

Scene on Radio

Season 6, Episode 3: A Day of Blood

Transcript

Michael A. Betts, II: A content warning: This episode contains descriptions of violence and the use of a racial epithet.

John Biewen: Hey, another note here at the top – and bear with us, this is going to take a couple minutes. You may have noticed in the credits for previous episodes of this season that *Echoes of a Coup* is a collaboration with a project called America's Hallowed Ground. Both *Scene on Radio* and America's Hallowed Ground are supported by the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University. In this episode, we'll hear about a man named William Rand Kenan, Sr. who played a disturbing role in the events of Wilmington 1898.

Michael A. Betts, II: The Kenan Institute was not named for William Kenan, Sr., who died in 1903. And much of the wealth that allowed his relatives to endow institutions like the Kenan Institute came to later generations. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the

Kenans owned a large plantation in Duplin County, North Carolina, where they enslaved twenty-to-fifty Black people. Their slave-based cotton and timber business made them well-off. They would lose that fortune with the end of the Civil War and Emancipation, but by the 1890's William Kenan Sr. was a successful merchant in Wilmington.

John Biewen: The bigger family fortune came to Kenan Sr.'s daughter, Mary Lily Kenan, through her marriage in 1901 to the oil and real estate tycoon, Henry Flagler. When Flagler died in 1913, his fortune went to his widow, and when she died four years later, she had no children, so the estate was mostly split among her siblings, including her brother, William Rand Kenan, Jr. William, Junior, grew up in Wilmington. In 1898 he was 26 years old, working as an engineer in Michigan. He was not present for the massacre and coup.

Michael A. Betts, II: As we'll hear in the episode, William Jr. would later give a description of his father's role in the massacre that was inaccurate but nonetheless damning toward his father. William Jr. died in 1965 and much of his inherited wealth passed into the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust. It's out of that Trust that the Kenan Institute for Ethics was created in 1995, with the founding of the William R. Kenan Jr. Fund for Ethics.

John Biewen: All of this goes to the heart of questions we've been exploring on this podcast for years. How do we, especially we white Americans, enact our citizenship responsibly, given everything – the good and the ill – we have inherited? We can say “it wasn't us,” the terrible, white supremacy-fueled acts carried out by the ones who came before us. But our society, our systems, and our institutions have not in fact escaped the evils of their founding—chief among them, the exploitation of people and nature. Whatever the name of the institutions we inhabit, the question remains, for all of us: What are we going to do about all of it now?

Sound: Outdoors ambience, traffic

LeRae Umfleet: So, we're standing here at the corner of 4th and Harnett on the edge of downtown Wilmington. Um, back in 1898, this was a mixed-race neighborhood. On this corner would have been a grocery store and on another corner was a pharmacy. The day of the violence...

John Biewen: That is LeRae Umfleet, the historian. Michael, you and I spent a day with her in Wilmington last August.

Michael A. Betts, II: That's right. Here she's talking about what happened on that corner on November 10th, 1898 – two days after the statewide elections that fall. And I

have to say, it was painful, as a Black and Indigenous North Carolinian, to stand on that street while she painted the picture, and to imagine the scene.

John Biewen: Yeah. Here, she's telling us about a group of armed white men. That morning they'd already burned down the building that housed the city's Black-owned newspaper – and then they headed over to this neighborhood, where some of them lived, alongside Black families. Ostensibly, they were going home.

Michael A. Betts, II: What happened next? white newspapers, and later, North Carolina historians, would describe what happened next as a “firefight.” They'd claim that Black men started the shooting. Keep that claim in mind as you listen to what LeRae says about those white men:

LeRae Umfleet: Once they stepped off the trolley, they began to yell at an accumulated group of workers who were from the Black community who had come near their homes to try to figure out what was going on, because they had heard gunshots where the shots were being fired in the air and they wanted to know what was going on. They also wanted to make sure their families were safe. So, a policeman came into the intersection and told the crowd to disperse. And he later testified that the only persons with guns at this intersection were

the white men. And at around 11 o'clock, one witness said that hell broke loose because gunshots started flying across the intersection.

Music

John Biewen: All of the available evidence suggests that bullets flew in only one direction.

