

"WE'VE HAD A PEACEFUL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RACES HERE":  
FORMATION AND EARLY WORK OF THE ROME (GEORGIA)  
COUNCIL ON HUMAN RELATIONS, 1959-1963

by

LAURA CALDWELL ANDERSON

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of the State University of West Georgia in Partial Fulfillment  
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## Introduction

Frances Pauley, one-time Executive Director of the Georgia Council on Human Relations, remembered the Civil Rights Movement as a grassroots movement from which leaders emerged—"like James Farmer and Martin Luther King and so forth"—but which also relied upon and produced "a tremendous number of heroes and heroines on a local level that really were the movement." Pauley told historian Kathryn Nasstrom that historians should create a "list and a little account of what different people did in different [Georgia] towns. Because if we don't do it soon, it's going to be forgotten."<sup>1</sup>

In the four to ten years that have passed since Nasstrom interviewed Pauley and edited others' interviews with her to author *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool*, a few other scholars have begun to study the civil rights movement in Georgia. Works such as Jeff Roche's *Restructured Resistance: The Sibley Commission and the Politics of Desegregation in Georgia* and Stephen Tuck's *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980* address life in post-World War II Georgia and, particularly, conflicts that erupted after federal courts mandated public school desegregation in the mid-1950s. As statewide studies, these works only touch on specific efforts of activists and their organizations in local communities all over Georgia. Roche looks at people and events in ten districts in which the Georgia General Assembly Committee on Schools (The Sibley Commission) conducted hearings related to public

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<sup>1</sup> Kathryn L. Nasstrom. *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool: Frances Freeborn Pauley and the Struggle for Social Justice*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000.

school desegregation in March 1960. Tuck, on the other hand, takes a broad view of civil rights movement events and activities between 1940 and 1980 in five Georgia towns: Athens, Augusta, Macon, Savannah, and Rome. It is difficult to imagine putting together the story of the Rome Council on Human Relations without these studies, for they provide the context and comparative material that an intensely local study must draw from in order to show its wider significance. From these works, too, we gain a sense of the richness of the history of the struggle for racial equality in a state that has too often been examined from the perspective of only one city: Atlanta.

In any study of the civil rights movement, Atlanta and Atlanta-based organizations play a key role. Atlanta was a national and regional headquarters. The same may be said of Birmingham and Montgomery and of smaller cities such as Albany and Selma. Thus, prize-winning, epic examinations of the civil rights movement such as *Parting the Waters* by Taylor Branch and *Carry Me Home* by Diane McWhorter focus on events in these key places. The majority of accounts of the movement are memoirs and biographies of nationally and regionally known figures, including John Lewis, Fred Shuttlesworth, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ella Baker. These works represent only one facet of the story—its bone structure. Furthermore, they largely address the lives of better-known national leaders, rather than the lives of persons comprising the “grassroots” of the movement.<sup>2</sup> As historians move beyond memoirs and in-depth character studies and beyond Atlanta—and Birmingham, Memphis, Albany, and Jackson—they can answer Frances Pauley’s call for an accounting of the variety of civil

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<sup>2</sup> Some new exceptions are found in recent memoirs of white women, including that of Sara Mitchell Parsons of Atlanta (*From Southern Wrongs to Civil Rights*, University of Alabama Press, 2000) and a collection of essays by nine women who were young members of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (*Deep in Our Hearts*, University of Georgia, 2000).

rights activists who constituted the movement. Community studies of the struggle for change by individuals and organizations in smaller towns and cities across the South will enrich the picture. Rome, in the Northwest corner of Georgia, is one such town. Every town has a history. And, like most southern towns, Rome has a civil rights history.

Rome is also my hometown. I do not live there, but my family does. In studying Rome I have taken a strange trip home, attempting to see the place of my family's roots from an objective distance, while enjoying the benefits of connections that lead to a different kind of understanding apart from scholarship. My excitement at discovering in Nasstrom's book the story of the Rome Council on Human Relations—black and white people working together for social change before I was born—is tempered by resentment that no one told me the story at home, in school, or in church, possibly because they did not know it either. That resentment is as much for myself as for my classmates, black and white. What if we had understood what it took for slow steps toward racial equality to be made in our town not so long before we, too, were its citizens? What if we had known that high school students had been brave enough to conduct sit-ins to protest unjust treatment downtown? What if someone had explained to us that interracial cooperation had contributed progressive social change to our town?

The following study of the formation and early work of the Rome Council on Human Relations and, particularly, the role of friendships and outside support in its establishment negates any idea that Romans worked in isolation, whether for social change or against it. The first chapter offers a look at Rome circa 1960—its churches, civic organizations, and general political and social climate that set the context for the formation, later that year, of the interracial Rome Council. Chapter Two introduces local

activists and their connections to a loose statewide network of individuals and organizations. Atlanta-based organizations supplied encouragement and support to local and statewide organizing efforts in the forms of training, literature, communication centers, and money for staff members, offices, and supplies. Chapter Three addresses the actual formation and early work of the Rome Council by outlining the events and circumstances that compelled the group to write by-laws, associate formally with the Georgia Council on Human Relations, and, later, to play a role in direct action protests by Rome students in 1963.

This study of the Rome Council is just as much about the individuals—their experiences and motivations to join—as it is about the work of the group. What the Rome Council eventually meant to the community and what it meant to each of the individuals involved may be different matters. The group does not appear to have been well known or to have received much public attention, nor does it seem to have operated in need or desire of such recognition. My research reveals, however, that founders and members of the council, understanding the role that individuals and organizations from outside the community could play in supporting the local group, drew upon statewide contacts to garner such support, primarily from Frances Pauley and the Georgia Council on Human Relations.

I hope that this study becomes a part of the accounting that Frances Pauley desires of all the many individuals involved in the civil rights movement across Georgia. The people she remembered meeting and forming friendships with in Rome fascinated me and I immediately determined to know more about them. I also wanted to find out where my own family and class fit into the larger story of the civil rights movement in Rome. This

version of the story is merely what I know to date. With the help of other citizens of Rome, it will continue to unfold. With much of the story gathered, word may more easily get around town that I am serious about documenting the lives of the persons who formed the Rome Council on Human Relations and the challenges and successes they met.



