

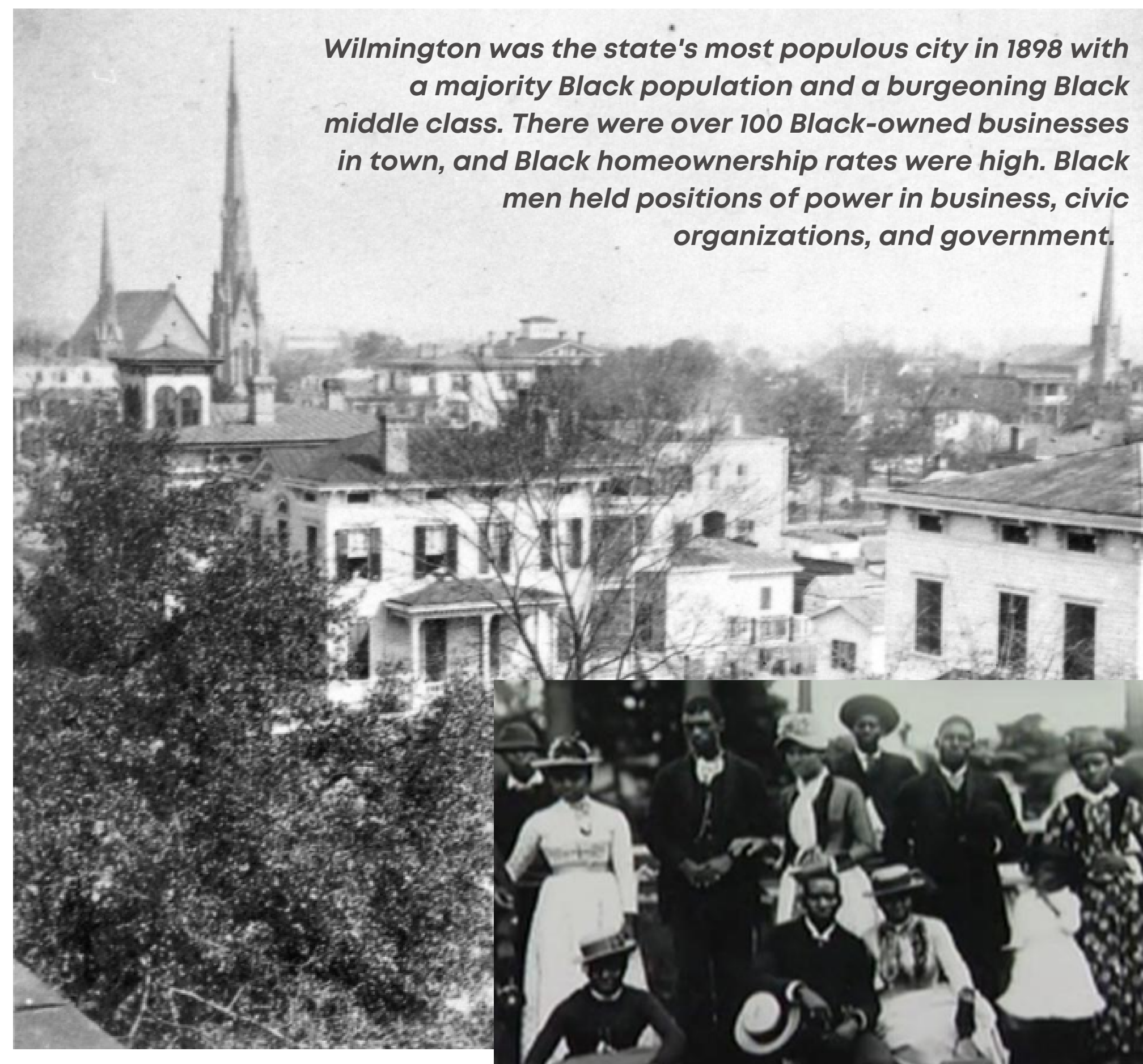
'THE STORM CENTER'

The White Supremacy Campaign of 1898

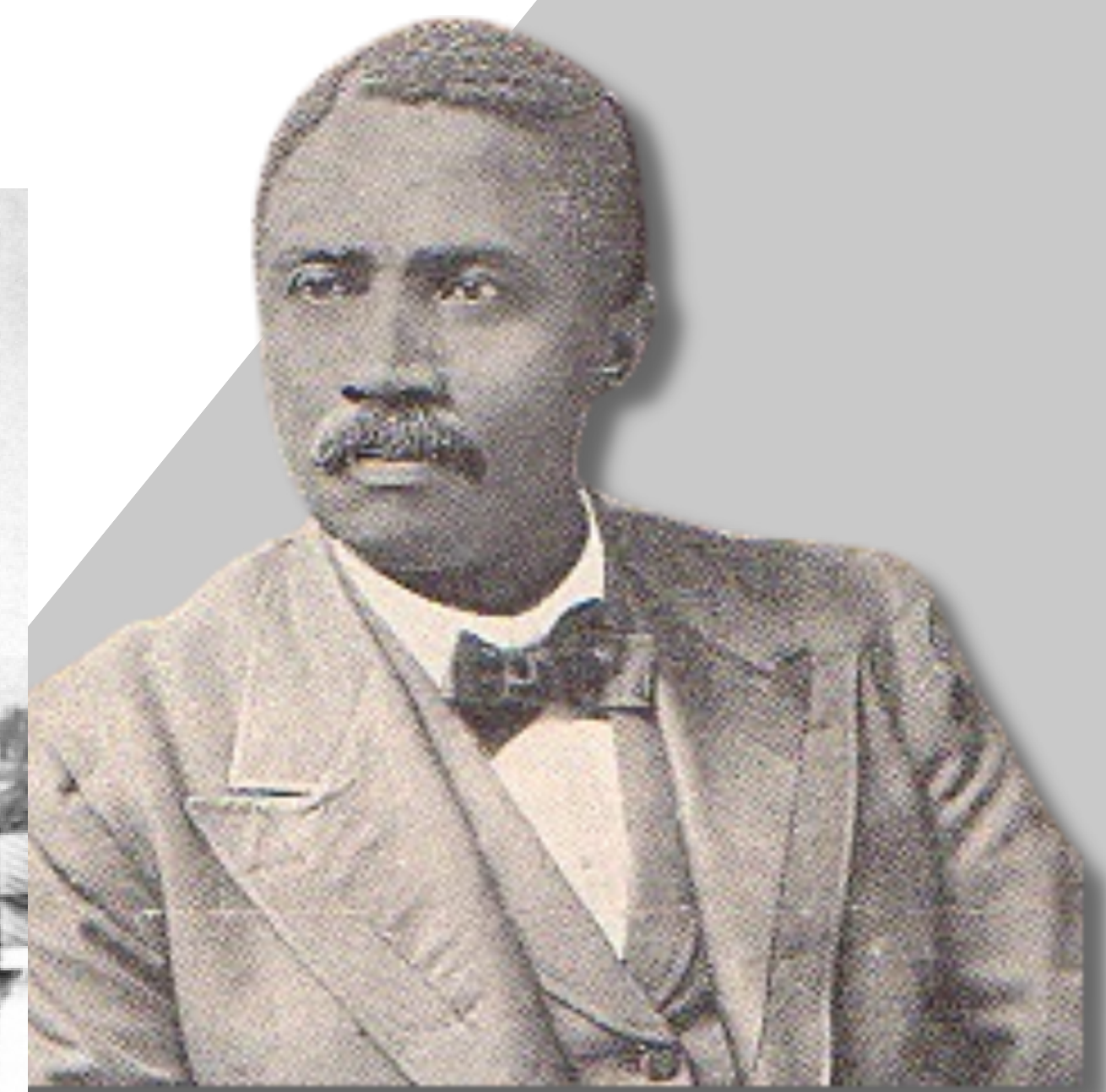
On November 10, 1898, two days after a seemingly peaceful election, mobs of White men terrorized the Black residents of Wilmington injuring and murdering an unknown number as well as exiling Black and White residents from town. The massacre and banishment were part of an organized coup d'etat planned and executed by influential townsmen to overthrow the city's biracial government.

The violence in Wilmington partially stemmed from a larger, statewide, white supremacy campaign launched by Democrats to take back elected positions from Republicans, Populists, and Fusionists—White and Black alike. This successful white supremacy campaign undid decades of Black progress in eastern North Carolina and had lasting effects on Wilmington's economic, social, and political landscapes.