From the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University, this is Scene on Radio Season 6: *Echoes of a Coup*, Episode Three. I'm John Biewen.

Michael A. Betts, II: And I'm Michael Betts. In this episode: November 10th, 1898. The massacre and coup.

John Biewen: Twenty-five years ago, we could not have told this story the way we can now. In Episode 4, we'll explain why that is and describe the century-long cover-up. But over the last couple of decades, North Carolina has reckoned with 1898, at least to the point where the essential facts are now available. So, here's what happened over those cataclysmic days.

Michael A. Betts, II: Remember where we left off in the last episode. After a months-long white supremacist propaganda campaign, complete with fearmongering about "negro rule," and with a paramilitary group, the Red Shirts, threatening violence against

anyone not voting for the openly white supremacist Democrats, election day is almost here.

John Biewen: In Wilmington, the white Supremacists' most popular and incendiary speaker, Alfred Moore Waddell, gives one last speech on November 7th, the day before the election. He tells his audience, "You are Anglo-Saxons," and "you will do your duty."

Voiceover (Mike Wiley), Alfred Moore Waddell: Go to the polls tomorrow, and if you find the negro out voting, tell him to leave the polls and if he refuses, kill him. Shoot him down in his tracks. We shall win tomorrow if we have to do it with guns.

Michael A. Betts, II: There was little, if any gunfire on November 8th. The pre-election campaign of threats and propaganda worked, along with, apparently, some actual election fraud just to make sure, says LeRae Umfleet.

LeRae Umfleet: Because we do have evidence of ballot stuffing.

John Biewen: In one precinct in Wilmington's First ward, for example, there were far more votes cast for the Democratic candidate than there were registered voters in the precinct. A few decades later, a white Wilmington newspaper reporter who had spoken with many of the men involved in 1898, would write this:

Voiceover (Mike Wiley), Harry Hayden, *The Wilmington Rebellion*: Of course, there were some irregularities in this state-wide election, in this city and elsewhere in the state, but the white citizens realized that victory had to be won by hook or by crook, otherwise they would have to continue to live under the intolerable conditions of the time.

Michael A. Betts, II: The Democratic Party swept to victory across North Carolina, taking back majorities in the state legislature and the state's Congressional delegation. But the white supremacists weren't done.

John Biewen: See, the 1898 elections were for state and federal offices only. The city leadership in Wilmington, with its Fusionist mayor and city council, was not on the November ballot; they wouldn't face the voters until the following spring. The local Democrats and their allies apparently decided they weren't going to wait that long. On the morning after the election, November 9th, a white-owned newspaper, the Wilmington Messenger, ran an ad that read:

Voiceover (Mike Wiley), Wilmington Messenger Ad: *ATTENTION WHITE MEN.*

There will be a meeting of the White Men of Wilmington this morning at 11 o'clock at the Court House. A full attendance is desired, as business in the furtherance of White Supremacy will be transacted.

Michael A. Betts, II: 600 white men showed up. At the meeting, they were asked to sign a statement, read by that inflammatory speechmaker, Alfred Moore Wadell. It would come to be called the White Declaration of Independence.

Voiceover (Mike Wiley), White Declaration: *We, the undersigned citizens of the City of Wilmington and County of New Hanover, do hereby declare that we will no longer be ruled, and will never again be ruled, by men of African origin.*

John Biewen: The statement singled out the Black-owned newspaper, The Daily Record. Its owner, Alexander Manly, had published that editorial about consensual relationships between Black men and white women – in response to Rebecca Felton’s speech calling for more lynchings of Black men. The Declaration demanded that Manly leave town immediately.

Michael A. Betts, II: 457 men signed the Declaration. It was delivered to a group of Black leaders, the Committee of Colored Citizens, with a demand they respond by 7:30 the next morning. Alfred Moore Waddell would later claim he never got an answer – and, in his words, “that caused all the trouble.”

John Biewen: Notice, he’s somehow blaming Black people, in yet another way, for what went down. It’s hard to say what kind of answer from Black leaders would have made any difference.