## Prologue

In the fall of 1963, Helen Hutzler, a native of Rome, Georgia and a student at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, wrote in her dissertation on the history of Rome's public library that the first "racial integration" of the Rome Carnegie Library had occurred quietly in early March of that year. Contrasting that desegregation process to sit-ins by Rome high school students one month later, Hutzler noted that while "hundreds of youngsters were incarcerated" in the city jail directly next door to the library, black and white patrons inside the library "went on with business as usual." The library board's decision, in Hutzler's words, to "let Rome Carnegie Library be a truly American public library," had occurred as a result of a somewhat more muted form of local agitation.<sup>3</sup>

An African American cook named Capus White and other members of the one and a half year old Rome Council on Human Relations had visited the library often and regularly throughout 1962 to inquire as to when the library would desegregate. Apparently, by March of 1963, they had worn down the library staff with regular interracial visits.<sup>4</sup> A staff member's eventual acquiescence to White's repeated request for directions to the cookbooks constituted the desegregation of the library, though no formal, public announcement of a policy change was made until after the student sit-ins

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<sup>3</sup> Helen C. Hutzler, "History of Rome, Georgia Carnegie Library, 1911-1961" (M.S. L.S. diss., Catholic University of America, 1963), 100-101. Hutzler exaggerated; the number of students was sixty-two.

<sup>4</sup> Kathryn L. Nasstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool: Frances Freeborn Pauley and the Struggle for Social Justice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 72.

occurred at lunch counters a few weeks later. Nonetheless, White and other members of the new interracial organization were pleased that they had made some progress toward one of their purposes, to "devise, develop, publicize, and execute techniques and programs which [would] promote good will and understanding and counteract prejudice and discrimination based on racial, national, or ethnic group membership."<sup>5</sup>

Rome citizens buzzed much more loudly about the student protests than over the integration of Carnegie Library. In the wake of other, recent protests against Jim Crow laws by African Americans in Georgia and across the South, almost all local governments were dreading sit-ins and boycotts. Rome's civic leaders were no exception. Concerned as they were with promoting the town's image, local boosters and officials, even if they were segregationists, wanted their town to escape violent protests or the appearance of unrest. The *Rome News-Tribune*, at this time the only local newspaper, regularly carried stories of African American protests in the South and editorialized about how the "Northern press" stirred things up with its lack of understanding of the relationship between blacks and whites in the South and its desire to cause trouble in the region. It was as if the paper's editors wished to warn white Romans of the potential threat of violence from "the Negro community" and to remind African Americans that white people in charge were keeping a watchful eye on them.<sup>6</sup> Despite local officials' fears and their supposed efforts to ward off protests, on Thursday, March 28, 1963, sixty-two

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<sup>5</sup> John R. and Annabel H. Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations, 1962-1988: Historical Survey Based on Documentary Sources" (unpublished paper, December 1988), 7.

<sup>6</sup> For example, a 1960 book drive for black schools, organized by the city police department, but, in effect, co-sponsored by the *Rome News-Tribune*, sang the praises of the book drive in editorials and held it up as an example of how "relationships between the races locally [were] exceptionally good." The book drive was held during the height of the Sibley Commission Hearings, held across Georgia in 1960 to gauge public reaction to the idea of desegregated public schools and to give the state time to determine how it would meet federal court orders to desegregate. See "Do Local Negroes Need 'Protection'?" *Rome (Georgia) News-Tribune*, 18 March 1960, 4 and below, Chapter One.

African American high school students marched in groups of four and five into downtown Rome with books in their arms and money in their pockets. They wanted after-school snacks--sandwiches, Cokes, and proper service.<sup>7</sup>

Rome's popular downtown lunch counters, like those elsewhere in the South, were segregated. As the students entered three different drugstores and one five-and-dime on Broad Street, Rome's main thoroughfare, they were prepared to face violence or verbal abuse. Three days before, on Tuesday, March 26, one of their classmates, Herbert Munford, had spontaneously determined to try to order a cold drink on a warm day at a downtown lunch counter. When Munford had failed to leave promptly upon refusal of service, the staff had splashed ammonia onto the countertop in front of him. He had then departed with the resolve to spread word through the Main High School student body that something had to be done. After school on Wednesday, March 27, Munford and a few friends held a meeting to organize sit-ins at downtown lunch counters. Over one hundred students and no adults met in the school's gymnasium. It is possible that the assembled students discussed non-violence as a tactic, but they had no formal training in it. Back in their homes that night, the students told their parents what they intended to do and received their permission to participate in Rome's first mass display of direct action protest. The next morning, they dressed especially neatly for a warm day that must have seemed to last forever.<sup>8</sup>

After school, sixty-two students walked into town in groups of four and five and entered G.C. Murphy Company, Keith-Walgreen Drugs, Redford Variety, and Enloe Drugs. Upon refusal of menus and service, the students took out schoolbooks and began

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<sup>7</sup> "62 Jailed After Rome 'Sit-In' Demonstrations," *Rome (Georgia) News-Tribune*, 29 March 1963, 1; "Rome Jails 62 Teens In Sit-Ins," *Atlanta Constitution*, 29 March, 1963, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Linda Cason Harbert, interview by author, telephone, 21 February 2002.

to read, keeping their seats at the counters. Members of the Rome city police force were called to arrest the students, none of whom resisted. Putting down their books, each of the young men and women accepted a variety of charges, including "disorderly conduct," "loitering which obstructs public sidewalks," "loitering by minors," and "failure to disperse assemblies following a police order." Some of the students required that officers carry them to the police cars that took them to the city jail. The students did not anticipate spending much time in jail. The Rome chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) contacted the organization's Atlanta offices and requested a mediator and a lawyer for the teenagers. A young NAACP field representative named Vernon Jordan went immediately to Rome to negotiate on behalf of the students, as did another lawyer, Horace Ward, who litigated the case. Bond of \$102 was posted for each of the students.<sup>9</sup>

Very few students paid the bail; most preferred to spend a long weekend there. On the following Monday, April 1, a deal was worked out whereby the students were allowed to serve five days in jail or pay a \$50 fine.<sup>10</sup> Since some families could not afford to pay the money, another option was offered: students could serve jail time on consecutive weekends so as not to interrupt their schooling. A few students, whether their families could afford the fine or not, wanted to serve full sentences. Of the sixty-two demonstrators, seventeen spent nine consecutive days in the Rome city jail—the four days before the sentencing, plus the five days sentenced. Three of these students were female, including Linda Cason Harbert, then a senior at Main High School.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "62 Jailed," 1.

<sup>10</sup> "First Negro Sit-In Demonstrators Sentenced to \$50 Fines or Jail," *Rome (Georgia) News-Tribune*, 1 April 1963, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Harbert interview.