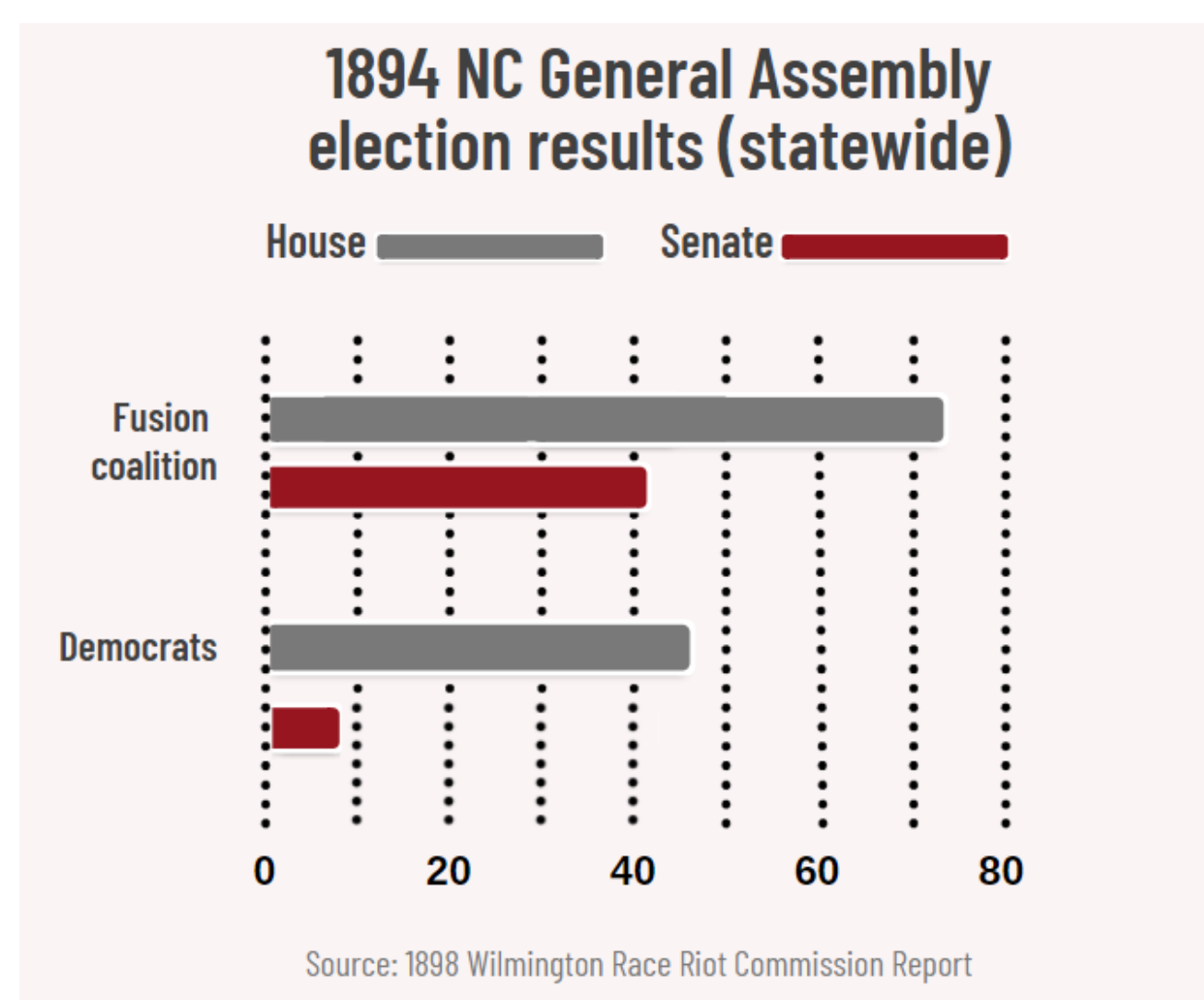
North Carolina's political balance shifted during the 1890s when a biracial effort between Republicans and Populists, a movement known as Fusionism, began defeating elected Democrats across the state. At this time, the Democratic Party included primarily former slaveowners and wealthy Whites. Fusionists took control of the state's General Assembly in 1894 and the governorship in 1896. By 1898, Democrats decided to run a statewide campaign of white supremacy using fear-mongering strategies in an attempt to divide Fusionists along racial lines and take back political power across the state.



Wilmington was the state's most populous city in 1898 with a majority Black population and a burgeoning Black middle class. There were over 100 Black-owned businesses in town, and Black homeownership rates were high. Black men held positions of power in business, civic organizations, and government.



John C. Dancy, above, was Wilmington's Collector of Customs, appointed by Presidents Harrison and McKinley. Dancy's salary was four times higher than that of North Carolina's governor. In 1897, Blacks held many public offices in Wilmington including members of the Board of Aldermen, the justice of the peace, deputy clerk of the superior court, coroner, policemen, and mail clerk. The city also boasted two Black fire departments and an all-Black board of health.

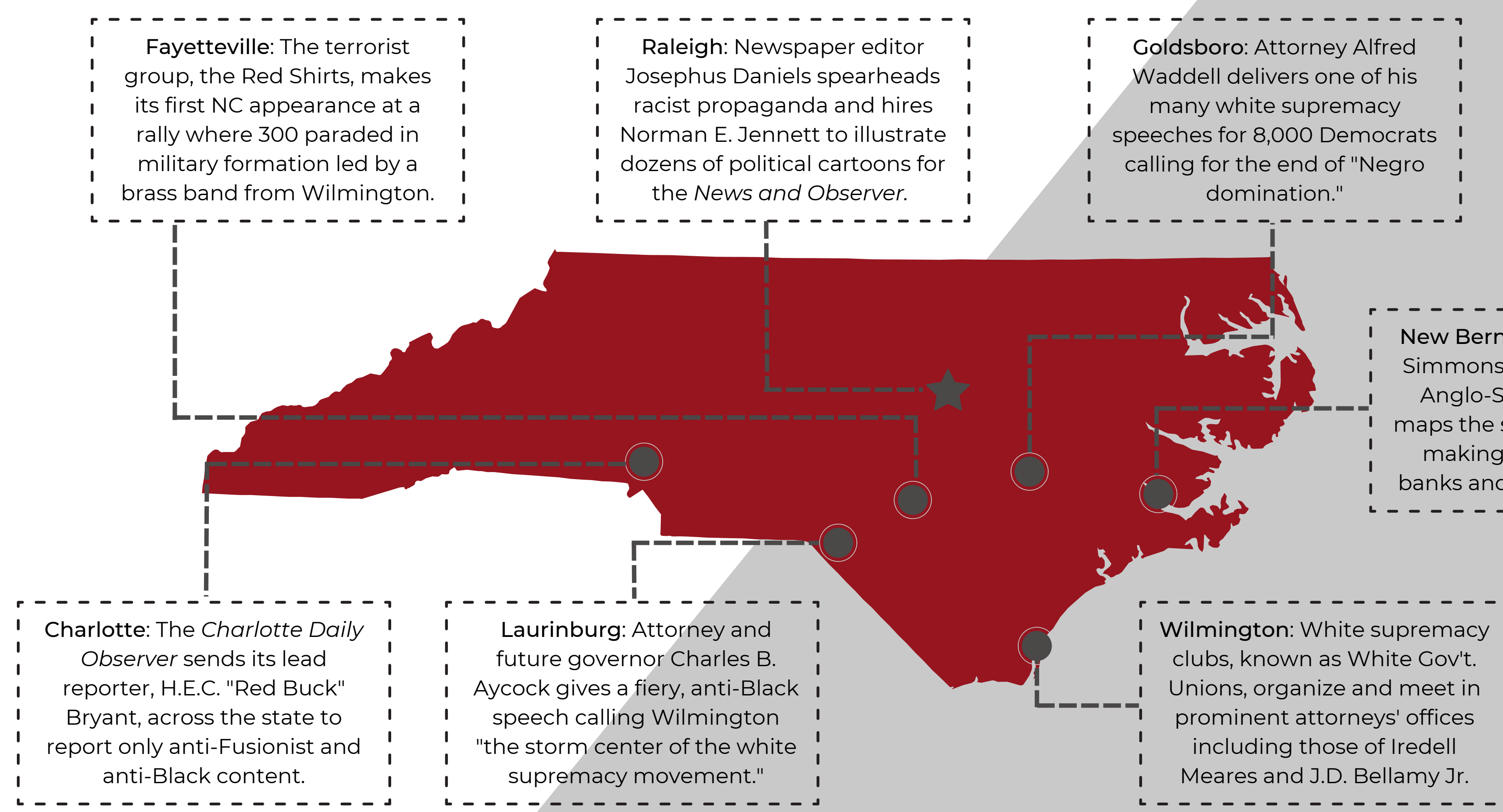


Raleigh's News and Observer ran these political cartoons in the weeks leading up to the 1898 election. Cartoonist Norman E. Jennett created these racist illustrations, along with 72 others, between August and November 1898. Targeted at illiterate Whites, the cartoons were used to exacerbate fears that Black enfranchisement emboldened Black men to rape White women and take White men's jobs.