Michael A. Betts, II: White supremacist leaders called hundreds of white citizens to meet at the armory of a local militia, on the morning of November 10th – two days after the election:

Lerae Umfleet: The crowd that met Alfred Moore Wadell here on the steps grew rapidly to hundreds of men who were angry and eager to see something happen. Because if you can imagine, they had months and months and months of propaganda and white supremacy rhetoric being sent to them, and the Democratic Party had won the election, but there had not been a breaking point for the average citizen who was the target of the white supremacy campaign. Shouts were made to fumigate the city with the ashes of Manly's printing press, and who knows if that was a planted thing or if it was an organic thing. Nonetheless, Wadell took control of the crowd, arranged them in skirmish lines, and marched them, as a good Confederate general would, up Market Street to then turn and go to the Manly Printing Press building, where the building would eventually be caught on fire and burned – ending the career of the Record in Wilmington at the time.

John Biewen: Alexander Manly had slipped out of town the night before the mob came for him.

Milo Manly: My father and a friend who was a part of the newspaper setup, got in my father's buggy, which of course is the Cadillac of the day, horse and buggy. And they headed out of town.

Michael A. Betts, II: That's Milo Manly, Alexander Manly's son, from a 1984 interview with the University of Kentucky. He's telling the story of how his father escaped Wilmington physically unharmed.

Milo Manly: The gang, the mob that had been set up, had put a circle around the town. Because they were coming in to lynch this nigger Manley. Well, a German grocer, who knew my father, got in touch with my father, says, look, you've got to get out of town. But they've lined it up that nobody can leave the vicinity of this cordon, unless they have a certain password. He said, now, if it ever got known that I gave you the password, they'd kill me. But I know you, I trust you, I want you to get out of here. He gave my father the password....

Michael A. Betts, II: Alexander Manly was very light-skinned, and most ordinary white people in the area didn't know what he looked like.

Milo Manly: My father went on up, to come up to the line. They stopped him. Where are you going? He named a town up there. What are you going up there for? I'm going up there to buy some horses, he says, there's an auction up

there, or something like that. Oh, all right. He gave the password. Okay. They said, but you see that nigger Manley up there, shoot him, and they gave him two rifles. (Interviewer chuckles.) That's right. Away he went.

Music

John Biewen: With Manly's newspaper building destroyed, Alfred Moore Waddell told the white men to go home.

Michael A. Betts, II: But Cedric Harrison, who leads those tours about Black Wilmington history, says the armed white Supremacists took their frustration at Manly's escape into nearby neighborhoods. Some shot into Black people's homes and targeted any Black people who were out in the streets.

Cedric Harrison: In the deep south, a lot of neighborhoods weren't exclusively black or white because blacks had to live close to where they worked. And so when some of the whites went back to their homes, they ended up seeing some Blacks just going about their day to day, minding their own business, and ended up shooting them where they stood. And that started a massacre that happened throughout the night.

Music

John Biewen: Among the white men who shot down Black people on November 10th , a group that may have taken part was a squad that operated a Colt machine gun mounted on the back of a horse-drawn wagon. It was one of two rapid-fire guns called into action on November 10th. The other, a Hotchkiss weapon, belonged to a local naval militia. The Colt was similar to a Gatling gun; it could fire more than 400 rounds a minute. Local businessmen had bought it shortly before the election, to keep the peace, as some said – or, to intimidate Black people. A week before the election, members of the gun squad had invited Black community leaders to a demonstration by the river, firing the weapon to show them what it could do. In the days after the massacre, a Philadelphia newspaper wrote that the gun’s purpose was to “overawe negroes.”

Michael A. Betts, II: On November 10th, after shots were fired in Wilmington’s Brooklyn neighborhood, Governor Daniel Russell sent a telegram ordering the head of a North Carolina militia, the State Guard, to take command of the local militia, the Wilmington Light Infantry, to “preserve the peace.” That’s when the various militias, and the Colt machine gun, headed into the city’s neighborhoods.

LeRae Umfleet, in car: We're driving along Bladen right now, up towards 6th. The machine gun squadron was tasked with pulling the machine gun on the wagon throughout the Black neighborhood to make sure that everyone was being, um, well-behaved and peaceful.

Michael A. Betts, II: Most of the men on the machine gun squad were members of the Wilmington Light Infantry. Their captain was William Rand Kenan, Sr. He was 53, a former Confederate officer, now a prominent merchant. The day before the massacre, Kenan wrote his signature on the White Declaration of Independence.