Harbert remembers the sit-ins and jail time as "peaceful" direct action. She recalls that arrangements were made for good food to be delivered daily to the jail from students' homes and for homework and books to be brought to them. In their cells, singing songs and discussing the difference they genuinely felt their protest was making in Rome, the students were unaware of the negotiating being conducted on their behalf. Some of them must have known about similar protests earlier in the decade in Greensboro, Nashville, and other southern cities. However, Harbert insists that she and most of the other students considered their actions to be no more than spontaneous reactions to injustice--orderly protests confined to Rome, Georgia.<sup>12</sup>

The perspective of Frances Pauley of Atlanta, Georgia might have been a bit different as she got into her car on the morning of April 1. Pauley drove the seventy-five miles to Rome with a mind toward helping "put out fires" that the students had started with their sit-ins the day before.<sup>13</sup> She was Executive Director of the Georgia Council on Human Relations, a branch of the work of the Southern Regional Council, a non-profit organization dedicated to funding programs and projects to promote social change all over the South. Though she had worked throughout Georgia as an organizer since the early 1950s, Pauley had been at the head of the Georgia Council on Human Relations only two years. It was her job to help organize local chapters of the Georgia Council on Human Relations in communities around the state. In this sense, though she was a Georgian, Pauley was an outside agitator.

Born in Ohio in 1901, Frances Pauley had been a resident of the Atlanta area for fifty-five years. In her work, Pauley went out from Atlanta, where the Southern Regional

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<sup>12</sup> Harbert interview.

<sup>13</sup> Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations," 4.

Council was based, into communities of all types and sizes in Georgia to identify individuals and organizations interested in working to promote understanding between blacks and whites in whatever ways locals deemed best. Pauley's connections around the state were deep and wide. She knew Vernon Jordan and Horace Ward. The three had represented their groups—Jordan and Ward the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Pauley the Georgia Council on Human Relations—during previous movement activities in Atlanta, Savannah, and Albany.<sup>14</sup>

When Pauley reached Rome, she found members of the new Rome Council on Human Relations operating a type of underground communication system. The Chairman of the Board of the Chamber of Commerce, Jule Levin, was a behind-the-scenes supporter of the Rome Council. His wife, Rose Levin, was an active member. In constant communication with the city police chief about the protestors, Jule also called Rose on the telephone and spoke in code in order to let her know what terms of sentence the police were considering for the students from one hour to the next. Upon receipt of the information, Rose Levin drove across town to the campus of a local college, where she passed word to her friend, Franziska Boas, who was president of the Rome Council and an instructor at the college. Boas then got word to C.W. Aycock, principal of Main High School, who used the information to talk with worried parents, as well as with the NAACP negotiating team.<sup>15</sup>

Quickly, as students were arrested, parents were called to the jail, and possible police responses to the situation were considered, a local network of men and women, blacks and whites, emerged from various points around the small city to work behind the

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<sup>14</sup> Nasstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool*, 70.

<sup>15</sup> Rose Esserman Levine, "Civil Rights," (unpublished memoir, 1988), 10.

scenes on behalf of the students. Though the local newspaper reported that the sit-ins were planned in advance, implying the involvement of "outside agitators," Linda Harbert views the event as a quick, unplanned, and somewhat naïve collective response to segregation motivated by Herbert Munford's humiliation earlier that long week. The truth may lie somewhere in between, for whether or not the students' direct action was premeditated or involved input from adults, adults in the community were poised on that day to intervene together—across "race," gender, and, in some cases, class lines—to ensure not only that the young people were treated well, but that their efforts made some kind of larger difference in the lives of all Romans, black and white, once the sit-ins were over. The story of how Jule and Rose Levin, Franziska Boas, C. W. Aycock, Capus White, and other members of the Rome Council on Human Relations came to work together for social change is a story of networks and friendships, and of the often crucial role of outside support to small, local groups working to create or manage change in the mid-twentieth century South.

After serving nine days in jail or accepting and carrying out one of the other options negotiated for their punishment, the protestors from Main High School returned to their classes. A core group went on to work with members of the Rome Council on Human Relations to plan continued peaceful protests and gradual desegregation of other facilities around Rome in the following months of 1963. Some students, including Linda Cason Harbert, graduated that May, left Rome, and never returned for any extended period of time.<sup>16</sup>

When sixty-two African American students registered their opposition to Jim Crow laws and customs in Rome in 1963, the event seemed to meet the expectations of

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<sup>16</sup> Harbert interview.

local officials. The students' demonstrations were largely seen as just that—student actions reflecting a trend sweeping the South, rather than actions meant to compel the community to engage in dialogue about real change. When City Manager Bruce Hamler told reporters that most of the Main High School students' parents did not condone the demonstrations, he added, in a remark that reflects the qualities of moderation and denial that characterized much of Rome at the time: "We've had a peaceful relationship between the races here."<sup>17</sup>

It may be that dissatisfaction with mere moderation had motivated the Rome Council on Human Relations to organize just a year and a half prior to the sit-in. Whatever their motivations, members of the Rome Council did not share the City Manager's blindness to the racial inequality in Northwest Georgia. Rather, they were both aware of it and bothered by it. While many in Rome claimed that the Main High students' lunch counter sit-ins were both unwarranted and unreasonable, members of the Rome Council quietly supported and encouraged their protest. Perhaps the students' overt protest represented bravery and conviction that the adults, for a variety of reasons related to employment and social life in the small city, could not afford to display.

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<sup>17</sup> "62 Jailed After Rome 'Sit-In' Demonstrations," *Rome News-Tribune*, 29 March 1963, 1.



## Chapter One

### **“A Splendid Spirit of Cooperation”: Life & Social Change in Mid-20th Century Rome, Georgia**

Rome, Georgia, in the state's upper Piedmont, sixty-five miles northwest of Atlanta and thirteen miles east of the Alabama state line, was a busy, mid-sized city in 1960. Since it was founded in 1834 at the confluence of three rivers, Rome had grown to be the economic, social, cultural, educational, and medical center of Northwest Georgia.<sup>18</sup> The population of Rome in 1960 was estimated at 32,000, with a total of 69,000 in Floyd County as a whole.<sup>19</sup> Three years before student sit-ins would lead to desegregation of downtown lunch counters, Jim Crow segregation of blacks and whites was a “way of life.” Rome had a segregated public school system, a segregated country club, a wide variety of segregated civic and social clubs—black and white, men's and women's—and roughly seventy segregated churches throughout the county. The churches were mostly Baptist and Methodist but included one small Jewish congregation, the First Christian Church, an Episcopal congregation, a Lutheran church, an African Methodist Episcopal church, and a Catholic church. Cotton and rayon mills established earlier in the century

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<sup>18</sup> Rome's three rivers are the Etowah, Oostanaula, and Coosa. The first two meet to form the Coosa, which is navigable to Mobile Bay via the Alabama River.