A STATEWIDE CAMPAIGN

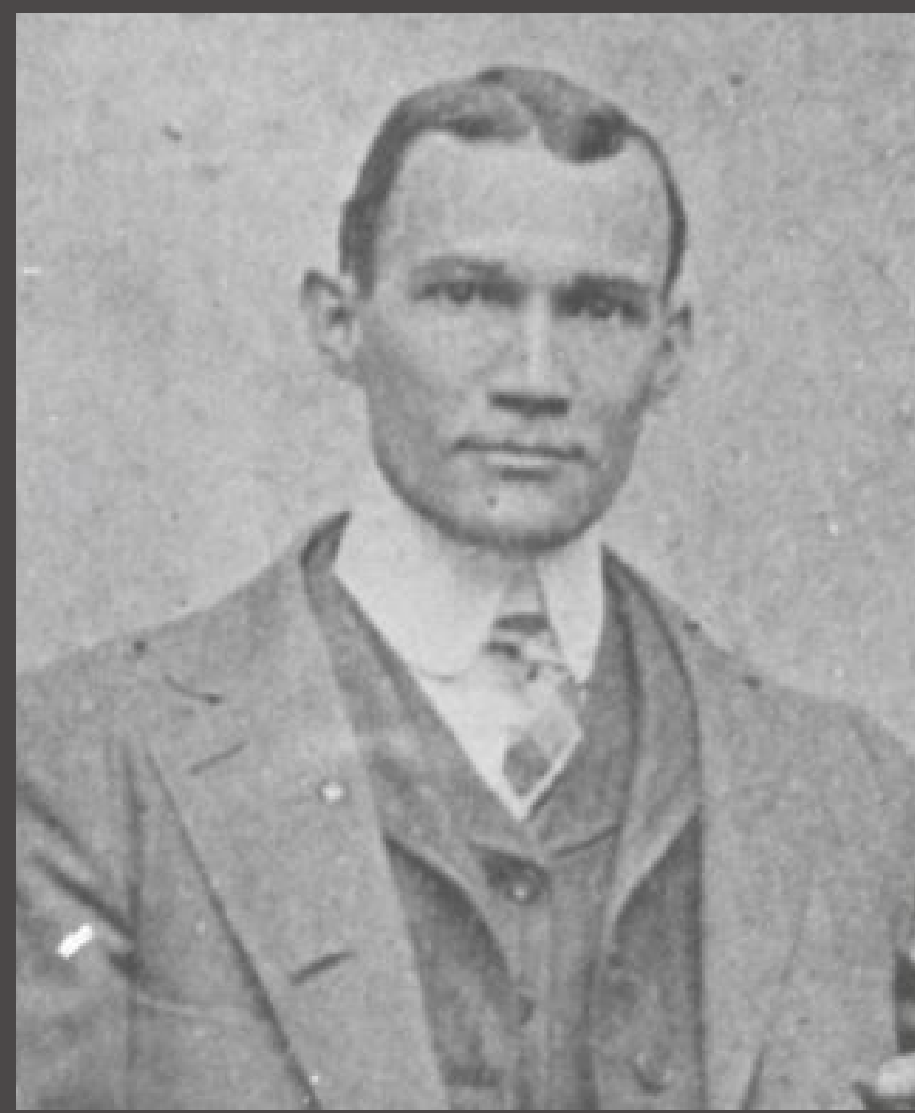
The Cry for White Supremacy in 1898



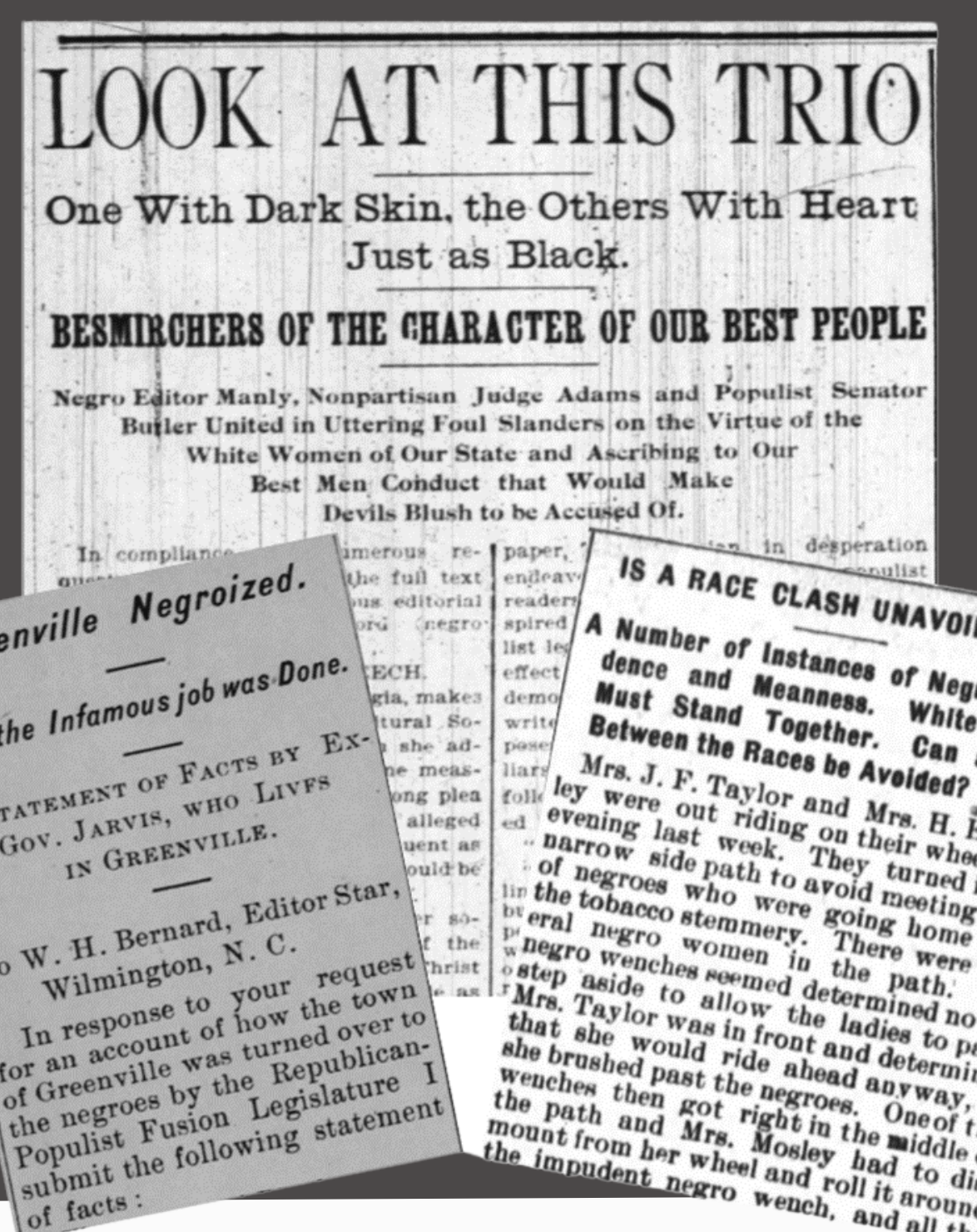
Acting as a terrorist wing of the Democratic Party, Red Shirts were armed gangs of White men who used intimidation and violence against Blacks and their White allies during the North Carolina elections of 1898 and 1900. Red Shirts disrupted Black church services, interrupted Republican meetings, and openly patrolled polling places across the state. This photo was taken at a polling place in Scotland County on election day, November 8, 1898.

The Editorial That Rocked the State

The literacy rate in Wilmington was higher among Black residents than White, and Alexander Lightfoot Manly, right, was editor of the Daily Record, a popular Black newspaper. Though Manly could have passed as White, both his parents were of mixed ancestry. His paternal grandparents were Governor Charles Manly and Corinne Manly, one of the Governor's slaves.



In August 1898, Manly penned and published an editorial response to a pro-lynching speech given by a White woman from Georgia. Democrats across North Carolina used Manly's article on sex and race in their anti-Black campaign, and, in Wilmington, the article was used as justification for cries to lynch Manly and to burn his printing press.



The Democratic Party seized on Manly's article immediately. After the August 18th editorial raced across NC, headlines churned the racial tension that eventually erupted in violence and murder in Wilmington. Some wanted to act immediately against Manly, but other influential men in town saw it as an opportunity to organize and exploit the controversy right up to the November elections. Wilmingtonian Walker Taylor, a White Democrat, wrote, "Senator Simmons...told us that the article would make an easy victory for us and urged us to try and prevent any riot until after the election."



Scan the QR code to read Alex Manly's 1898 editorial

With Wilmington the epicenter of Black political and economic power and pride, the Democrats' white supremacy campaign focused much attention on rallying poor, White workers to its cause, but the events that transpired on November 10, 1898, were orchestrated and carried out by Wilmington's White elites. A Wilmington group, now known as "The Secret Nine," worked covertly for weeks organizing armed militias to patrol the streets and drawing up lists of Fusionists, both Black and White, targeted for violence, murder, or banishment.

ELECTION DAY FUELS THE FIRE



November 8, 1898, election day, came and went with no violence though Red Shirts patrolled the streets and many Blacks did not vote out of fear. Through ballot-stuffing and voter fraud, Democrats won Wilmington's elections handily. Many local Fusionist officials were not up for re-election in 1898, but Democrats wanted them out. On November 9, 1898, industrialist Hugh MacRae ran a notice, left, in the Wilmington Messenger.



Hundreds of White men showed up at the courthouse where Alfred Waddell, left, presented the "White Declaration of Independence." This document, drawn up by "The Secret Nine," declared that White men in New Hanover County would never allow Black political participation again.

A committee of 25 White men summoned 32 prominent, Black men to the courthouse where Waddell read the declaration and demanded that White men be given jobs over Black men, the closure of the Daily Record, and that Alex Manly leave town. The committee demanded a response within 12 hours.

- "The Secret Nine"
- Hardy L. Fennell
 - William Gilchrist
 - W.A. Johnson
 - E.S. Lathrop
 - P.B. Manning
 - Hugh MacRae
 - Walter L. Parsley
 - L.B. Sasser
 - J. Allan Taylor

"We will never surrender to a ragged raffle of Negroes, even if we have to choke the Cape Fear River with carcasses."
—Alfred Waddell, November 9, 1898

'WE HAVE TAKEN A CITY'

The Wilmington Massacre and Coup

Alfred Waddell and his cohort gave the "Committee of Colored Citizens" a deadline of 7:30 am on November 10, 1898, to issue a response to the "White Declaration of Independence." At 8:15 am, Waddell began assembling a crowd of White men and boys to march to the *Daily Record* and destroy it. This ushered in a day of destruction, violence, and murder targeted at Wilmington's Black population.



Above: A well-dressed mob of White men and boys brandished guns as they posed for photos in front of the smoldering building—Love and Charity Hall—which housed Manly's newspaper operation. Black firefighters, pictured on the second floor, tore the building down, and the lot remains vacant on 7th Street near the intersection with Church Street.

