another white teacher from Massachusetts that there was a "policy" that

---

[77] Attempts were made to study the records of some of the city's African American A.M.E. churches for this project. The early records of St. Stephen's are scant and in poor condition – the earliest ledger dated to 1898 and recorded Sunday school information. Other records for the church date to the twentieth century. Overall, the records of St. Stephen's do not provide much detail about the church's congregation before or after the riot. The records of St. Luke's cannot be located. The church experienced a catastrophic fire during the mid-twentieth century and its records could have been destroyed at that time. A search of the records at the Heritage Hall at Livingstone College did not provide any additional information. Interview with Reverend John Burton of St. Stephen's April 31, 2004.

[78] For more information on the memory of the riot and its long-term impact on the city, see Leslie Hossfeld, *Narrative, Political Unconscious and Racial Violence in Wilmington, North Carolina* (New York: Routledge, 2005) and Appendix M.

[79] Lura Beam, *He Called Them by the Lightening*, 15, 18, 27, 36.

dated to the Civil War regarding black/white interaction in the city. That teacher had been in Wilmington during the riot and she told Beam where 23 murders had occurred and that fires had burned along streets that she walked and that many families still in the city had to run for their lives during the riot. Because of such simmering undercurrents, Beam sensed the "smell of fear" in Wilmington. Blacks related horrors of 1898 to her such as stories of hiding in marshes and swamps where men pretended to be cypress trees as they hid from bloodhounds that were sent into woods to find them. One family recounted burying their silver and never recovered it. Beam learned to be wary of whites and blacks would not speak to her in the street to protect both her and themselves lest someone would perceive that a white woman was endangered or that she fraternized with African American men.[80] Beam's "education" into black/white roles and relationships was undoubtedly repeated throughout the city for newcomers of all races, ages, and occupations.[81]

As for the white narrative of the violence and coup, Wilmingtonians suggested that their actions had been necessary to restore order to the city. In the years that followed, the city attempted to attract new businesses and capital in order to diversify its economy according to the New South model. The 1900 city directory boasted that the city's population had grown since 1897: "In view of the vicissitudes through which Wilmington has passed since our last publication, this gain is not only gratifying but surprising."[82] In this veiled reference to the violence, the directory compilers boasted about the city's ability to grow despite the troubles of Negro rule and the violence necessary to restore order. In 1902, the city's Chamber of Commerce produced a pamphlet designed to attract outside capital. The pamphlet heralded that it was not the "mission in these pages to devote any space to details connected with the early history of Wilmington. Our business is not with the past, but with the present."[83] Realizing the potential hazard of referencing the riot to potential investors, the organization simply chose to ignore it. The clearest allusion to the violence came in a discussion of the city's attributes which favored manufacturing: "The local government is now based upon strict ideas of economy consistent with safe and secure progress." Three years later, the local press

---

[80] Beam, *He Called Them by the Lightening,* 28.

[81] Another story of how the violence of 1898 affected the African American community has come from the family history of Gwendolyn Cottman. Cottman's family genealogy, *Just Us*, details her family's lives over several generations. Dispersed within the pages is an underlying story of how her family's collective memory of 1898 affected how children were reared, how family history was told, and how children viewed elderly members of the community who recalled the horrors of 1898. An interesting topic appeared in Cottman's work—the existence of vacant homes in Brooklyn. Cottman never knew why the homes were vacant but research into several homes indicated in her work in the neighborhood around North Tenth/McRae/North Ninth/North Eighth Streets is insightful. A study of the block book, census, Sanborn maps, and tax lists for blocks 327, 310, and 297, blocks referenced by Cottman, show that in the 1920s there were several properties owned by blacks but were considered "vacant and open." It is unclear why some people owned homes in the city but yet left them fully furnished, unlocked and open

for years. Cottman points out that these homes were later torn down by the city. More research is needed to understand how or why some African American property owners such as Timon Council maintained ownership of property in the city but lived in other parts of the state. Council owned property at 1107 N. Ninth Street in the 1920s but lived in Cumberland County. Gwendolyn Cottman, *Just Us* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, Inc., 2002), 62-64, 75-76, 81-87, 222; 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Wilmington; 1920 and 1930 census.

[82] Wilmington City Directory, 1900, n.p.