<sup>19</sup> *Rome City Directory*, viv. There is a discrepancy in the directory. Population figures noted above come from the directory's front page “Courtesy of Chamber of Commerce of Rome and Floyd County.” However, the text of the “Introduction” pages that follow (x-xiv) reveal that the “population of the Rome urban area is 55, 748; for Floyd County, 68, 917.”

provided employment for most working-class whites, while most African Americans made livings as domestics or laborers in restaurants, schools, foundries, a few factories, or private homes and institutions. According to the 1960 edition of *Polk's Rome City Directory*, "a splendid spirit of cooperation" characterized the relationship between employers and employees in Rome and Floyd County.<sup>20</sup>

This statement and other promotional information for the introductory pages of the *City Directory* came courtesy of the Rome-Floyd County Chamber of Commerce, an organization comprised not of members of the working class, but of management and leadership of local businesses and institutions. Because the area had seen little labor conflict and even fewer incidents of race-related conflict in the twentieth century, the Chamber of Commerce could put a highly positive spin on the relationship between workers and management without raising many eyebrows. Furthermore, the Chamber apparently found it necessary to play up Rome's "whiteness" in order to make the area appealing to industry, claiming also in the *City Directory* that in 1960 "the white population [had] shown a steady increase each decade for forty years" in contrast to its "gradually decreasing colored population."<sup>21</sup> About fourteen percent of Floyd County's residents were African-American.<sup>22</sup> Whether or not this percentage reflected a decrease or increase in the number of blacks in the county from any one period to another, boosters of the "City of Seven Hills" clearly sought to promote and, if need be, invent a white or Appalachian identity for Rome—seemingly accepting a distorted image of Appalachia as poor and white, but proud. This image contained some truth in that large

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<sup>20</sup> *Rome City Directory* (Richmond: R.L. Polk, 1960), xii.

<sup>21</sup> *Rome City Director*, xi.

<sup>22</sup> Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) Study 00003: Historical Demographic, Economic, and Social Data, U.S., 1790-1970. Anne Arbor: ICPSR, <http://fisher.lib.Virginia.edu/cgi-local/censusbin/census/cen.pl>

numbers of rural whites had left farms in the Appalachian foothills for jobs in the textile mills and small factories of Rome and other industrial cities of the Piedmont South during and after the Great Depression of the 1930s.<sup>23</sup>

An earlier example of identification with whiteness is found in the story of the Berry Schools, established just outside the city limits of Rome. At the turn of the twentieth century, founder Martha Berry began referring to her institution as a "mountain school for boys." Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, in appeals to potential benefactors of her school, Berry touted the students as good, pure "Anglo-Saxon" sons and daughters of the "Southern Highlands" whom all Americans needed to help save from lives of poverty and isolation. By the 1920s, the Berry Schools—one for boys and one for girls—participated in a national stirring of interest in supposedly traditional Appalachian folk culture by crafting textiles, furniture, and foods that they marketed, along with the schools, in wealthy communities of eastern seaboard cities such as New York City and Newport.<sup>24</sup> Martha Berry and her schools brought a great deal of attention to Rome and Floyd County. It is likely no accident that in the 1950s and 1960s, the Rome Chamber of Commerce referred to the local labor pool, in words similar to those of Berry, as "Anglo-Saxon stock—loyal and efficient."<sup>25</sup>

Education was a highly touted component of life in Rome in 1960. As the educational center of the region, Rome drew white students and faculty from throughout

<sup>23</sup> At least one historian has considered Rome a "mountain county." See Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1982) 125.

<sup>24</sup> Susan Rhea Asbury, "Far Up From the Hills": Re-Thinking Oak Hill, Martha Berry's Home," (M.A. thesis, University of South Carolina, 2000), 12-17. For more on the selling of Appalachia, see David Whisnant's *All That Is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in a Changing Region* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1983) and Jane Becker's *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of American Folk, 1930-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998).

<sup>25</sup> *Rome City Directory*, xii.

the South—and the country—to several different schools. The oldest educational institution was Shorter College, a small liberal arts college affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. Founded in 1873 as Rome Female Seminary and supported by Southern Baptist churches, Shorter offered a four-year degree to fewer than 250 students, all of whom were female until 1958.<sup>26</sup> Berry, by this time Berry College, accepted nearly 1000 male and female students and offered a four-year degree. Though not formally affiliated with any religious denomination, it identified as white and Protestant.<sup>27</sup> These two colleges were joined by a small extension of the University of Georgia that offered local students courses but not a campus.

Aside from the colleges, there were eighteen segregated public elementary and high schools in Rome and Floyd County, with separate city and county school boards. Older white students in the city attended Rome High. High school students in the county attended Cave Spring or Model. However, through a special arrangement by which the city provided a building and the county provided personnel, African American students throughout the county attended one school, Main High, located a few blocks from Rome's downtown shopping district.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps the most innovative educational institution serving African American children in Rome in 1960 was the Rebecca Blaylock Nursery, a day care center established in the late 1940s and overseen by a biracial board of twenty-two white and eleven black members.<sup>29</sup>

Saint Mary's Catholic Church maintained a parochial grade school for white students. Rome also claimed two other private academies. The Darlington School was a

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<sup>26</sup> *Shorter College Yearbook*, 1960.

<sup>27</sup> *Berry College Yearbook*, 1961.

<sup>28</sup> Roger Aycock, *All Roads to Rome* (Roswell, GA: W.H. Wolfe, 1981), 522.

<sup>29</sup> Mildred Knight to Jane Vinson, 19 August 1960, in Frances Pauley Papers, Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta.

private boarding and day school for wealthy white boys, founded, like the Berry Schools, at the turn of the century. Whereas upper class white families in Rome had typically sent their sons to Darlington and their daughters to local public schools, a group of elite white families opened Thornwood School for Girls in 1958, possibly because of fear of desegregated public schools.<sup>30</sup>

The organizers of Thornwood School for Girls were part of a loose professional and social network of owners and upper-level management of Rome's businesses and industries who constituted the town's traditional white upper class. There was a small group of upper middle class African Americans connected to one another through professional and church associations, but they were almost invisible to whites. Educated African Americans in Rome who did not teach in the segregated schools sometimes had so few opportunities that they had to take employment as domestic workers in the homes, gardens, and clubs of whites. When working, they hid their educations behind deferential masks. One example of this is found in the story of Myrtle Jones, an African American woman who, in the 1960s, was a domestic worker in the home of a white family. When the family discovered that Jones had a college degree, they insisted she find other employment and assisted her in obtaining a teaching position. Jones went on to retire from the English faculty at Clark College in Atlanta.<sup>31</sup>

The family for whom Myrtle Jones worked happened to be an old Rome family. However, the few white people who were willing to respect individuals for their abilities and values other than their skin color were often from somewhere else. Rome's two

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<sup>30</sup> Thornwood opened just as the crisis over desegregation of Georgia's public schools began to heat up. The U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision, in the case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, that separate but equal schools were unconstitutional meant that Georgia faced a federal court order to desegregate.