LeRae Umfleet: Here at the corner of 6th and Bladen was a community center for the Black community. And the machine gun squadron was pulling the machine gun through the area when there came to them reports that there was someone in Manhattan Park, which was what this was called, shooting at the white patrols, and to bring the machine gun post-haste to evacuate the building. By the time the machine gun squadron got here, there was also a patrol from the Wilmington Light Infantry and it was complemented by a Red Shirt patrol.

John Biewen: Umfleet says white men at 6th and Bladen claimed that Black men had shot at them. Reports also said the gun squad itself had drawn fire as it moved through town. Someone “speculated” that a Black man named Joshua Halsey, who lived on this block, had fired shots. Members of the Wilmington Light Infantry soon found him.

LeRae Umfleet: And, uh, Halsey was pretty much shot by a firing squad here in the street. And when I was doing my research trying to identify victims of the violence of that day, I came across multiple references to men who were shot here at this intersection, and one or two references to the machine gun being

here. And / perhaps as many as twenty-five men were killed at this intersection, potentially by the machine gun, in a short amount of time.

Music:

John Biewen: Umfleet says “potentially,” because Red Shirts and other members of the Wilmington Light Infantry also fired *rifles* at Black men at this intersection, so it’s not clear precisely what the men operating the machine gun itself did or didn’t do. Many years later a white newspaperman, based on interviews with those involved, would write that the machine gunners killed twenty-five Black people here. But the journalist, Harry Hayden, would later change that account, for some reason, to say the squad itself shot only one man. What can we say about William Rand Kenan, Sr., and his role in all of this?

William Sturkey: So, there's a picture of him standing on the wagon with the gun....

Michael A. Betts, II: Historian William Sturkey. He’s talking about one of the most chilling photographs related to the massacre and coup at Wilmington. It’s a posed photo: ten men in suits and hats, holding rifles and looking into the camera. They’re positioned on the open, horse-drawn wagon with the Colt machine gun, on a tripod, pointing off the back. As captain of the squad, William Kenan is standing at one end,

behind the others, white-haired with a thick mustache, his head towering above the rest.

John Biewen: The photo was taken after the coup and the massacre, at a time when Wilmington's white supremacists were openly triumphant ... and wanted to document those who'd contributed to their "victory.". The Wilmington Morning Star reported in February 1899 that the photographer, Henry Cronenberg, had made photos of, quote, "'Captain Kenan's Rapid-Fire Gun Squad,' which performed such excellent service during the race trouble here on November 10th."

William Sturkey: Plenty of newspaper articles from the time, not just in North Carolina but across the eastern seaboard, talk about Kenan's role in this massacre. So not all of them say, well, you know, he pulled the trigger x amount of times and killed x amount of people, but the picture of him on the most dangerous wagon from those events, and then also, of course, you know, contemporaneous news coverage that's saying, well, William Rand Kenan helped lead this unit that did x.

John Biewen: The Philadelphia newspaper that printed the item, a few days after the massacre, about the rapid-fire gun used to "overawe negroes"? Those words were part of a caption under an image of William R. Kenan, calling him, "the man who was in command." The city editor for the white Wilmington newspaper, the *Messenger*, said

he witnessed some of the shootings that day. He wrote that he was impressed by the “spectacular action of the machine gun outfit,” and singled out Captain William R. Kenan as one of the “heroic figures” who led the squad.

Michael A. Betts, II: Kenan’s son, William R. Kenan, Jr., wrote an autobiography in 1946, that includes this passage.

Voiceover (Mike Wiley), William Kenan, Jr.: As a small boy I was much impressed with the following: There was a riot of colored men in Wilmington, and my father organized a volunteer company of men with all kinds of rifles together with a riot gun on a wagon and they cleaned up the riot very quickly, although they were compelled to kill several persons. He rode the wagon and directed the operation.

