



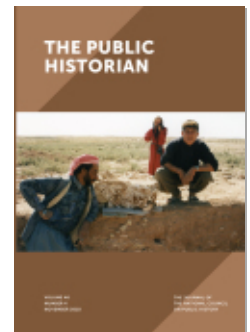
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Race, Place, and Memory: Deep Currents in Wilmington, North Carolina by Margaret M. Mulrooney (review)

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“an untruth; a falsehood,” and in order to fully understand our present, we must move away from the untruths we tell ourselves about history for comfort and convenience. That would be a more substantive way to honor the activists of the civil rights movement.

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Race, Place, and Memory: Deep Currents in Wilmington, North Carolina

by Margaret M. Mulrooney. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018.

1 + 355 pp.: illustrations, notes, bibliography, index; clothbound, \$95.00.

The topic of race and heritage stands at the center of socio-political discussions in America today. The wave of pro and con perspectives on racially controversial monuments of soldiers, physicians, composers, educators, and industrialists has resulted in the removal of some statues and public monuments. At the heart of the controversies is the question, “How do Americans celebrate and commemorate its public history?” Race and heritage controversies come to a head in Margaret M. Mulrooney’s *Race, Place, and Memory: Deep Currents in Wilmington, North Carolina*, a well-documented book that combines historical data with the author’s own role in the current controversy over historic memory in the city.

Mulrooney, professor of history and associate vice provost of university programs at James Madison University, is a specialist on the history of Wilmington and its importance as a colonial and early American port city supporting the economic growth of the United States in the post-Revolutionary period, and beyond. Mulrooney “served as public historian in residence for the 1898 Centennial Foundation planning body,” the civic organization charged with forging a citywide commemoration of the 1898 race riot, or “coup” (2). *Race, Place, and Memory* is an account of her work on the Centennial project as well as a historical narrative to help focus the reader and provide a greater understanding of race and violence in the shaping of Wilmington.

Much of the study focuses on the difficulty of race relations in the history of Wilmington. As early as the eighteenth century, white Wilmingtonians have used violence to buttress white supremacy and racial terrorism. Mulrooney outlines in chapter 1 “that violence especially affected colonial-era residents’ emergent racial and civic identities; the Market where enslaved persons stood on the block for sale held different meanings for blacks than it did for whites; so did places like Nigger Head Road, where whites posted the decapitated skulls of suspected slave rebels” as a public monument to white power and African subversion (8).

The debate between white and black historic memory played out as Wilmingtonians prepared to commemorate the one-hundredth year since the 1898 riot—or coup. One recurring theme in Mulrooney’s history is the indoctrination of new Wilmingtonians, white and black, into the culture of white southern hegemony in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In order to understand the historic

memory battles, it is necessary to examine the polar perspectives in white and black. Historically, an array of white elites, established as the leading citizens and their descendants, protect their economic, political, social, and racial status while African American notables fought to uphold their right to free enterprise and citizenship. Some of Wilmington's historical figures such as Alfred Waddell, Cornelius Harnett, Alexander McRae, Hugh McRae, and Maurice Moore, are stalwarts of white heritage. Abraham Galloway, David Walker, Frederick Sadgwar, and Alexander Manly, are but a few of the African American leaders and activists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Most of the men or surnames mentioned above played a role in what is the most noted historic event in Wilmington's history. Free blacks and enslaved populations increased significantly over the period of two centuries to the degree that they were a majority in the city by the late nineteenth century. Urban blacks enjoyed access to goods and enterprise that rural blacks, especially the enslaved, would not experience. Even poorer or "common" whites were jealous of the visual economic freedom of Wilmington blacks.

A majority black town in 1898, Wilmington published a black newspaper, the *Wilmington Record*, and black men held political, civil servant, and other public positions in government and enterprise. This newfound status of civil citizenry ran counter to the post-Reconstruction social and political renaissance of white power. While other parts of the South moved with speed to enact and enforce de facto and de jour segregation within its Jim Crow society, Wilmington found itself as an integrated civic city.

Yet, in the years leading up to the coup, white Wilmingtonians reformed a Civil War era militia, the Wilmington Light Infantry (WFL), to serve as its troops. Mulrooney detailed the murderous episode of November 10, 1898. The coup was an example of the white elite's use of "organized racist violence as a traditional social-control mechanism" (148). In fact, the coup leaders, the McRaes, Waddell, Taylor, and others had given the African American elected officials, businessmen, and civil servants an "ultimatum: submit their acquiescence on the part of the entire Black community or face the consequences" (140). The white mob fanned out in the city heading to the majority African American section of Brooklyn. With the aid of the WFL and the US Naval Reserves, armed whites machine gunned their way through the African American community arresting and shooting dead men and women alike. The coup leaders deposed elected politicians such as aldermen, police chief, and the mayor, as well as civil servants such as the Cape Fear Steam Engine Company. Once in power the revolting board of alderman fired all African American municipal workers including the Cape Fear Steam Engine Company and gave those jobs to whites. Overnight a city of African American majority became a minority and would never again retain that status.

Almost immediately after the coup the white power structure used the media and political propaganda to blame the African American community for the racial unrest. Countering those interpretations, two African American writers, David

Bryant Fulton and novelist Charles Waddell Chesnut, penned a defense of the black community and set the story right as to the motivation and facts of the coup. Fulton's book, *Hanover, or, the Persecution of the Lowly*, and Chesnut's *The Marrow of Tradition* fictionalized the 1898 coup and its peculiar impact on black freedom and historic memory.

What arises in *Race, Place, and Memory: Deep Currents in Wilmington, North Carolina* is how whites and African Americans differ on the historic accounts of the past and the meaning and reverence of public spaces. Opposing historic memories play out for over a century. The attempt to commemorate the 1898 coup revealed the deep-seated difference in public discourse of the city's continued racial divide.

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The Rosewood Massacre: An Archaeology and History of Intersectional Violence

by Edward González-Tennant. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018.

1 + 226 pp.; illustrations, references, index; clothbound, \$79.95.

Although the title of this book suggests that it is about a single event that took place in 1923 in Rosewood, Florida, it quickly becomes apparent that it has a much broader scope. As Edward González-Tennant explores the meaning of racial violence in the United States, the author keeps his study closely tied to that moment and place while simultaneously covering a much wider time period and geographical scope. His starting point is an early twentieth century race riot (or pogrom) that led to the complete destruction and near-erasure of Rosewood, a small African American community located on the Gulf Coast of Florida. Beginning on New Year's Day in 1923 and ending one week later, a white mob attacked the residents of Rosewood, causing numerous deaths and the uprooting of a flourishing community that existed since the nineteenth century. Throughout the book González-Tennant balances a finely detailed microhistory of this tragic event with a broadly ranging exploration of social science theories about violence, race, and intersectionality.

González-Tennant is interested in more than simply chronicling the narrative of the massacre, which has been detailed by a number of prior historians and journalists, as well as by a state-funded report commissioned in the 1990s. Instead, for much of the book, he examines the patterns of American racial violence over time, noting that while the types of attacks and what they were called changed (massacres, pogroms, lynchings, race riots, etc.), the violence has continually taken three main forms regardless of time and place. He refers to these as interpersonal, structural, and symbolic violence. González-Tennant explains that "structural and symbolic violence may not be physical, but their effects have material consequences nonetheless" (56). In this sense, racism and social inequality become types of violence that are just as damaging as a lynching. The interaction of these three