<sup>31</sup> Barbara Schaible, 18 January 2002, interview by author, telephone, Lawrence, Kansas.

private colleges and its industries with northern headquarters often brought to town a class of white persons who lived on the margins of Rome society—among the elite, yet not necessarily sharing all of their values. Some members of this loosely affiliated “intellectual” community came to know African Americans by traditional means—by employing a black domestic worker or gardener or by talking to a black cook or custodial manager on the campus of one of the colleges. A few of these individuals developed cross-racial relationships that rejected the usual white southern notion of blacks’ inferior “place” in society.

Most white citizens of Floyd County comprised a working class dependent on the textile mill industry that was the base of the local economy. Labor union locals had grown strong in the 1930s and maintained strength through the 1950s despite a handful of mild conflicts through the years with owners and management of mills and factories. Members of the locals, however, were not always aligned with national labor sentiments. Potentially destructive pressures began to build in the late 1950s and early 1960s when national unions favored school and factory integration and southern affiliates of national unions resisted such major social change. As historian Michelle Brattain asserts in a study of white racial identity in the southern textile industry in Rome between 1930 and 1970, “organized labor [by 1960] was becoming one of the most conservative constituencies in Georgia.”<sup>32</sup> Local unions also remained largely under the leadership of men, though women’s committees and auxiliaries played an important role in holding the locals together by promoting social and family activities for members, participating in membership drives, and walking picket lines during strikes, either as striking workers

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<sup>32</sup> Michelle Brattain, *The Politics of Whiteness: Race, Workers, and Culture in the Modern South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 227.

themselves or as wives of striking workers.<sup>33</sup> Some of the small number of African American workers in Rome's mills, relegated to the most menial positions, had also joined local unions by 1960. However, meetings were as segregated as the mills, and just as they spoke for female members of the locals, white men represented black members in regional and national meetings.<sup>34</sup>

The issues and social lives of the white working class featured prominently in the pages of the local newspaper, the *Rome News-Tribune*, for its editors' political leanings were similar to those of many in the mill villages.<sup>35</sup> The owners and editors of the paper generally supported Eugene and Herman Talmadge and their ilk—politicians who had led Georgia in southern demagogic fashion more or less from the 1930s through the administration of Ernest Vandiver, elected in 1958 by overwhelming margins.<sup>36</sup> Despite the paper's political opinions and support of the white working class, the Chamber of Commerce did not generally address working class concerns. Rather, most members of the Chamber touted the virtues of the working class as a potential labor force and ignored its tendency to vote for Georgia's popular, race-baiting politicians.<sup>37</sup>

In 1956 the Georgia General Assembly had passed a resolution calling for the impeachment of members of the U.S. Supreme Court who had authored and passed the federal ruling against segregated schools. One year later, nine students had integrated Little Rock, Arkansas' Central High School in the face of rioting by whites that led President Eisenhower to call federal troops to the city. Then, in the early months of

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<sup>33</sup> Brattain, *The Politics of Whiteness*, 140-141.

<sup>34</sup> Brattain, 234.

<sup>35</sup> James A. Mackay, who would later become a progressive member of the Georgia General Assembly, interviewed Ben Cooper, editor of the *Rome News-Tribune* in 1947. The interview reveals much about the politics of the owners and editors of the paper in the late 1940s. See Calvin Lytle and James A. Mackay, *Who Runs Georgia?* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 108-110.

<sup>36</sup> Kenneth Coleman, ed. *A History of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press), 396.

<sup>37</sup> For more on Rome's white working class, see Brattain, *The Politics of Whiteness*.

1959, Georgia's General Assembly proposed to close Georgia's public school system altogether to avoid meeting court orders to desegregate.

In 1960, almost all white upper, middle, and working class Floyd County citizens generally opposed the racial integration of schools, industries, and unions. The Chamber of Commerce reflected the moderate attitudes of most Romans when it worked to lure industry by promoting the area's "good whiteness"—a loyal, hardworking, cheap labor supply—and downplaying its "bad whiteness"—"lintheads" and "white trash" cotton mill workers looked down upon by the downtown crowd. No matter how they perceived the working class, the small number of African Americans living and working in Rome hardly seemed to constitute a threat to the way of life that vastly benefited whites and relegated the remaining fourteen percent of the population to second class citizenship.

Though the newspaper gave it little attention, Rome's chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had been established prior to World War II. When large numbers of African Americans registered to vote in Rome and Floyd County in 1946, it was largely a result of the organizing work of women members of the local NAACP chapter, inspired by black and white veterans of World War II who had encouraged voter registration drives in the African American community upon their return from war.<sup>38</sup> Members of the NAACP and its women's auxiliary were ministers, educators and business owners—a fairly moderate group, although considered radical by most whites in Rome and throughout Georgia.

As early as the mid-1950s, an African American educator named M.D. Whatley had run without incident—or victory—for a place on the city school board. Reporting on

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<sup>38</sup> Callie Martin, interview by author, Rome, Georgia, 24 September 2001; Brattain, *The Politics of Whiteness*, 157.



his observations of Rome for the Southern Regional Council, Brailsford R. Brazeal of Morehouse College in Atlanta had noted his opinion that the African American candidate's loss was attributable to a split between the NAACP and the all-black Non-Partisan Voters' League (NPVL). The Non-Partisan Voters' League, established prior to World War II, consisted of conservative individuals who had not believed that Rome was ready for a black person to obtain public office when a black candidate ran for school board. Brazeal had also considered the NAACP of the period "inactive" due to a lack of leadership and interest."<sup>39</sup> Whether or not they had given in to pressure from the NAACP or from the NPVL, the local white power structure in Rome had tapped 'qualified' blacks to participate in select aspects of local government in Rome throughout the decade following the end of World War II.

This approach to "race relations" was similar to that of officials in the larger city of Greensboro, North Carolina, which saw the country's first sit-ins at lunch counters in February of 1960. Though Rome would not see sit-ins for three more years, it shared key qualities with Greensboro. Both cities were hilly textile industry centers with majority white populations. Both were home to a handful of schools and colleges. Neither city would integrate its public school system until 1971.