Michael A. Betts, II: This account has some problems. Kenan, Jr. was not a small boy in 1898. He was 26 years old – living and working in Michigan, as we said at the top. The other big falsehood: that the violence started with “a riot of colored men.” There’s no evidence of any such riot, and though three white men were reported shot and wounded – if in fact that happened, those men may have been the victims of friendly fire. The New York Times reported after the massacre that two white men were “wounded slightly” after other white men opened fire. And the state report said that the

third white man, the one wounded most seriously, was hit by a “stray bullet.” Only Black men were killed.

John Biewen: Had William Kenan, Jr. been misinformed about what happened that day, or did he know better? And who were his sources? His father? Other people from his hometown? Or was he relying on what had become the predominant narrative among white people in the decades after 1898? In any case, Kenan Jr. didn’t hesitate to put his father on that machine gun wagon, running the show and “cleaning up” the problem.

Music

[BREAK]

Michael A. Betts, II: Even as the massacre raged on November 10th, the white supremacist Democrats had more violence to carry out – against democracy in Wilmington.

LeRae Umfleet: While bullets are still flying in the streets, the existing mayor and board of aldermen were summoned to the town hall, where they were summarily required to resign their position as a representative of their ward in the city. And a hand selected group of white supremacy supporters were put in their place.

John Biewen: The insurrectionists chose Alfred Moore Waddell, the fiery, racist speechmaker, as mayor. As each alderman resigned, the board “elected” his replacement. The city charter allowed the board to replace a resigning member in this way.

LeRae Umfleet: So they followed the rule of law in the way that this happened. However, the piece that you may not understand is that there were about two hundred armed men in the building at the time. So this was all done under duress. And this is the exact definition of a coup d'etat. Armed overthrow of a legally elected government.

Music

Michael A. Betts, II: On the day we spent together, LeRae Umfleet took us to the corner of 4th and Harnett. This is where the killing started on November 10th.

LeRae Umfleet: I get asked a lot how many people died on the day of the violence. Officially, the count was less than 20, but in my research and in my digging, I kept a card file of every time I saw a reference to someone getting shot and murdered or anything like that. And once I started compiling all that information, I feel safe to say that between 40 and 60 men lost their lives that day. But it could be considerably more.

Music

LeRae Umfleet: Many men who were shot – and it was all men as far as I can tell – their bodies were left to lay in the street until nightfall, and their families came and buried their bodies in secret. And we don't necessarily know where all of those burial locations were.

William Sturkey: The people who were massacred weren't the ones who got to preserve and tell their stories.

John Biewen: Historian William Sturkey.

William Sturkey: Black people who experienced this weren't thinking, like, OK, my aunt was killed in the street, let me take pictures of her dead bo– you know, it was like, how do we deal with this in a way that we can safely process the death of our loved ones, bury them, and then in some cases, get out?

John Biewen: Any documentation of the dead was in the hands of government agencies now controlled by white supremacists. A century later, the official state report verified the deaths of at least 22 people, but noted that eye-witness estimates ranged into the hundreds.

Michael A. Betts, II: Eyewitnesses also said that large numbers of Black people were shot and thrown into the Cape Fear River. Bertha Boykin Todd is 94. She's lived in Wilmington for more than 70 years. She was instrumental in pressing for an acknowledgment of the massacre and coup, starting in the 1990s – we'll be hearing more from her in this series. As a small child in Sampson County, an hour's drive from Wilmington, Mrs. Todd heard whispers about terrible events in Wilmington, and specifically about bodies being thrown into the river. She couldn't understand why anyone would do such a thing.

Bertha Todd: It was what my stepfather said! And I said, Who's throwing those dogs and cats in the river? That's all I knew. I didn't dare think they were humans.

John Biewen: It was only after she'd led the centennial commemoration in 1998 that she learned it wasn't just Black people circulating those whispers.

Bertha Todd: I was so shocked to get that telephone call.

John Biewen: The morning after the 100th anniversary event, Mrs. Todd was at home, feeling very good about how it all went, she says, when her phone rang.

Bertha Todd: A white female said, Good morning, my name is Wilma. You don't know me, but I know you. If my life depended on my identifying Wilma and her last name, I'd have to die, because I have no idea. And she said, I want to tell you a true story – what Judge Judy would say is hearsay.

John Biewen: It was hearsay because Wilma said she'd heard the story from an acquaintance, an elderly white man born and raised in Wilmington. That man told Wilma that he'd heard it from his father – who'd been a young man in Wilmington in 1898.