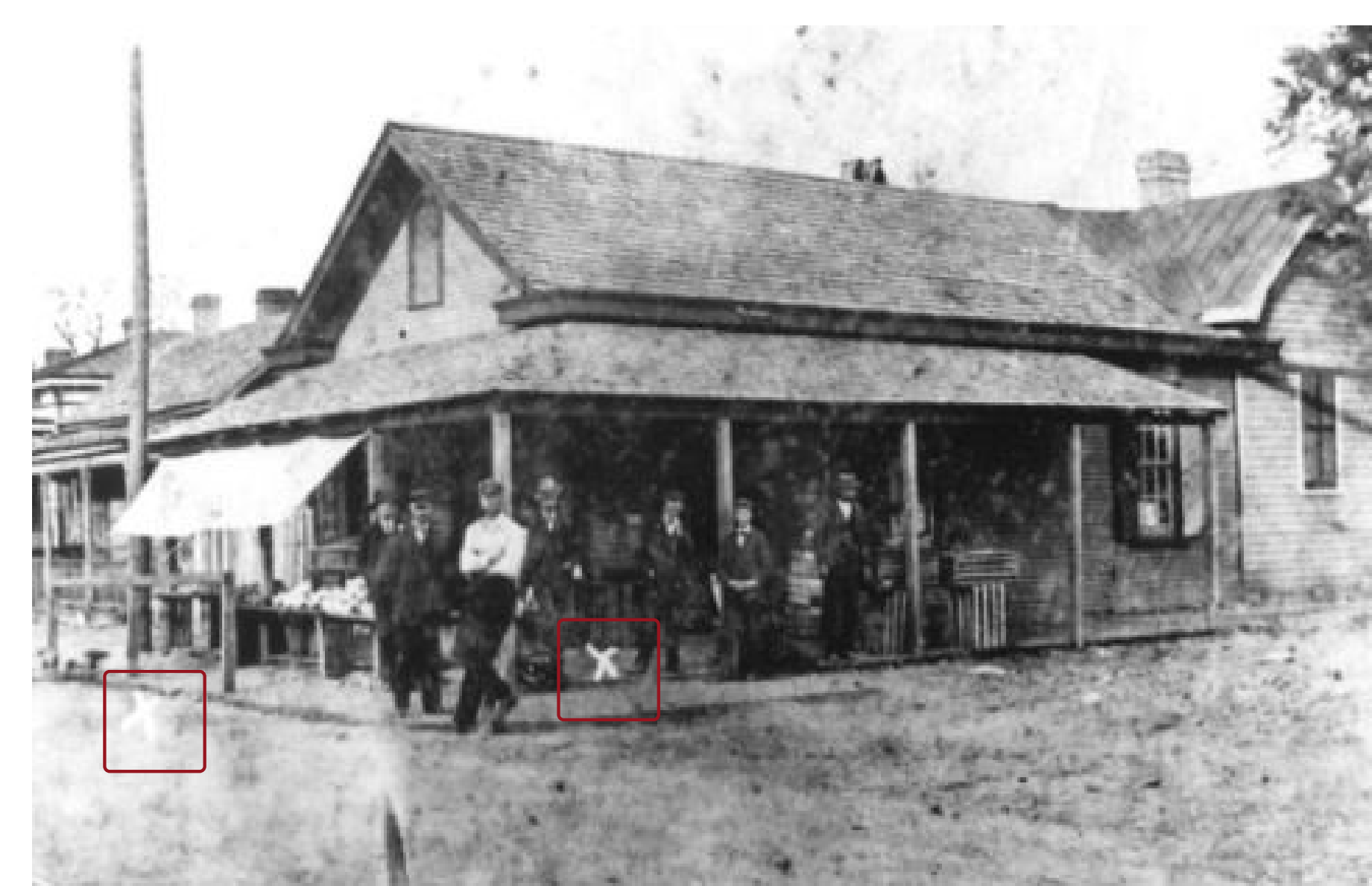
Left: Members of the Wilmington Light Infantry (WLI) with a rapid-fire gun. Weeks prior to the election, local businesses bought a Colt gun that could fire 420 rounds per minute. On November 1, 1898, Black leaders were given a demonstration of the gun's power. On the day of the massacre, the WLI machine gun squad wheeled the Colt and a Hotchkiss machine gun through Black neighborhoods to disperse crowds, aimed them at Black churches, and used them to guard entrances to the city. Witnesses asserted the WLI gunners opened fire with the rapid-fire guns killing at least three Black men.



Members of the "Committee of Colored Citizens" included (L to R): carpenter Frederick Sadgwar, Reverend J.W. Telfair of Mt. Zion AME Church, and attorney Armond Scott who was tasked with delivering the committee's response to Waddell's home. Fearful of entering a predominantly White neighborhood at night, Armond Scott dropped the response in a mailbox instead, causing it not to arrive by the deadline.

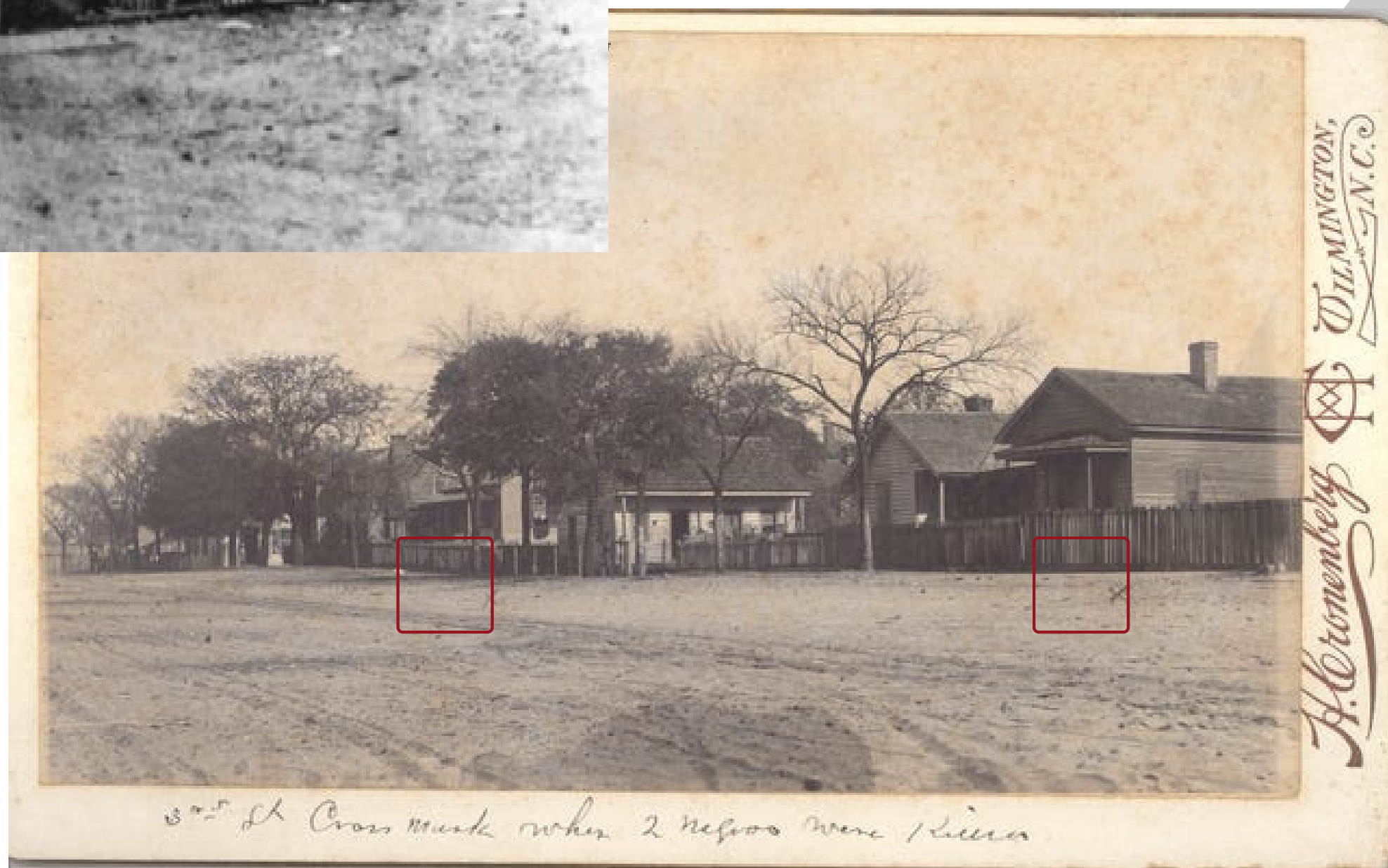


Scan the QR code to read the "White Declaration of Independence" and the "Committee of Colored Citizens" response



Left: Two X's mark the spot at the W.A. Walker Grocery Store at N. 4th and Harnett Streets where White men shot and killed the first of an unknown number of Blacks. Initial estimates put the death toll around 10-25 Black men, but current estimates put the number murdered at 100 or more. Some victims' bodies, those who hid beneath buildings and in area swamps, were not found for days or weeks. Many suspect bodies of countless Black victims were thrown into the Cape Fear River.

Right: Two X's mark the spot on N. 3rd Street where two murdered Black men fell. The X on the right may have been where Daniel Wright died from multiple gunshot wounds. Henry Cronenberg snapped these photos and more, marked them with the X's, and turned them into cabinet cards—souvenirs of that deadly day.



"Thousands of women, children, and men rushed to the swamps and there lay upon the earth in the cold to freeze and starve."
—Rev. J. Allen Kirk of Central Baptist Church

Rev. Kirk, a Black minister who had moved his family from Boston in 1897, was a target of the white supremacists who called for him to leave the city in local newspapers. Rev. Kirk evacuated his family to Pine Forest Cemetery to hide during the massacre.

Right: Wilmington Light Infantry and Naval Reserve troops marched captured Black residents out of town. "The Secret Nine" drew up a list of Black leaders, businessmen, and White Republicans for banishment. White leaders expelled hundreds, many put on trains to neighboring cities and states. Alex Manly and his brother, Frank Manly, escaped unharmed. According to Manly's wife, Carrie Sadgwar Manly, a "white...friend" gave Alex \$25.00 and the password to get past patrolling Red Shirts. She also wrote that when Red Shirts stopped the Manlys' buggy, they mistook them for White men and gave them guns.