Above all, influential people in Rome seem to have shared a value with Greensboro that historian William Chafe terms a "commitment to civility," with "civility" defined by white leaders. This commitment amounted to a paternalistic racial etiquette and was implicitly part of life in both places. Whites in both Greensboro and Rome felt it was their responsibility, as civil people, to "take care of" blacks, as in the case of a book drive

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<sup>39</sup> Brattain, *The Politics of Whiteness*, 156-57; Stephen G.N. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 81-82.

for "Negro" schools co-sponsored by the Rome City police department and the *Rome News-Tribune* in 1960. Blacks in Greensboro and Rome knew they had to be deferential to whites to get jobs, keep jobs, and meet the code of civility. The whites' commitment to this ethic found expression in charity toward blacks, token representation for them in local government, and description of relationships between white employers and their black domestic workers as "friendships."<sup>40</sup>

The differences between Rome and Greensboro, however, outnumber the similarities: Greensboro was much larger than Rome, was home to two black colleges, and had a larger community of whites who identified themselves as "progressives." Rome's white power structure also liked to distinguish between African Americans' "just" grievances and "unjust" grievances without defining one or the other, as when the editor of the *Rome News-Tribune* reminded readers that,

Leaders of the Negro community know they have in our public officials an understanding audience whenever they present just grievances. They don't have to have any outside 'protectors,' who simply use their avowed interest in the Negro as a cloak for their own political opportunism in the big-vote Northern states.<sup>41</sup>

It was implicitly understood that "just" grievances presented to and heard by Rome's leadership were brought forth by "good" or "qualified" blacks—persons who subtly acknowledged their second class status and were careful to express appreciation for being permitted to raise an issue, run for office, or hold public office.

Over two dozen different clubs and organizations, including the NAACP, contributed to the dynamism of life in Rome and Floyd County, a few welcoming the race-related changes of the mid-twentieth century, most resisting them. A variety of

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<sup>40</sup> William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 8-9.

<sup>41</sup> "Do Local Negroes Need Protection?" March 18, 1960, *Rome News-Tribune*, 4.

organizations in both the white and black communities constituted a complicated network of individuals and coalitions dedicated to a variety of causes in the area and throughout the state of Georgia. Some groups were purely social; some engaged in charity work; others organized around particular political issues and disbanded once their task was complete. Still others were concerned with Rome's statewide and regional image and sought community improvement with their eyes toward economic growth.

The activities and services of Rome's organizations, whether private events or community projects, were not publicized unless a group was deemed worthy of attention by the owners and editors of the *Rome News-Tribune*. Though it had long considered itself the paper of record in Rome and Floyd County, the *News-Tribune* had been only one of three papers published in the 1950s. The *Floyd County Herald* was a short-lived weekly owned and edited by white veterans of World War II who sought to provide a forum for the area's more progressive voices—those who did not necessarily support the Talmadge faction of state politics. The *Rome Enterprise* was a half-century old publication owned and edited by African Americans. Both the *Herald* and the *Enterprise*, "North Georgia's Only Negro Newspaper," ceased publication in the 1950s.<sup>42</sup> Thus, in 1960, the *Rome News-Tribune* continued its daily coverage of national and world events, race-related strife in other southern places, local life in white 'society' and the mill villages, and what its editors generally considered "peaceful relations between the races" in Rome.<sup>43</sup>

In the absence of the *Enterprise*, black citizens of Rome rarely appeared in news stories unless the stories related to a crime allegedly perpetrated by an African American,

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<sup>42</sup> Aycock, *All Roads to Rome*, 479.

<sup>43</sup> "Do Local Negroes Need Protection?" *Rome News-Tribune*, March 18, 1960, 4.

“agitation” by African Americans for improved schools, or local examples of “harmonious relations” between blacks and whites. The *Rome News-Tribune*, for example, took great pride in the book drive it co-sponsored with the Rome Police Department during the spring of 1960. On a routine visit to a local school, one officer reportedly had noticed shelves empty of books. In response, he discussed the matter with fellow patrolmen and the police chief, all of whom determined to spearhead a community-wide book drive to supply students in black schools with reading material. In March 1960, just one week after blacks and whites from Rome went to speak at state hearings related to a race-related crisis facing public schools in Georgia, the president of the newspaper wondered, in a Sunday editorial, whether there was need in Rome and Floyd County for the kinds of “protection” for blacks that he understood national groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to be calling for. After all, the editorial continued, it was a place where even local law enforcement took initiative to help the black community, and where two black men had served on the police force since the early 1950s.<sup>44</sup>

High-profile groups joined exclusively by white men and always given exposure in the *Rome News-Tribune* included the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club, the American Legion, the Sons of Confederate Veterans, the Masons, Kiwanis, and the Rome (White) Citizens Council. Membership in these groups divided loosely along class lines, with more affluent white men belonging to the Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, and Kiwanis and middle class whites more likely to belong to the American Legion, Masons, and Sons of Confederate Veterans. Lower middle class whites joined the Rome Citizens Council. It is possible that Floyd County’s chapter of the anti-communist John Birch

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<sup>44</sup> “Do Local Negroes Need Protection?” 4.

Society had also organized by 1960. More upper class, the John Birch Society drew members from the country club set—individuals not likely to join the Rome Citizens Council because of class distinctions, but interested, nonetheless, in maintaining the racial status quo. The group became popular in the South after its founding in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1958 as whites opposed to integration and desegregation linked African American protests against Jim Crow to communism.<sup>45</sup>

The Rome Citizens Council, unlike the John Birch Society, was devoted solely to massive resistance to desegregation of public schools and facilities. Founded in Mississippi after the 1954 case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the national White Citizens Council (WCC) was well organized and gathered grassroots support in most southern states, but in Georgia it never became a grassroots organization. Rather, the Georgia group was associated with, and headed by, the state's political leaders. Thus, it failed to develop the real power in Georgia or its local communities that it did in, for example, Mississippi and Louisiana. In Georgia the group gave itself a different name on the state level as well: the States' Rights Council. The Rome Citizens Council, as it called itself, may have wanted to distance itself from the national or state organizations to gain credibility among Romans by leaving the word "white" out of its group name, but it was born of the same motivations that the national and state organizations were and its members operated as part of the larger WCC/States' Rights Council network.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See Broyles, J. Allen. *The John Birch Society: Anatomy of a Protest* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964). John Birch, for whom the group is named, had no connection to the John Birch Society. A native of Georgia and child of missionaries, Birch was the first American killed in China at the outset of its communist revolution. He was there as a missionary. Incidentally, Birch's father taught at Berry College from 1915-1916 and again from 1931-1932. Anne Culpepper to author, 14 March 2002, e-mail correspondence; Susan Asbury to author, 29 April 2002, telephone.