Bertha Todd: And his father would have been involved. And he said he wasn't the killing kind, but he grew up in Wilmington with a black male playmate. They were about the same age.

Michael A. Betts, II: On November 10th, the man told Wilma, he was standing alongside the Cape Fear River, watching as the chaos unfolded around him.

Bertha Todd: Red Shirts, a group of Red Shirts came up. Said, what are you doing here? You don't have a rifle? They didn't see one. He said, no, because

he wasn't the killing kind. I guess he was wondering what a devastating mess this is. And they said -- this is what they told him. We want you to take this rifle, and we want you to shoot every nigger male that's trying to swim to Brunswick County across the Cape Fear River. Shoot 'em, let them fall in, there'll be no record of them. If you shoot them on land, still drag them and drop them in. And they gave him that. He took it and still kept looking. Then, all of a sudden, he heard a rustle in the bushes. And that was his playmate, trying to get to the river to swim across to Brunswick County. And he pretended he didn't see him. He didn't shoot him. But he never saw him again. And this is what that lady told me.

Music

Michael A. Betts, II: Later, Mrs. Todd decided to run this account past a close friend and ally, Betty Cameron, who was prominent in the white community.

Bertha Todd: I told Betty, because we had gone beyond friendship. We were just talking like two individuals whose friendship would never end. I told her how the Red Shirts killed lots of Blacks when it wasn't necessary and threw them in the Cape Fear River. And Betty said to me, Well, Bertha, that's all I've heard! (Uncomfortable laugh) I was so shocked. I couldn't discuss it anymore.

John Biewen: So, Betty Cameron confirmed that white Wilmingtonians had passed down similar grisly accounts.

Music: Laurelyn Dossett, “Run to the River”:

There are secrets, secrets I swore I’d never tell

But the ones that I loved are all good gone dead

So listen children, listen well

Michael A. Betts, II: On top of the killing and the coup d’etat, November 10th, 1898, was also a day of banishment. The Secret Nine had drawn up a list of about twenty men, Black and white, who they wanted gone from Wilmington – in addition to the newspaper editor Alexander Manly. The Black men on the list included the pastor of a large Black church, two attorneys, and the owners of successful businesses – a butcher shop, a fish and oyster enterprise, and a real estate and pawnbroking business.

John Biewen: The white men to be driven away included the mayor, the police chief, and a deputy sheriff, all supporters of Fusionist politics and full Black citizenship – and a federal court official who was married to a Black woman. The mob led all these men to the train station at gunpoint and ordered them to leave and never come back.

Michael A. Betts, II: A lot of ordinary Black residents also fled the city, after first looking for safety in the nearest place they could find.

Sound: car door slams, voices

Cedric Harrison: We are here in Wilmington on the north side of town, at the famous Pine Forest Cemetery, which is the Black, or “colored,” cemetery for Wilmington, North Carolina Black residents.

Michael A. Betts, II: Cedric Harrison describes how Black people, maybe hundreds of men, women and children, ran to the cemetery to hide after the shooting *started*. Others hid in woods and swamps outside of town. Pine Forest cemetery is a sprawling landscape with mounds and dips and many large trees.

Cedric: It was a lot more trees during that time. And so it was a lot easier to come and hide amongst this wooded areas and spaces. And some people did that for days going into weeks. Some people went and found their way out to the other side and was able to go to surrounding counties, and others were able to get all the way out of this Wilmington area and to never come back.

John Biewen: It’s not clear how many Black people left for good, but the U.S. Census shows that the city’s Black population, after almost tripling between 1860 and 1890, dropped in 1900 by eight percent. That year, for the first time in forty years, Black Wilmingtonians were outnumbered by white people.

Michael A. Betts, II: People have described Wilmington as a “chocolate city” in the 1890s, but after 1898, the white population would grow steadily and the number of Black folks would stagnate. Today, it’s a largely white city. Only about one in six Wilmingtonians is Black.

Music

John Biewen: Michael, the story we’ve just told relies heavily on the work of LeRae Umfleet, and her research for the state commission in the 2000s that resulted in her book *A Day of Blood*. It’s worth talking about how *LeRae* was able to document certain things – in particular, the machinations of the Secret Nine, that committee of white elites in Wilmington.