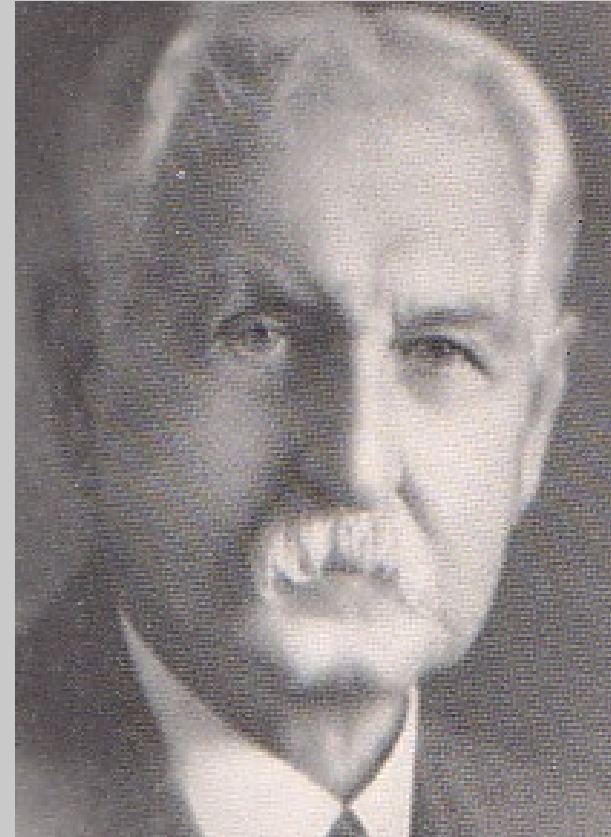


WILMINGTON'S COUP D'ETAT

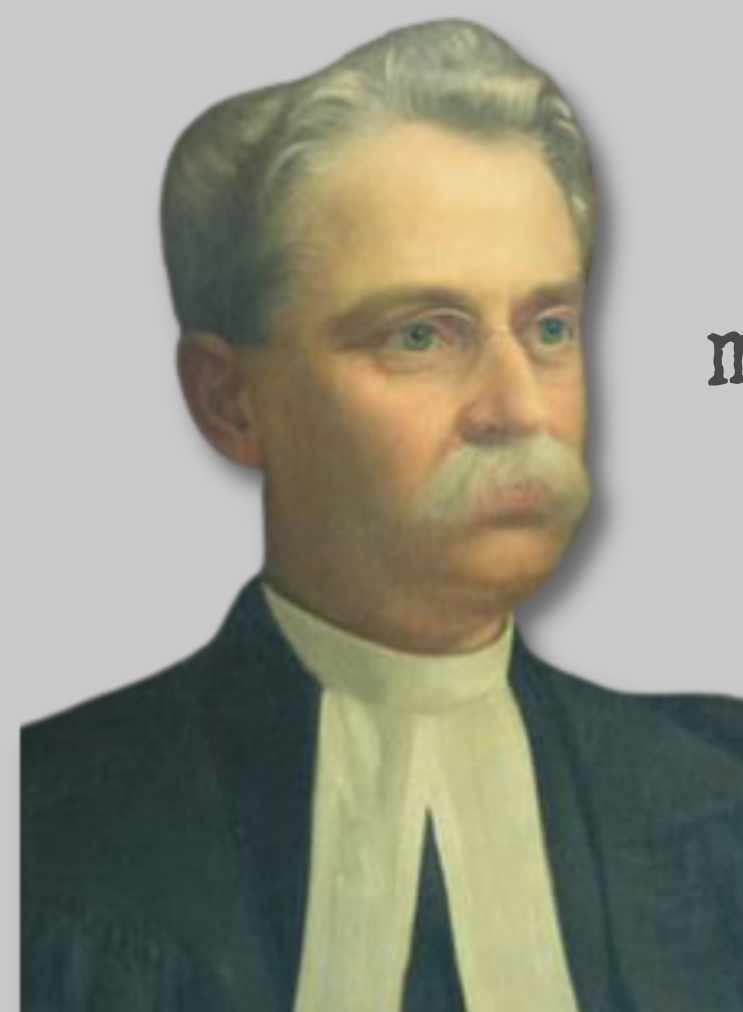
Even after the rigged election, local Democratic Party leaders knew that Wilmington's government was still under Fusionist control and would remain so until the next election the following year. During the massacre on November 10th, the White, political elites chose to enact America's first and only successful coup d'etat to retake the city. They intimidated elected Republicans and Populists to vacate their positions immediately.



Mayor Silas P. Wright was the last elected official to resign during the coup d'etat. A committee of Democrats unanimously voted Alfred Waddell as the new mayor, and he was sworn in on the spot. Populist John Melton, Chief of Police, resigned after armed men gathered in the corridors of City Hall.



Attorney John D. Bellamy Jr. was one of the coup's influencers. Elected to the U.S. Congress two days prior, conspirators sought his help. Bellamy put pressure on Mayor Wright and the Board of Aldermen to "turn the city affairs...over to the citizens of Wilmington." Bellamy denied further involvement in the massacre or coup.



"We have taken a city. That is much. But it is more because it is our city that we have taken."
—Rev. Peyton Hoge, First Presbyterian Church

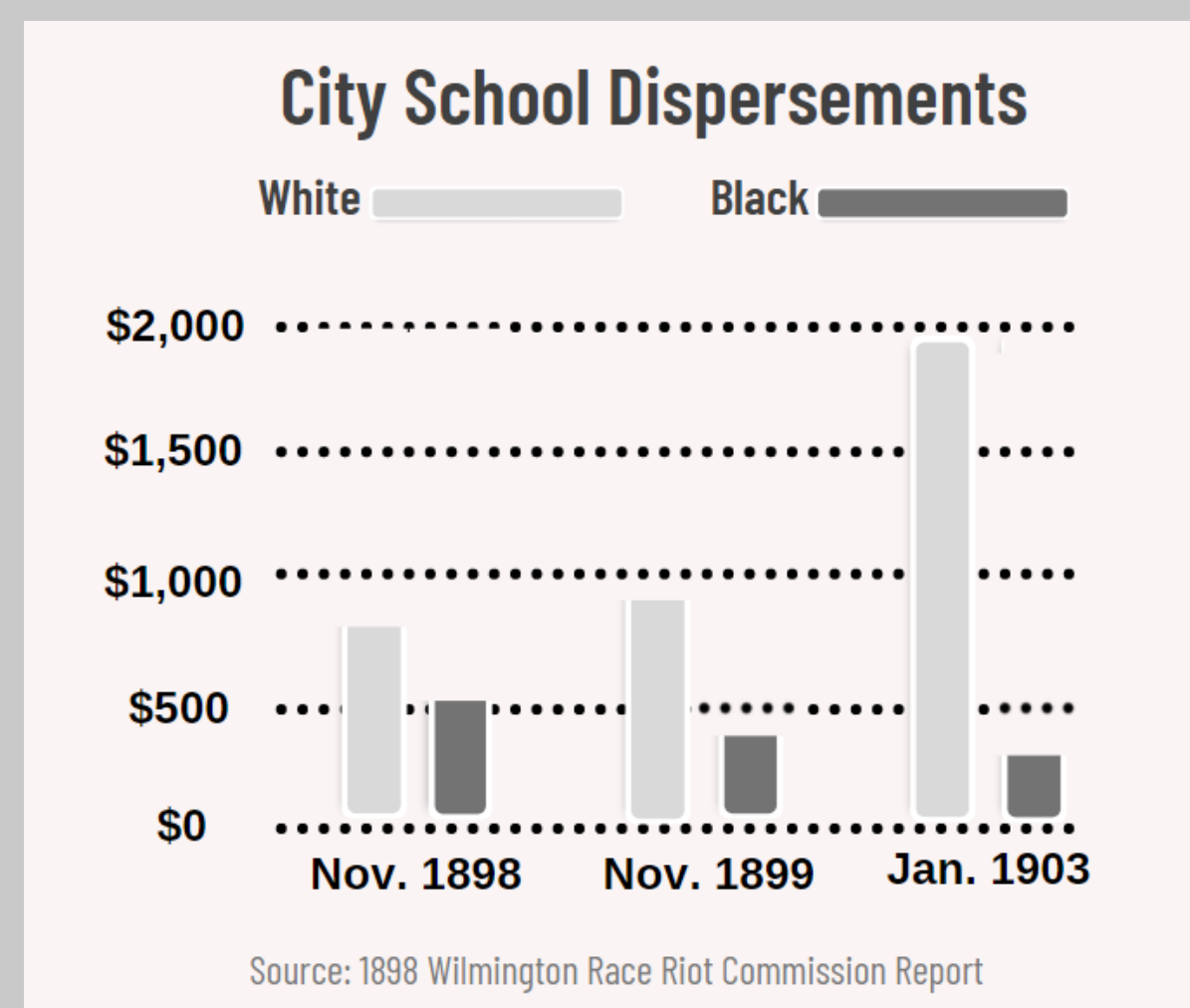
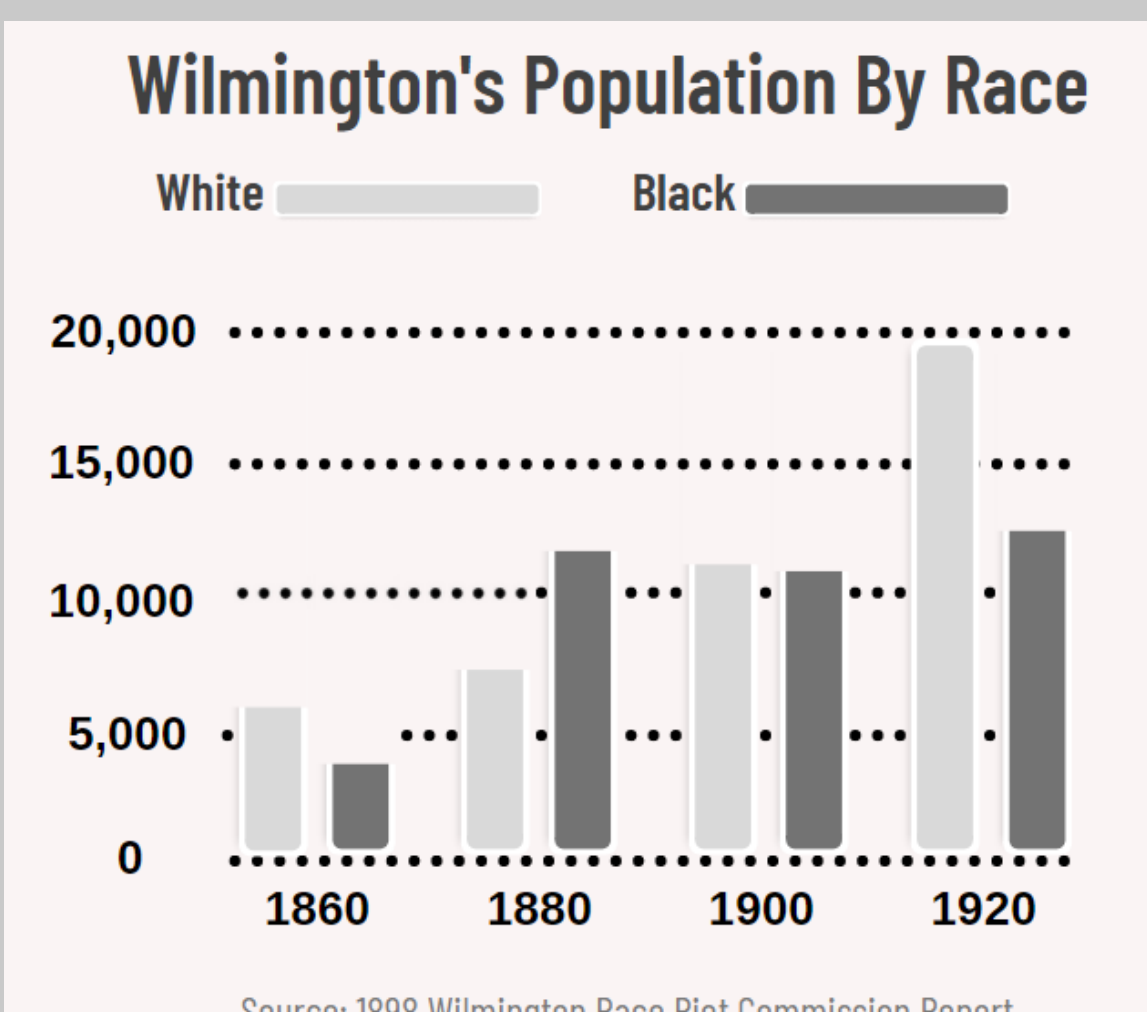
Rev. Hoge's sermon from November 13, 1898, was printed in newspapers and praised for its themes of victory and redemption. In White churches across the city, the first Sunday sermons after the violence were full of justification and praise for the white supremacy campaign, the massacre, and the coup. Most Black clergymen preached submission. Pastor James W. Telfair of Mt. Zion AME Church told parishioners to "obey the law and keep the peace." Many local Black leaders tempered their reactions to the events fearing more death and destruction.