[83] *Wilmington Up-to-Date: The Metropolis of North Carolina Graphically Portrayed* (Wilmington: W.L. De Rossett, 1902), n.p.

suggested that the end of rioting marked the beginning of "an era of prosperity which has advanced the city greatly commercially, and this era still holds forth and is bringing increased progressiveness and prosperity to Wilmington."[84] The differentiation between past political conditions and contemporary conditions suggested that the city had changed hands without referring to the means or the cost of the takeover. The city's businessmen advocated silence on the issue, but the local mentality attributed prosperity to the violence.

As the city's leading white businessman and amateur historian, James Sprunt chronicled the event in his landmark history of the Cape Fear published in 1916 and still used as a standard reference by many historians:

> *The year 1898 marked an epoch in the history of North Carolina, and especially the city of Wilmington. Long continued evils, borne by the community with a patience that seems incredible, and which it is no part of my purpose to describe, culminated, on the 10th day of November, in a radical revolution, accompanied by bloodshed and a thorough reorganization of social and political conditions. .... It was only under stern necessity that the action of the white people was taken, and while some of the incidents were deplored by the whites generally, yet when we consider the peaceable and amicable relations that have since existed, the good government established and maintained, and the prosperous, happy conditions that have marked the succeeding years, we realize that the results of the Revolution of 1898 have indeed been a blessing to the community.[85]*

Sprunt's narrative reflected the traditional story of the violence as developed by participating and leading whites to justify their actions. This concept – that the armed overthrow, or revolution, was necessary to restore order and prosperity to the city – has become the standard belief for many as to why the violence occurred on November tenth. However, after careful study it is clear that such a simple explanation cannot suffice for all members of the community nor was it truly the reason for the violence.

The causes and effects of the riot, neatly packaged by Wilmington's elite became the standard story for inclusion in all statewide histories by historians such as R. D. W. Connor, J. G. deRoulhac Hamilton, and Samuel A. Ashe. These men chronicled the history of the state during the first half of the twentieth century, and their prevailing assumptions regarding Wilmington's African American population were clouded by previous authorship and close association with some who participated in the coup and violence.

As generations of Wilmingtonians have shared the stories of 1898, historical fact and fiction have merged, creating alternative narratives that combine hearsay, fact, fictionalized accounts, and episodes from other parts of the city's history. An often repeated story is that the heads of black men who died on November 10 were placed on pikes along the major entrances to the city. No historical data has been found to prove such activity happened in 1898. However, such displays were found in and around the city in 1831 following the hysteria that blossomed in the region as a response to the 1831 Nat Turner insurrection in Virginia.[86] Harry Hayden fueled the confusion when, in his works, he referenced the 1831 events. Hayden stated that blacks and "white agitators" would have done well to delve into the city's history, remarking

---

[84] "The 'Riot' Seven Years Old," Reaves Clippings, New Hanover County Public Library.

[85] James Sprunt, *Chronicles of the Cape Fear River, 1660-1916*, 554-555.

[86] Charles Edward Morris, "Panic and Reprisal: Reaction in North Carolina to the Nat Turner Insurrection, 1831 *North Carolina Historical Review* (January 1985) 62:29-52.

that rioting in the city was rampant in 1831 with a number of "unruly negroes put to death." He recounted that in 1831, the heads of men killed because of supposed ties to slave insurrection conspiracies were placed on pikes in conspicuous areas as a warning to others "bent upon stirring up racial tensions."[87]

Wilmington's Riot and Racial Clashes in the South

Racial tensions and explosions of violence directed against African Americans were not uncommon in the South at the turn of the twentieth century. The fear and actuality of slave uprisings prior to the Civil War and the growth of spontaneous lynch mobs of the late 19th century created a cult of violence. Although clashes between more than one black and more than one white have been called race riots, historian Paul Gilje has sought to clarify the term and the overall phenomenon of rioting in the United States. Gilje defined a "riot" as "any group of twelve or more people attempting to assert their will immediately through the use of force outside the normal bounds of law." [88] Gilje further noted that the first race riots were white invasions of African American communities but, after World War II, African Americans used the riot as a tool to vent their frustration with failures in social, political and economic progress. However, Gilje and other historians have noted that white rioters killed blacks while destroying black property and that such riots

were followed by a suppression of the black voice in politics and the media whereas black rioters usually only destroyed white property and their actions rarely led to bloodshed. [89] In order to distinguish between the two types of upheavals, historian H. Leon Prather suggested alternative and more appropriate labels for the racial clashes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: massacre, pogrom, or race war.[90]