Michael A. Betts, II: Yes. We know about the Secret Nine because they told people what they did, in the years and decades after 1898. Without shame. Importantly, they told a guy named Harry Hayden.

John Biewen: Right, and I mentioned him earlier. Harry Hayden was white, born in Wilmington. He was only eight years old in 1898, but he grew up to be a reporter with the Wilmington Morning Star newspaper.

Michael A. Betts, II: Exactly. And for years he had wide-ranging conversations with the very people who had orchestrated the coup and carried out the massacre. Here's LeRae Umfleet.

LeRae Umfleet: As a newspaper man and investigative journalist, he was doing what you might call his due diligence by speaking with the witnesses of the event.

Michael A. Betts, II: Hayden ultimately published a pamphlet in 1936: "The Wilmington Rebellion," in which he revealed the names and the actions of the Secret Nine – along with many other details, including the plans to banish a list of prominent Black and white men from the city after the election.

John Biewen: Hayden didn't have to dig all that hard to get those stories, LeRae says.

LeRae Umfleet: I believe Harry Hayden's work was created over a period of time where he was working to refine the content. And he was speaking with "veterans" of 1898. That's how they viewed themselves. And at every anniversary of November 10th, those veterans would come together at the Lumina on the beach and, uh, have an oyster roast and reminisce about their glorious victory in 1898.

Michael A. Betts, II: Umfleet told me she looked at Hayden's reporting with skepticism, and there were inconsistencies in his story. But she cross-checked his

account with other sources, and she's convinced his most important claims – the ones she included in her book – are true.

John Biewen: And just to be clear: Hayden's pamphlet was not an *exposé* of the white supremacist conspiracy of 1898. He set out to write a respectful history. Here's the description on the cover of Hayden's pamphlet:

Voiceover (Mike Wiley), *The Wilmington Rebellion* cover description: First authentic account of the Wilmington Revolution of 1898, which resulted in the elimination of the Negro as a political factor in Wilmington and North Carolina and which led to the disfranchisement of the race throughout the South through the instrumentality of the "Grandfather Clause."

Michael A. Betts, II: The Grandfather Clause was part of a mechanism to prevent Black people from voting, put in place by the North Carolina state government in 1900. More on that in our next episode. But Harry Hayden makes clear that he's fully on board with the disfranchisement and the "elimination of the Negro as a political factor" in North Carolina.

John Biewen: Notice the words Hayden uses for what the white supremacists did: "rebellion" and "revolution." He's spinning a tale about a popular revolt against a failing, illegitimate government, the victimized little people rising up, righteously and justifiably – not a mob that represented a powerful minority committing a racist massacre and deposing a duly elected government.

Michael A. Betts, II: And Hayden published this booklet in 1936, almost forty years after the events of 1898. Which says a lot about the prevailing view of 1898 at that time in North Carolina. He could write a triumphalist tract in 1936 because he and many others felt sure that white supremacy was in complete control and always would be.

John Biewen: And there's a reason they felt that way.

Next time, in Episode 4: The second propaganda campaign – the one *after* the massacre and coup. It would serve its purpose for a century.

Music, Laurelyn Dossett, “Run to the River”:

You gotta run to the river, you gotta run run run

The boatman is waitin', you gotta run

Mothers, fathers, wayward daughters, wayward sons,

Get on down to the river, 'cause you gotta run

Credits:

Echoes of a Coup is an initiative of America's Hallowed Ground, a project of the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University. It is written and produced by Michael A. Betts the Second, and me. Our script editor for this series is Loretta Williams. Voice actor, Mr. Mike Wiley. This song, “Run to the River,” written and performed by Laurelyn

Dossett; recorded and mixed by Michael A. Betts, II. Other music by Kieran Haile, Blue Dot Sessions, Lee Rosevere, Okaya, Kevin MacLeod, Jameson Nathan Jones, and Lucas Biewen. For more on the America's Hallowed Ground project, see americashallowedground.org. Logistics by kidSweater Design Group, Ltd. Our website is Sceneonradio.org. The show is distributed by our friends at PRX. Scene on Radio comes to you from the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University.