<sup>46</sup> See Nasstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother & Nobody's Fool*, 73-74; Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-1964*. (Urbana: University of Illinois,

The Rome-Floyd County Chamber of Commerce, on the other hand, was comprised of business owners--middle-class merchants, as well as more affluent owners or managers of locally based industry and administrators of local schools and colleges. Similarly, upper and upper middle class and politically moderate members of the Rome Rotary Club gathered for weekly luncheon meetings to educate one another about other cultures and to promote Rome and Floyd County, both to Romans and to visitors from out of town. The Kiwanis Club focused on community service and was joined by many members of Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce.<sup>47</sup> Members of the Rome chapter of the American Legion were white veterans of military service who promoted behavior and civic activities that reflected their definition of patriotism.

Because the Rotary, Kiwanis, and Chamber of Commerce did not permit women to join their groups, women in Rome had formed their own chapters of national civic organizations earlier in the century, including the Quota Club, the Business & Professional Women's Club (B&PW), and the Pilot Club. Membership in all of these women's organizations was exclusively white and generally middle class, and the groups concerned themselves largely with the same matters as Rotary and Kiwanis, after which they patterned themselves. However, they were not women's auxiliaries of men's clubs; they were separate and strong organizations in 1960.<sup>48</sup>

The B&PW might have been the most visibly active. Featured regularly in the women's pages of the *Rome News-Tribune*, this club consisted of white, middle class women who worked as secretaries, sales clerks, or assistants to managers and

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1974), 80-9; R. Carter Pittman to George M. Battey, III, February 23, 1958, Battey Papers, Sara Hightower Library, Special Collections, Rome, Georgia.

<sup>47</sup> Vertical files, Sara Hightower Library, Special Collections, Rome, Georgia.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

administrators of local industries and institutions. The B&PW named an annual "Woman of the Year" from among its members and presented local young women with scholarships to attend vocational schools or colleges. During monthly meetings, the group sought education on political and social issues facing the state and community. In March 1960, the BPW invited Judge H.E. Nichols of the Georgia Court of Appeals to speak at their monthly meeting.<sup>49</sup> The judge's topic was Georgia's county-unit system of government, which gave each county in the state almost equal representation in the legislature, no matter its population. As many parts of Georgia had grown more urbanized after World War II, those areas were not represented in the legislature on the basis of "one-man, one-vote," giving rural white voters disproportional power in the state legislature and in state elections. Disagreement over the county unit had provoked a nasty political battle in 1952 when an amendment to make the system part of the state constitution was defeated.<sup>50</sup> Eight years later, Judge Nichols urged members of the B&PW not to be influenced by continued attacks on the system. It is difficult to ascertain whether or not the B&PW supported the county-unit, but they did invite Nichols to speak on the subject at a time when many supporters of the county-unit were also simultaneously aligning in opposition to public school desegregation—another change in white Georgians' "way of life."<sup>51</sup>

Extensive charity work in Rome was undertaken by both the Salvation Army and the Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary. Also devoted to charity were members of the Junior Service League of Rome, Inc. Members of the "Junior League" were the most

<sup>49</sup> Vertical files, Sara Hightower Library, Special Collections.

<sup>50</sup> The League of Women Voters of Georgia led the successful 1952 campaign to defeat the amendment, thus leading to the gradual replacement of the system in Georgia. See Nasstrom, 43-45.

<sup>51</sup> "Mrs. Inez Henry President of New B&PW Group," *Rome News-Tribune*, Thursday, March 17, 1960, 3.

affluent white women in Rome and could join only when they received personal invitations to do so. Members of the League did not work for pay outside the home. Instead, they volunteered in the community, as individuals and as "Leaguers." They were closely connected to the city's civic and business leaders, for most of those men were Leaguers' fathers, husbands, and brothers.

Certain members of all of the upper and upper middle class men's and women's organizations were likely to meet socially and for recreation with their families at the newly reconstructed Coosa Country Club, established in 1910 exclusively for elite whites.<sup>52</sup> Unlike country clubs in many other southern cities, the Coosa Country Club accepted Jewish families as members. In addition to golf, swimming, and tennis, "the Club" featured dining rooms and a snack bar. Ladies' luncheon groups and men's business lunches took place there on a daily basis. African Americans employed at the club often transitioned into private domestic employment, having first met members and their families at the club.<sup>53</sup>

While many upper and upper middle class white women were playing bridge at the country club, upper middle class black women did so in one another's homes. Two social clubs for African American women, the Silver Leaf Matrons Club and Amusu Club, had been founded in Rome in 1929.<sup>54</sup> Though middle class educated African Americans in Rome had formed other social clubs and business associations in the early twentieth century, some of these, particularly those associated with businesses in the

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<sup>52</sup> Aycock, *All Roads to Rome*, 542.

<sup>53</sup> Callie Martin, interview with author, Rome, Georgia, 24 September 2001. Mrs. Martin, an African-American community activist, formerly worked at the Coosa Country Club, as well as in the homes of local white families. She particularly remembers the Rome Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) having its meetings at the Coosa Country Club.

<sup>54</sup> Callie Martin interview.



black business district, had waned by 1960 as many professionals born in Rome had moved elsewhere to practice their professions in larger, more active black communities, if not in the North, then in Atlanta. The black middle class that remained consisted of ministers, educators, and some domestic workers, as well as owners of a handful of small businesses, including funeral homes, beauty shops and barbershops. Because they were excluded from enrolling in Rome's two colleges, black men and women from Rome who went to college attended historically black schools, including Morehouse and Spelman Colleges in Atlanta, and Tuskegee and Talladega in Alabama.<sup>55</sup> The types of jobs and educational opportunities available to African Americans in Rome in the 1950s and '60s reflected the desire of white leaders to associate the city with whiteness. Whether or not it was true that the African American population had steadily declined during the twentieth century, boosters of Rome, by stressing the availability of "Anglo-Saxon" or white labor in their promotions of the city, put the majority of African Americans in Rome on the bottom rung when it came to jobs. Perhaps the best work for educated African Americans in Rome was found in the city's three "Negro" public schools.

With over seventy churches in the county, there were just as many churchmen's groups and churchwomen's auxiliary groups operating in individual congregations. Some of these organizations worked collectively along denominational and racial lines, such as the Baptist churchwomen—black and white—the Methodist churchwomen, and the Presbyterian. Protestant and Catholic churches participated in denominational activities on the state and regional levels and the Jewish congregation was part of a

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<sup>55</sup> Much appreciation to Mr. Rufus Turner of the African-American Historical Society in Rome. Through a museum exhibit on the history of African Americans in Rome, he educated me about the lives of the black middle class. Turner drew in part on articles from the *Enterprise*, a black newspaper published in Rome from 1900 to 1955. Unfortunately only a few copies of this important paper are known to have survived.

tightly knit community that included congregations throughout northwest Georgia and Atlanta.

