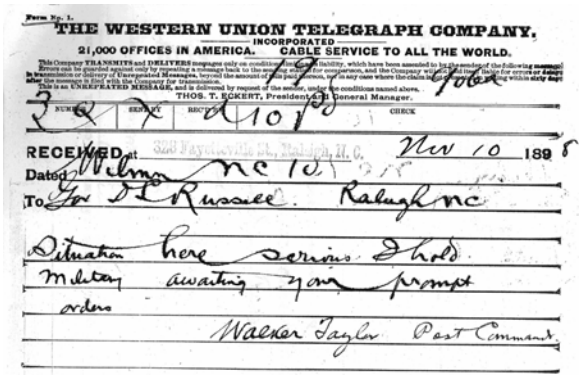
WLI, as a local North Carolina State Guard unit, was pledged to maintain peace and order. After consultation with Taylor, James refused to have the WLI officially participate in the destruction of Manly's press. The WLI could not and would not lead the march to the press.[12]

Waddell assembled the crowd in military fashion, in columns of four for the length of two city blocks, with himself and other leaders of the Committee of Twenty-Five, Red Shirts, and business interests leading the march.[13] These front ranks were Waddell, escorted by Mike Dowling of the Red Shirts, followed by F. H. Fechtig, W. C. Galloway, A. B. Skelding, and E. S. Lathrop of the Committee of Twenty-Five.[14] Also named by witnesses as leaders of the march were John D. Bellamy and former mayor Silas Fishblate.[15]

Once the main body of the crowd had left for the press, Taylor and James met at the armory and discussed the potential for trouble. Taylor, a member of both the WLI and a leading businessman, felt compelled to control the situation as much as possible and composed a telegram to the governor: "Situation here serious. I hold military awaiting your prompt orders."[16]


THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY,
INCORPORATED
21,000 OFFICES IN AMERICA. CABLE SERVICE TO ALL THE WORLD.
THOS. T. ECKERT, President & General Manager.
RECEIVED at
Dated Wilm NC 10 Nov 10 1898
To Gov D L Russell. Raleigh NC
Situation here serious I hold
Military awaiting your prompt
orders
Walker Taylor Post Commander

Telegram: Walker Taylor to Governor Daniel Russell.
Image: North Carolina State Archives

Taylor and his men then waited at the armory for a reply while the crowd descended on the press. John V. B. Metts, a sergeant in the WLI, wrote that he and the other members of the WLI were "kept under arms" in the armory until eleven o'clock while the citizens met there and "proceeded to burn the *Record* building."[17] Another member of the WLI, Private James D. Nutt, expressed the men's eagerness to participate

[12] Taylor, at a meeting of riot "veterans" in 1905 recalled that "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 they had all gone and then I went down and Capt. James and I went over the situation" and then sent a telegram to the governor. "Minutes of the Association of the WLI," North Carolina Collection.

[13] The men reportedly formed themselves into columns according to military drills and, by the time their formation was complete, they presented a formidable front, twelve men across for two blocks. Hayden, *WLI*, 85; *Wilmington Messenger* November 11, 1898; Hayden, "Introduction to the Wilmington Rebellion," 22.

[14] Hayden, *WLI,* 85.

[15] There are contradictions on Bellamy's participation. An unsigned letter to President McKinley from an African American Wilmingtonian claimed he was at the head of the march. However, Bellamy's testimony in court contradicts this statement: "Question: Mr. Bellamy, were you present at anytime during the destruction, or any part of the destruction, of the Manly printing office and printing press? Answer: I was not present; I was not even in the crowd that went there; I don't know who went there, except upon information, and had nothing to do with it, and have never seen the building, as I recall, either prior to or since the destruction." Further, Bellamy contended on another occasion that he was out of town at the time. *Contested Election Case*, 249; Unsigned Letter to President McKinley, November 13, 1898, General Records of the Department of Justice, National Archives, Washington, D. C.; Bellamy, *Memoirs*.

[16] Governor Russell Papers, State Archives, North Carolina Office of Archives and History, Raleigh.

[17] John V. B. Metts to "Miss Elizabeth," November 12, 1898, Hinsdale Papers, Duke University Library, Durham.