

“Minutes of the Organizational Meeting of the Association of Members of the Wilmington Light Infantry, December 14, 1905.” North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Notes on transcription:

Transcriber tried to duplicate original content and meaning.

{ } indicates where transcriber summarizes text instead of full transcription or adds information to assist reader

... Indicates where transcriber skips unimportant text

Section I

{On Atlantic Coastline Railroad Company letterhead 2/2/1908 Mr. J. Van B. Metts, from JE Bunting – “here are the papers you wanted typed” ... “sorry for the delay”}

Section II

{Organizational meeting at the Lumina, Wrightsville Beach, 12/14/1905}

{Meeting opened by Bishop Strange and called to order by Col Walker Taylor}

Taylor – {sought to compile information so a report of events could be written, first addressed article by Manly} “when that article appeared, it required the best efforts we could put forth that we could prevent the people from lynching him. The office was right over a saloon across the street from the Star office. Senator Simmons, who was here at the time told us that that article would make it an easy victory for us and urge us to try and prevent any riot until after the election. Just at that time I was asked by two or three gentlemen to attend a mass meeting to be held in the Court House at 11 o’clock and will read what occurred at the Court House that morning. (Col Taylor has the papers) You gentlemen are aware that the negroes got frightened when we demanded that Manly pack up and leave the City and that the printing press be shipped from the City. On the morning of November 10th, I got a telephone message that a crowd was at the Armory and wanted the military to lead them up to the Record Office and as I was Post Commander at that time and my duty would have been to disband them, I did not go down until Capt. James telephoned me that that had all gone and then I went down and Capt. James and I went over the situation as we considered same critical, I sat down at the Armory and sent the following telegram (Col Taylor has telegram)

Capt. James: I move that the elaborate report of Co. Taylor be published in pamphlet form and that it should be preserved as a matter of history. It is history and as such, should not be lost. Motion tabled.

Col. White: The gun was a great mystery to me and always will be and I did not know what kind of a gun it was, whose gun it was or anything about it. The first I knew of the gun was one Sunday I saw it at the Armory and asked what it was and some one replied that it was a rapid fire gun. I was asked to put the gun in order and I had had no experience except a little at Sullivan’s Island with the big guns so together with Srgt. Harris we got it in order and we put it on a board and went down the river. When I took my seat on the gun I could not tell whether it shoot front or back but just closed my eyes and pulled the trigger and let her go and all ... I heard was a loud explosion and that is the first and last time we ever worked that gun, as far as I know. It went everywhere the WLI went. Capt. Kenan was the man in charge of the gun ... Speaking of Manhattan Park experience with a darky, I remember seeing a darky jump over the fence and run and every man, Capt. Kenan and all jumped down from the wagon and started after the darky (leaving me with the gun with nothing but a pocket knife) and left me in charge of the gun and Jack Quelch was leading the crowd after the negro.

Capt Metts: On November 10th we were quartered at Col Morton’s house, that is part of the WLI and the Naval Reserves. That night as I sat at a little table making out lists and sending out squads as Col. Taylor and Capt. James would come in and want a squad to go somewhere. That night our men were so tired that they were sleeping on the floor ... There were so many men asleep on the floor that I could not step.... Along towards morning I was tired....Hardly closed my eyes when I received orders to take a squad to

Kidder's Hill and got back to the Armory just in time to see Capt. James and a squad going to the depot with Chief of Police Melton.

Mr. Nutt: I remember we were in the yard and had been marched around the yard about 8 times when I asked Capt. James to let me go and move and he said no, and I told him if he did not let me move something would move. At last we started down Market Street. We went down Market Street until we got to Third and turned down Third Street and went across Princess and halted while waiting for the Naval Reserves to join us. We turned around and Ed. Moore saw that they had stopped us in front of Jim Woolvins' and he turned as white as a ghost, except his hair which was still red.... After a while we started again and went up Third to Mulberry, where the ladies on the piazza waved us "God Speed" and turned up Mulberry to Fourth and as I passed my house I saw that it was all closed up and said to my self I suppose they have moved, we then turned down Fourth and across the bridge and Capt. James said halt, and he said "now boys I want to twll you right now I want you all to load and when I give the command to shoot, I want you to shoot to kill." About that time "bang" went a gun and we tried with a fine tooth comb to find the man that shot. We went all around in the region....And then back to the Armory and I had all my cartridges when I got back to the Armory. Then Col. Taylor put us in a wagon and we drove all around town and then wound up at Frank Maunder's house where his wife gave us something good to eat.

Thos. H. Wright: I will speak of the "moral effects." I will never forget when we reached Manhattan Park. A negro ran through the yard and we hollered "halt" and when he would not stop, we fired at him ad as there was a squad across from us with the rapid fire gun, we all expected to be shot every minute which would have been our last if the rapid fire gun had opened up. We then had our pictures taken by the "Lady Reporter." I remember seeing Ben Turlington tearing down the fence and then tying the negroes and throwing them in a wagon. First there was Ari Bryant and then Tom Miller and I don't remember the rest. When we went to get Tom Miller, his daughter was on the piazza and she said he was not there. He was one negro we could not make keep quite and he talked and talked until Ed. McKoy's gun went "click click" and when he told him to shut up, he kept a little quieter.