The Wilmington massacre and coup were turning points in North Carolina, ushering in the era of "Jim Crow." In 1900, the General Assembly implemented a literacy test and poll tax to disenfranchise Black voters. With White literacy rates low across the state, they also adopted the "Grandfather Clause." It allowed a man to vote if "he or a lineal ancestor could vote under the law of his state of residence on January 1, 1867," which predated the 14th Amendment, so most Black voters did not qualify to vote in NC.

Ghosts of the "Day of Blood"

Long-term ramifications are hard to measure fully as they still affect the Port City. Many of Wilmington's Black leaders and entrepreneurs left the city, which rapidly segregated. Black residents who stayed worked to rebuild communities in spite of living amongst hardened white supremacists. New Hanover County Schools steadily cut funding for Black schools, and Black men lost jobs to White men while Black women were forced to joined the workforce.



LASTING EFFECTS

Historian LeRae Umfleet asserts the events of November 10, 1898, created lasting power for the Democratic party in North Carolina because the violence happened "all without consequence for the perpetrators or solace for the victims." Wilmingtonians kept the city council White for over 70 years and elected the county's first Black sheriff in 1982. North Carolinians did not elect another Black U.S. Representative for 91 years until Eva Clayton in 1992.



Many, like Armond Scott, never moved back. He became a federal judge in D.C. appointed by Pres. F.D. Roosevelt in 1935.

Kenneth McLaurin was appointed to the Wilmington city council in 1972 becoming the first Black council member since John G. Norwood was forced out in the coup.

'BY WHATEVER MEANS'

The Election of 1898

The election of 1898 was one of the most contentious in North Carolina's history. To win back seats from Republicans, Populists, and Fusionists, the Democratic Party launched a statewide white supremacy campaign which put "everybody to work—men who could write, men who could speak, and men who could ride..." In the press, on the stump, and through vigilante groups, the Democratic Party's tactics ranged from typical to terrorism.



Congressional Districts 1891-1901

In 1898, North Carolina was divided into nine Congressional districts. Oliver Dockery and John D. Bellamy Jr. ran for the Representative seat in the 6th Congressional District. The 1898 elections also included races for over 100 General Assembly seats. In addition, there were many local elections for mayors, city councilmen, and sheriffs. In a drastic change from the 1896 elections where Fusionists won over Democrats two to one, the Democrats won 93 out of 118 seats in the General Assembly in 1898. Following their landslide victory, the Democrats quickly got to work passing legislation that disenfranchised Black North Carolinians.

OLIVER H. DOCKERY

Oliver H. Dockery (1830-1906) was around politics his whole life. His father, Alfred "General" Dockery (1797-1873), was a long serving state senator, U.S. Congressman, and two-time candidate for NC governor. Oliver graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill with a degree in law, but he never practiced. He chose to farm instead. Oliver was a slaveowner, and he served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War.

Oliver entered politics in 1867. He won a seat in the NC General Assembly where he served until 1870. He then ran an unsuccessful campaign for the U.S. Congress in 1882, and he lost two North Carolina gubernatorial races in 1888 and 1896. His 1898 bid for the U.S. Congress proved his last attempt to run for political office.



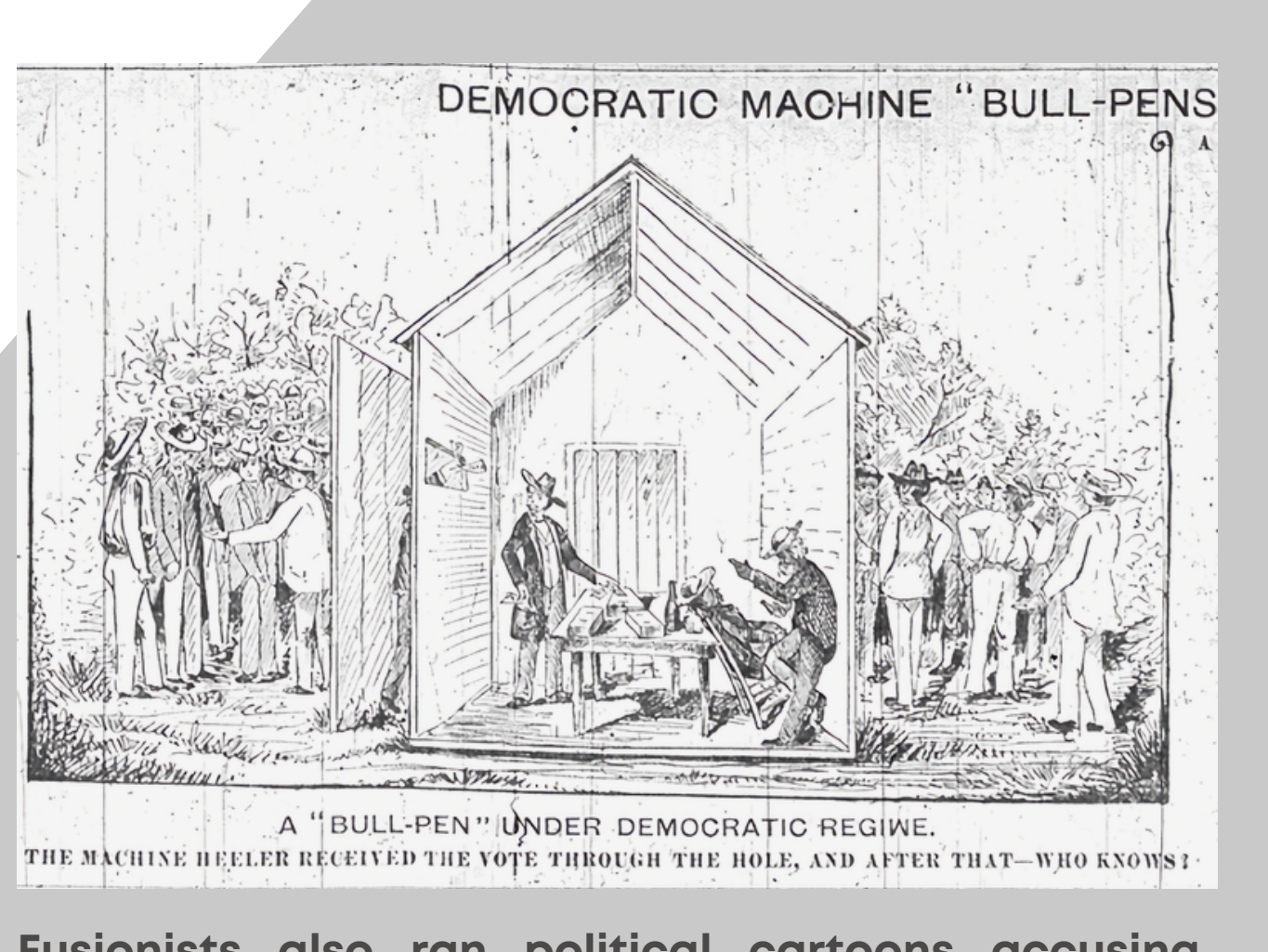
JOHN D. BELLAMY JR.