Wilmington's riot followed a model of white invasion into black neighborhoods, loss of black property, and the deaths of black citizens plus the creation of a virtually silent African American population. Wilmington's riot was the first of its kind in the industrial age although there were scores of lynchings taking place throughout the South each year. Prior to 1898, three noteworthy race riots took place in the South. Of these, two were in 1866 in response to Reconstruction woes in Memphis, Tennessee and New Orleans and the third, in Danville, Virginia in 1883, occurred much as Wilmington's riot – during election season and in response to attempts by blacks to exercise their full rights as citizens in public spaces. [91]

---

[87] Another interesting oral tradition is that there were truly guns in the basement of St. Stephen's AMEC Church. The tradition holds that the weapons were stored in a concealed entrance to an underground tunnel or crawlspace created beneath the church by members who constructed the building. Hayden, "Introduction to the Wilmington Rebellion," 35-36.

[88] Paul Gilje, *Rioting in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 4.

[89] Charles Crowe, "Racial Massacre in Atlanta September 22, 1906," *Journal of Negro History* 54 (April 1969): 150; Gilje, *Rioting in America*, pg. 155.

[90] In discussion of November 10, 1898 in Wilmington, Prather has also added the term, coup d'etat to the lexicon. In his groundbreaking study of the riot, *We Have Taken a City,* Prather argued that the violence and resignations of the Board of Aldermen under duress constituted nothing less than an armed takeover of the city's government. H. Leon Prather, "Race Riots," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, ed. by Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989): pg. 1496.

[91] Gilge, *Rioting in America*, 96-7; James G. Hollandsworth, Jr., *An Absolute Massacre: The New Orleans Race Riot of July 30, 1866* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001); Jane Dailey, "Deference and Violence in the Postbellum Urban South: Manners and Massacres in Danville,

The year 1898 marked a turning point in violent race relations across the country. At the same time Wilmington was dealing with its violence, Phoenix, South Carolina underwent a violent episode in which at least 13 men, including one white man, were killed by white mobs. After Wilmington's riot, followed closely in the press throughout the country, other states experienced similar unrest within a short span of time. Within 25 years of Wilmington's riot, at least six other major race riots occurred throughout the country in which blacks lost their lives, property, and experienced ever tightening controls on their rights. In all cases, the numbers of black dead were never fully tallied with estimates ranging from as few as seven dead in the Springfield, Illinois riot to as many as 500 injured in Chicago. Massive property damage and a mass exodus of blacks also followed. [92]

The Atlanta Riot of 1906 closely resembled the building tensions and outbreak of violence in Wilmington. Atlanta had struggled to recover from the Civil War and re-invent itself as a "New South" city. Attempts to revitalize the city faltered until the turn of the twentieth century and the violence in 1906 reflected growing tension between whites and blacks regarding segregated public spaces. The white rioters focused their attention on destruction of the upwardly mobile, successful black businessmen of the city. Additional impetus for the violence was linked to reports of black-on-white sexual assault. [93]

Although Georgia and Atlanta had experienced numerous lynchings, the violence in 1906 broke with tradition as white leaders looked to the model established by Wilmington's white leaders as they forced black businessmen from the city and took political control of the city. In fact, during political rallies, gubernatorial candidate Hoke Smith explicitly indicated

Virginia," *Journal of Southern History* 63 (August 1997), 553-590.