J.F. Maunder: We were told to hold up and search all negros going and coming from work. I was at Second and Castle Streets when a negro came along with a bag on his back and I asked what he had in that bag and he said nothing but onions and potatoes and when I searched it I found onions, potatoes and an old case knife. Presently an old negro woman came along and I said "I have reason to believe you have a razor concealed in your stocking" and she said "No boss, I will show you right here" and I told her no, that there were ladies across the street on a piazza and I sent her on to the next corner. I held up and searched at least twenty five negroes and found nothing except that old case knife. We were then sent back to the armory.Srgt Harriss was lined up in front of Hill Terry's house and given orders to find this negro Halsey. When we found him and turned him loose and told him run, Bill Robbins said "I am sick at my stomach" and I told him not to show the white feather or I will shoot you myself and when the order to fire was given, Billy snapped his gun and said, I hope I did not hit that man and I said I hope I did for I shot straight at him and I looked down on the ground and there was all of Billy's cartridges as his plunger was out and his gun would not fire. You don't know what people in Brooklyn had suffered, it was not safe for a lady to go on the street by herself and my wife did not dare go to her sister's just one square from our house {in Brooklyn} in the day time even.

J. Van Metts: ...why we were not killed when the firing took place at Manhattan Park. The firing was done by the Citizens and when we fired, the crowd went crazy. They had a board fence about 10 feet all around and a dance hall inside. {they had help from people in Kinston} We went with a detachment from the Naval Reserves with their gun to search some of the colored churches, as we thought they were stacked with men and guns. We got to one church and the Naval Reserves line up across the street and aimed their gun right at the church ready to blaze away and then we went in the church and all we found was a lot of tickets, "vote for Dockery."

Boylan: I think the swiftest thing I remember was the negro Redmon's coat tails. A squad had been sent out to find his house and when we got there, there were two houses just alike and there was some dispute as to which was his house and I jumped out of the wagon just about between the two houses. All we saw was a flirt of his coat tail as he went over the fence. We ran around the square and some through the square and

although he had no longer to go than we did, we never did see him and he has never been seen from that day to this. I believe his dog was seen a few days after that down street but that was one badly frightened negro.

Quelch: When we stopped at St. Andrews Church... I said to Capt. Kenan, let me shoot the ----

Sloan: I was in the squad Capt. James sent out to look for Beverly Scott but we failed to find Scott. We went in a house looking for Scott, we found Bob Bunting and arrested him And later in the day Mr. J.A. Taylor sent him out of town.

Metts: I will never forget how Melton looked as he sat under a tree in front of the Armory, he could not eat and when some of the boys went up stairs and took a rope with a noose in it and threw it at his feet, he turned just as white as a sheet.

Orrell: I came down to listen and have been more than gratified with what I have heard. I do not know that I have ever heard of an event that was arranged and carried out so perfectly and I have always regretted that I was not of age to be a member of the Wilmington Light Infantry but at the same time I was a Citizen and was a member of what we called the "Citizen's Patrol." We were organized under one head and each division had a sub division and so on until each block had a Captain and I did little duty except patrol the block I lived in....One morning I was going to work....I saw an immense number of people...And was told to go home and get his gun....saw a crowd in front of YMCA bldg and further up street saw a crowd of negroes from the press and Mr. Sprunt and Mr. Raylor and a number of prominent citizens talking to them and pleading with them to go on back to work and finally they went back to work and I went in the office.

Mr. D. McRae: At the time I was very much engaged in other matters and did not follow the historical part of the situation as closely as a great many men did....I took no official part and was what you may call a non-combatant and had several experiences in connection with the matter....{saw a crowd, someone told him to get his gun so went to his room and got} "riot gun and about seventy five pounds of riot cartridges and two pistols and a bowie knife or two and started in the directions of crowd...saw crowd with Sprunt trying to calm them {McRae heard someone say} "they were going to kill the whole gang of negroes, so lets start in and get through with it and then some on came up to me and said you have just been through the war and so you know about what should be done, so lets get started and be through with it but I had very little stomach for it and as very few of the negroes were armed, it was little less than murder that they proposed, they were really alarmed about their homes....{he then went to Brooklyn after reports of fighting there and was ready to set up a skirmish line, etc when someone said that a US Army officer should not be found in} "this business" {because he would be gotten by the Pres. So they put someone else in command "...I suppose you have all heard about this; an Indian came up and I suppose he had a grudge against the negroes for he said he knew where the man was that shot Bill Mayo and asked that twelve men be detailed to go with him and they went and go him and coming back the negro was walking on the side walk when someone knocked him down with a piece of gas pipe and when he got up someone said string him up to a lamp post and about that time some one of the Citizen's Org. drove up and stopped.... And said give him a chance and let him go and they did and when he had gotten about fifty yards at least forty guns of all descriptions turned loose on him and when he was taken to the hospital where he lived for two days, the Doctors said they never saw one man with as many shots in him. [Daniel Wright's murder]

Rt Rev. Bishop Strange: {Tom Strange told him that a mob was going to jail and was asked to talk to mob to stop them because doing such a thing would be a "lasting disgrace" to the town.... Men from Fayetteville came up and Bishop told them to protect the jail...then talked to Waddell and then went home at daybreak} "we saw what was needed and what could have happened and when we think what did happen, we all know that it was the best managed thing that ever did happen.

{End of meeting, BBQ and oysters followed.... Business meeting followed where named selves the "Association of members of the Wilmington Light Infantry" as constituted on the 10th of November 1898, planned to meet annually on 10 Nov. "so long as there are any of us to meet"}

Members and guests present:

Rt. Rev. Bishop Strange
Col. Walker Taylor
Capt. T.C. James
J. Van B. Metts, Sgt.
J.D. Nutt
O.A. Wiggins
Geo. H. Harriss, Sgt.

Thomas H. Wright, Corp.
Robert N. Sweet
Frank Maunder
Robert Sloan
George S Boylan
Jno. Quelch

Guests:
Capt. Don McRae
Lt. Thomas R. Orrell