John D. Bellamy Jr. (1854-1942) was born into a wealthy Wilmington family. His father, Dr. John D. Bellamy (1817-1896), was a prominent physician, merchant, and one of the largest slaveowners in North Carolina. John Jr. graduated the University of Virginia with a degree in law and practiced in Wilmington. John Jr. was a prominent man involved in many civic and social clubs. He was a member of the Order of Oddfellows, served on the Board of Directors for the Chamber of Industry, was an officer of the Citizens' Building and Loan Association, and was chairman of the New Hanover County Democratic Executive Committee.

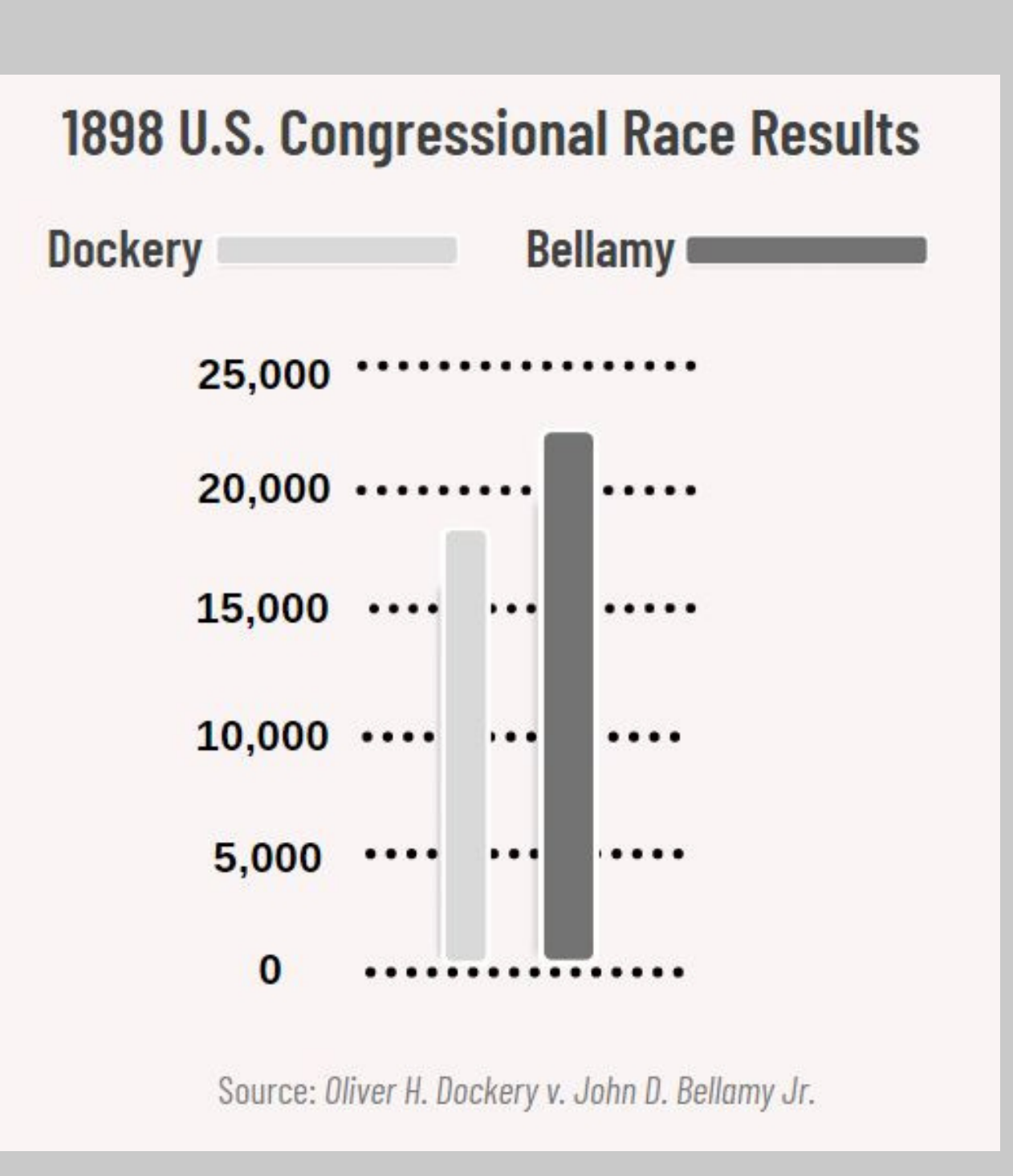
John Jr. ran for and won a position in the North Carolina Senate as a Democrat in the 1891 elections. In 1898, he ran for a North Carolina U.S. Representative seat, and he won though critics believed his victory was dubious. John Jr. served in the U.S. Congress from 1899-1903 after he won re-election for a second term.



Dockery was the subject of several Norman E. Jennett political cartoons that ran in Raleigh's News and Observer. The cartoon above shows "Little Ollie" chasing his father's legacy, and, at right, Jennett included racist caricatures of Black men as Dockery's "supporters." No political cartoons of Bellamy are known to exist.



Fusionists also ran political cartoons accusing Democrats of committing voter fraud and resorting to ballot-box stuffing to win elections. The cartoon above shows a long line of voters waiting to cast their ballots at a polling place run by Democratic officials. Once they pass their "vote through the hole...after that-who knows?"



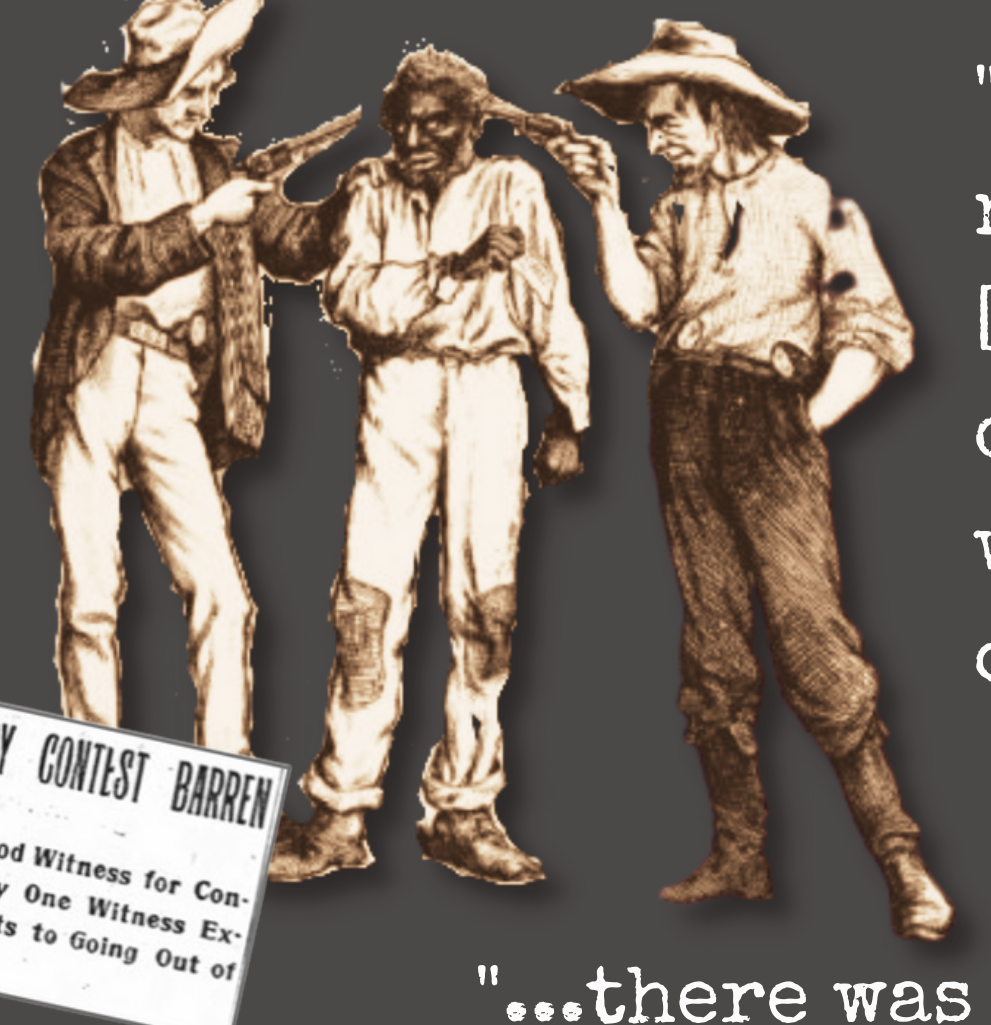
On November 8, 1898, voters across the state cast ballots, though many Republicans, especially Black Republicans, stayed away from the polls due to threats of violence and fear of losing their jobs. John D. Bellamy Jr. beat Oliver H. Dockery by a solid margin, but the Wilmington massacre on November 10, 1898, convinced Dockery enough voter irregularity and intimidation had occurred to render the results invalid.

Contested Election Case of Oliver H. Dockery v. John D. Bellamy Jr.

On December 31, 1898, Oliver H. Dockery brought a lawsuit against John D. Bellamy Jr. alleging that the conditions in multiple districts "violated, ignored, and outraged the constitutional rights of the electors...to such an extent as to render said election a farce, a mockery, and a fraud." Dockery argued Democrats "intended to carry said election at all hazards and by whatever means became necessary..." and through "pistols, rifles, and other deadly weapons...kept away from the polls a large number of electors..." which "deprived" Dockery of "thousands of votes" thus preventing his election.