[92] The riots in chronological order: Atlanta, GA (1906), Springfield, IL (1908), East St. Louis, IL (1917), Chicago, IL (1919), Tulsa, OK (1921), Rosewood, FL (1923). Ray Stannard Baker, *Following the Colour Line: An Account of Negro Citizenship in the American Democracy* (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1908); Charles Crowe, "Racial Violence and Social Reform: Origins of the Atlanta Riot of 1906," *Journal of Negro History* 53 (July 1968): 234-256; Charles Crowe, "Racial Massacre in Atlanta September 22, 1906," *Journal of Negro History* 54 (April 1969): 150-173; Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Allison Dorsey, *To Build Our Lives Together: Community Formation in Black Atlanta, 1875-1906* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004); Gregory Mixon, *The Atlanta Riot: Race, Class, and Violence in a New South City* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005); Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); Alfred L. Brophy, *Reconstructing a Dreamland: The Tulsa Riot of 1921: Race Reparations, and Reconciliation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); R. Thomas

Dye, "The Rosewood Massacre: History and the Making of Public Policy," *The Public Historian* 19 (Summer 1997): 25-39; Maxine D. Jones, "The Rosewood Massacre and the Women Who Survived It," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 76 (Fall 1997): 193-208; Phillip S. Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619-1973* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 136-7, 144.

[93] Don Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 13, 34-37, 318; Gregory Mixon, *The Atlanta Riot: Race, Class, and Violence in a New South City* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 86; Charles Crowe, "Racial Violence and Social Reform: Origins of the Atlanta Riot of 1906," *Journal of Negro History* 53 (July 1968), 158, 236; Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pg. 124-126, 178-179; Allison Dorsey, *To Build Our Lives Together: Community Formation in Black Atlanta, 1875-1906* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 159.

his willingness to recreate the violence that had overturned Fusion rule in Wilmington.[94] The bravado of the Atlanta campaign suggests that the lack of governmental response to the violence in Wilmington gave Southerners implicit license to suppress the black community under the right circumstances, as, for example, in response to a perceived black crime wave. Just as Wilmington whites used newspapers to assist in their attempts to regain power, Atlanta's leaders used Georgia papers to fuel the flames of the impending riot and subsequently to provide a modicum of calm and justification for the violence.[95]

Following the Wilmington and Atlanta riots, southern states experienced relative calm since whites had gained a strong footing in their control over blacks through Jim Crow legislation and intimidation. White lynch mobs still held both whites and blacks in check. However, by the 1921 Tulsa riot and the 1923 Rosewood riot, the threat of black-on-white sexual assault still proved to be a strong force in instigating violence that spread to include large numbers of black victims and black property loss. Further, the lack of state and federal response to vigilante violence demonstrated a tolerance of such behavior by white leaders, nearly sanctioning the activity through nonintervention.[96]

Tulsa's riot represented likely the most violent racial clash in American history. After an initial encounter between whites and blacks outside the city's jail on the night of May 31, 1921, whites prepared their invasion. The Tulsa police department deputized dozens of whites who murdered African Americans. White mobs looted black homes before setting them on fire. Blacks attempted to defend themselves by taking up arms against the white invasion, but the state militia entered the African American enclave known as Greenwood and disarmed blacks and confined them to city parks, leaving their homes and families unprotected. Thirty-five blocks, the heart of the city's black community, were destroyed. Estimates of the death toll vary from 75 to 300. Legal scholar Alfred L. Brophy emphasized the role of the state guard in facilitating the destruction of the black community, in a manner not entirely different from the activities witnessed in Wilmington and Atlanta.[97]

Whereas some Wilmington whites believed that the riot marked a positive turning point in the city's history, those in the white communities in Atlanta and Tulsa recognized the need to present their riots as aberrations and placate the black community. Their efforts appear to have been directed more toward potential investors rather than black victims, particularly given the hollow effort toward compensation. Historian Wayne Mixon contended that Atlanta's commercial-civic elite orchestrated the riot to impose their vision of the city's future. Atlanta and Tulsa presented an image of a repentant white leadership that had restored the pre-riot order disrupted by the violence of the lower class of whites. In Atlanta, the Committee of Ten was formed to illustrate to outsiders that order had been restored and that white elites cared for their black neighbors. The Civic League and the Colored Cooperative were established to facilitate communication between the races. The Committee of Ten distributed relief, but their efforts reflected a

---

[94] Mixon, *The Atlanta Riot*, 69-70; Crowe, "Racial Violence and Social Reform," 243; Hunter, *'Joy*, 124.

[95] Ray Stannard Baker, *Following the Colour Line: An Account of Negro Citizenship in the American Democracy* (New York: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1908), 5.