The case stretched on for months and was covered extensively in newspapers across the state. Dockery's attorney called 75 witnesses while Bellamy's team only called four. The case revealed much about the white supremacy campaign and Wilmington's massacre.

CLAIMS OF DOCKERY
He Says that Bellamy Was Not Elected.
ELECTION WAS A FARCE



"On the morning of the election...I heard numbers of [gunshots in all directions... [the] Precinct which I attended was completely surrounded by Red Shirts. They were standing four or five deep all in front of the ballot boxes."
--testimony of John Cameron

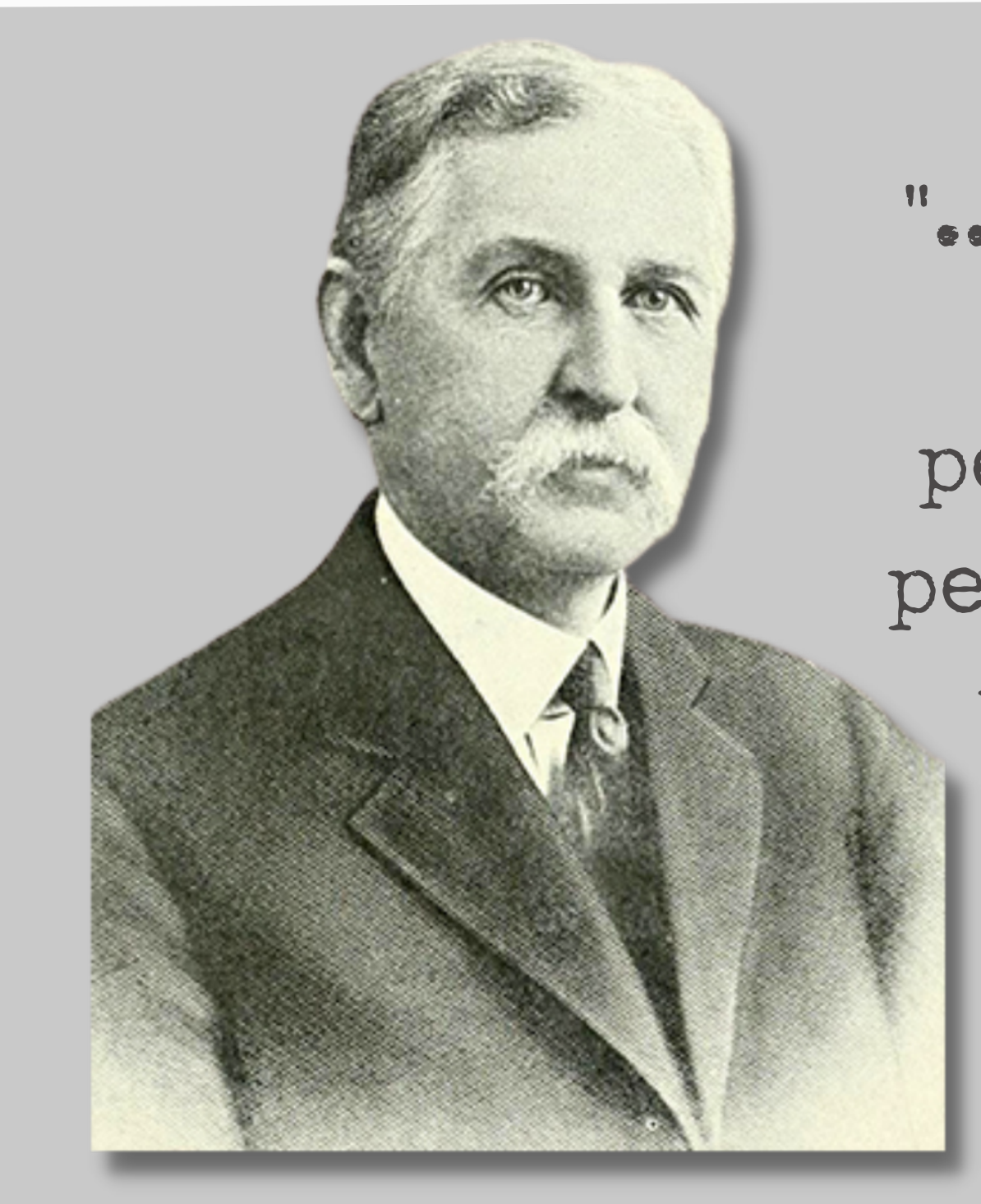
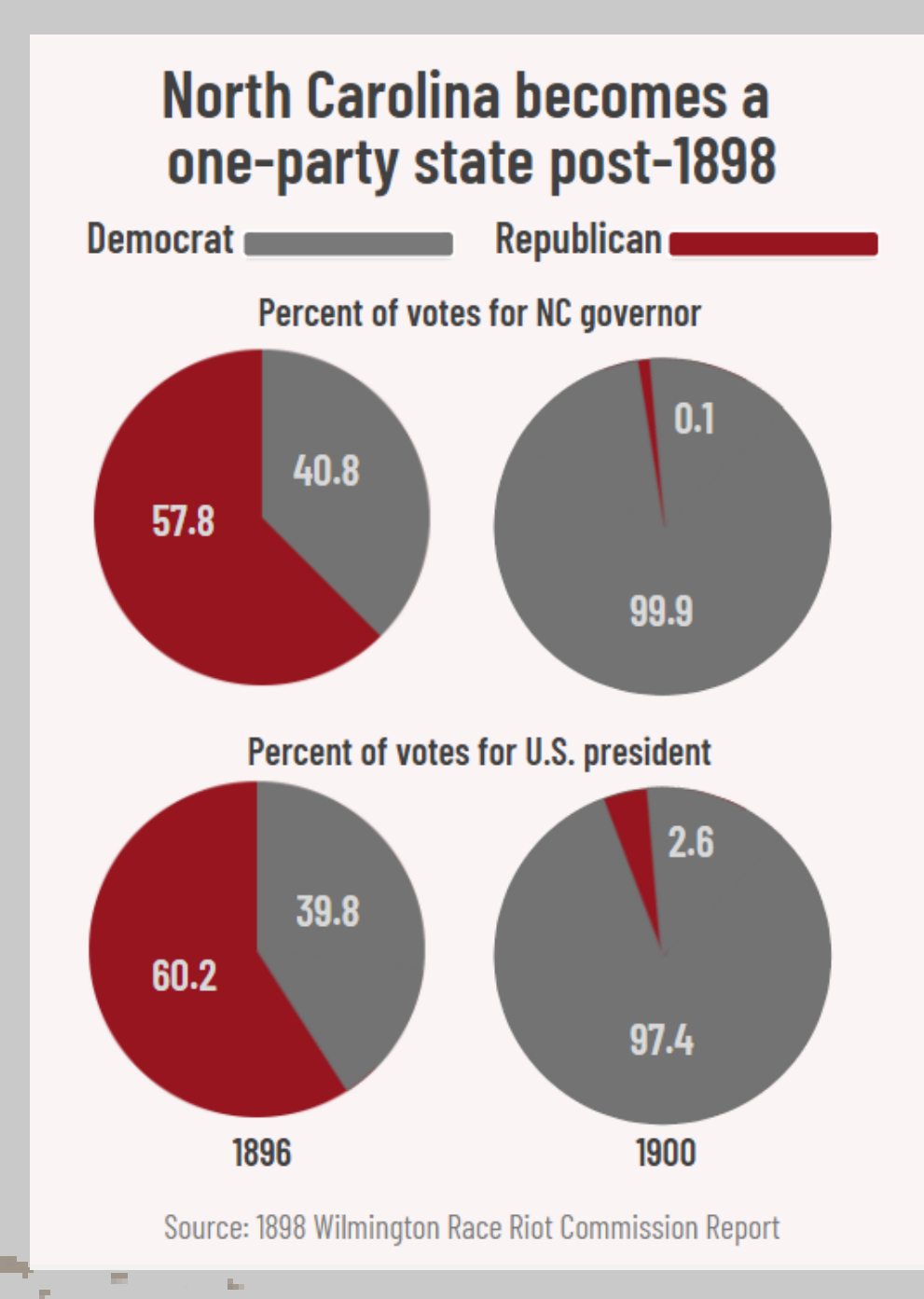
Dockery's lawyer called five hardware store owners to testify that gun sales to White men sharply increased in the months leading up to the election. Some accused Bellamy of giving fiery speeches where he stated the Democrats would take the election "at the point of Winchester rifles" if needed. Bellamy denied using any incendiary language during his campaign.

DOCKERY VS BELLAMY
The Taking of Depositions Terminated the Taking of Depositions...Two Colored Witnesses Examined...The Ability of the Witnesses...The Amiability of the Attorney...Prosecute Some of our Citizens About the Race Trouble

"...there was 100 to 200 men around, with their Winchester rifles...when [the officers] got through...they found the ballot boxes had been stuffed; one of them showed about twice as many votes as was cast in the precinct for that candidate."
--testimony of Sheriff J.R. Melton



Dockery v. Bellamy concluded in April 1899. Dockery's attorney was unable to prove voter fraud and intimidation was directly tied to Bellamy or occurred on a scale to warrant overturning the election results. John D. Bellamy Jr. went to Washington, D.C. and served in the U.S. Congress as a Representative from North Carolina for two terms—from 1899 through 1903. He then returned to his law practice in Wilmington. Oliver H. Dockery returned to his life as a farmer, never to run for political office again. North Carolina became a one-party state for almost a century following the 1898 elections.



"...the safety of our homes and firesides and the security of life, order, and peace, and the material interest of our people depended upon the restoration of the white people, represented by the Democratic party, to power again in the State."
--John D. Bellamy Jr., April 10, 1899