[96] "A Documented History of the Incident Which Occurred at Rosewood, Florida, in January 1923" presented to the Florida House of Representatives, December 22, 1993.

[97] Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land*, chapter 3.

desire to restore paternalistic relations between whites and blacks. Blacks were expected to depend upon white elites for all of their needs. Many expressed their lack of confidence in white paternalism with their feet, fleeing the city for more hospitable northern communities.[98]

A Tulsa grand jury blamed African Americans for the riot, contending that there was no eminent threat of white violence. Despite receiving most of the blame from the white community, blacks actively pursued restitution, filing five million dollars worth of claims with the city; only one claim was honored. Within two years, more than one hundred suits had been filed stemming from property damage during the riot. Whites attempted to appease blacks on the one hand and steal their property on the other. One hundred thousand dollars was donated to relief rather than reconstruction of Greenwood. Simultaneously, the Tulsa Real Estate Exchange was formed in order to buy the scorched earth of Greenwood, relocate African Americans farther north, and replace black businesses with industrial development. County judges blocked the efforts, and it became clear that African Americans would have to rebuild on their own. In the years that followed the riot, Tulsa became a haven for the Ku Klux Klan, further isolating the city's African American community.[99]

In context, Wilmington's riot can be considered to be the first of its kind—an all-encompassing event that resulted in white invasion of African American neighborhoods, an unknown number of black deaths, property destruction, armed overthrow of a legally elected city government, and the marginalization of black political and economic concerns.[100] Future white-on-black race riots grew in scope, affecting many more African Americans and destroying much more property as whites grew bolder in the face of little opposition or retribution. The post-riot responses of the cities' white leaders reveal local concerns about race relations and, more importantly, progress. Inaction by state and federal governments validated the riots and demonstrated that white supremacy would triumph. White Wilmingtonians tended to search for greater good – peace, good government, safe streets, healthy business climate – served by their riot, whereas Atlantans and Tulsans pursued a policy of compensation that offered outsiders the appearance of peace and understanding between the races.[101]

---

[98] Mixon, *The Atlanta Riot*, pg. 117-119; Baker, *Following the Colour Line*, pg. 14.

[99] Alfred L. Brophy, *Reconstructing a Dreamland: The Tulsa Riot of 1921: Race Reparations, and Reconciliation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pg. 95-97.

[100] Other attempted governmental overthrows have come to light in the course of this report. Many examples are reflective of the municipal upheaval that was commonplace throughout the South during Reconstruction, particularly during military occupation. However, after the end of Reconstruction and into the twentieth century, there have been points in the histories of many cities where local mob rule forced its hand. Wilmington's event, unlike many others, was completely successful and was not overturned by federal or state forces at any point whereas many of the other coup d'etat attempts failed to have staying power. Events in San Francisco (1856), Athens, Tennessee (1946), Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana (1919), New Orleans (1874), and the Brooks-Baxter War in Arkansas (1874) have been reviewed.

[101] An unapologetic white business community of Wilmington quietly collected funds to "compensate the several negro lodges which owned the *Record* building that was accidentally burned." The men raised $690 and presented the funds to a black representative of the lodges because destruction of the building had not been the intention of the action but, instead, the destruction of the *Record*'s office property. At the same time, the papers lauded another black man who had acquired the destroyed press and had offered to melt it down to create souvenirs for sale. Another article praised the White Laborer's Union and remarked upon a wonderful new

gavel, carved from a wooden table in the destroyed *Record* office, presented to the Union from workers at the Wilmington Iron Works. Wilmington *Star,* February 3, 1899, March 17, 1899.

The Battlefield
William Cullen Bryant

Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again;
The eternal years of God are her's;
But Error, wounded, writhes with pain,
And died among his worshippers.

Yea, though thou lie upon the dust,
When those who helped thee flee in fear,
Die full of hope and manly trust,
Like those who fell in battle here.

Another hand thy sword shall wield,
Another hand the standard wave,
Till from the trumpet's mouth is pealed
The blast of triumph o'er thy grave!

** Portions of Bryant's poem were quoted in a speech given by an African American minister at the protest rally organized by Timothy T. Fortune on November 17, 1898 in New Jersey. The poem was originally published in the *United States Democratic Review,* v.1#1, printed in New York by J & HG Langley, in October, 1837.