Rome's Jewish population consisted of about thirty or forty families, many of whom were long-time residents with connections to the city since the 1880s. A Jewish immigrant from Prussia, Max Meyerhardt, who had died in the early 1900s, was recognized on plaques all over town. He had served as city attorney, a founder of the public school system, and the energy behind the establishment of the Carnegie Library. His father had founded the Rodeph Sholom congregation, which, by 1960, had a downtown synagogue building. The majority of the members of Rodeph Sholom were also among the most engaged citizens of Rome and Floyd County, contributing to community projects and service institutions and operating several of the more successful downtown businesses.<sup>56</sup>

Church-based organizations of all types in the late 1950s and early 1960s still largely did the typical outreach work of a church—conducting bible study, raising money for missions and building expansions, or caring for the sick. However, as the South came under increasing pressure to undo the laws that bound people to segregated living, southern church groups gradually addressed social change. A debate over the public school system had finally begun to come to a head in Georgia in the late 1950s.

Religion had long been used to justify Jim Crow laws and customs in the South. However, engagement in debates about school desegregation by non- and inter-denominational church groups in the late 1950s and early 1960s illustrates that faith sometimes brought people together across racial lines. An interracial ministers' discussion group had formed in Rome as early as 1956 for the purpose of discussing

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<sup>56</sup> Aycock, *All Roads to Rome*, 533, 535.

more than spiritual and religious issues. B.R. Brazeal of Morehouse College, again conducting interviews and reporting on race relations in Floyd County for the Southern Regional Council in the mid-1950s, noted that Rome's interracial ministers' discussion group "created friendships and a reasonable degree of communication between these groups and this extends to several areas of activity beyond the field of religion."<sup>57</sup>

In February 1959, the Reverend Russell Daniel, rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in downtown Rome, brought his ideas about social change to the pulpit, not in the form of sermons, but in the form of announcements and prayer requests. Reverend Daniel requested his parishioners to pray that public schools not be closed. He also made it clear that he felt the church should take a strong stand against school closing.<sup>58</sup> Most families at Saint Peter's Episcopal sent their children to the Darlington and Thornwood Schools. Nonetheless, Daniel and other ministers in Rome's downtown upper class churches were among the first to speak out in favor of maintaining public schools when the school crisis hit Georgia in 1959. In addition to Daniel of the Episcopal Church, three other white, downtown ministers were not afraid to engage in dialogue with African Americans and about relationships between blacks and whites in Rome: Warren Gaw of the First Presbyterian Church, Garnett Wilder of the First Methodist Church, and A.M. Von Almen of the First Christian Church. By the time Georgia's public school crisis

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<sup>57</sup> B.R. Brazeal to Mozell Hill, "Confidential Appraisal of Status of the Rome, Georgia, Committee on Interracial Co-operation," 13 November 1956, Countee Cullen Memorial Collection, Special Collections, Woodruff Library, Atlanta University, Atlanta in Stephen G.N. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia, 2001), 139.

<sup>58</sup> "Vestry Minutes," February 10, 1959, Vestry Minutes Books, Rhodes-Wyatt Reading Room, St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Rome, Georgia.

came to a head in 1959, each had spoken in his church and in civic meetings about the need to keep public schools open in Georgia.<sup>59</sup>

The Rome chapter of United Churchwomen, on the other hand, was more reluctant to attempt interracial discussions. United Churchwomen was a national organization that had been founded in the 1890s by women of faith opposed to lynching and desiring to address social problems in a manner they felt the body of American churches did not. United Churchwomen of Georgia and its Atlanta chapter had released a pamphlet in 1957 concerning race relations and the law, but in 1960 the Rome chapter was not certain it should co-sponsor a local meeting of HOPE or Help Our Public Education, a statewide coalition of groups fighting to save Georgia's public school system. The Rome churchwomen's hesitance to get involved in the school crisis may indicate doubts about HOPE or fears of repercussions, or may indicate a local lack of commitment to the tenets of the national organization.<sup>60</sup>

Aside from civic, charity, and social organizations and church-related women's auxiliaries, there was a Rome chapter of the League of Women Voters (LWV). The national League of Women Voters had formed in 1920 after women in the United States won their fight for the right to vote. Devoted to educating the public about U.S. government, the voting process, and issues on the ballot at any given period, the LWV, as a non-partisan organization, did not engage directly in politics.

The Atlanta chapter of the LWV had been among the first in the country and the statewide headquarters, the Atlanta-based League of Women Voters of Georgia

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<sup>59</sup> Callie Martin, interview by author, 28 February 2001, telephone interview; Sandra Lightfoot, interview by author, 9 May 2001, telephone interview.

<sup>60</sup> Mildred Knight to Frances Pauley, 19 August 1960, Frances Pauley Papers, Special Collections, Robert Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

(LWVGA), was generally strong throughout the 1950s.<sup>61</sup> The Rome chapter, however, was rather short-lived. Nonetheless, it boasted seventy members in 1960 and some of the women involved in it networked locally and statewide to engage various women's groups in Rome in discussions or activity on behalf of local and state issues.<sup>62</sup> For example, when the issue of school desegregation—or whether or not to keep public schools open in the face of court orders to desegregate—was before the entire state in 1960, members of the Rome League of Women Voters took charge of organizing a contingent of public school supporters from the education and business communities in Rome to attend out-of-town hearings on the matter and speak on behalf of open schools.<sup>63</sup>

Men and women from Rome who attended the Seventh District Sibley Commission hearings on the future of Georgia's public schools went both as individual citizens and as representatives of civic organizations. Most of these concerned citizens were part of a spider web of interconnected organizations, voluntary associations, friendships, and professional contacts that would see Rome and the state of Georgia through direct action protests and cross-racial communication toward social change. Many of these individuals, black and white, were directly involved in behind-the-scenes maneuverings in Rome's experiences of the Civil Rights Movement during the early 1960s. A look at these individuals, their networks, and their friendships reveals the complicated nature of social change in the mid-twentieth century South and, particularly, in a place considered 'moderate' in its approaches to race relations and day-to-day life. Who got involved in

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<sup>61</sup> For more on the Georgia League of Women Voters, see Susan E. Whitney, *The League of Women Voters, Seventy-Five Years Rich: A Perspective on the Woman's Suffrage Movement and the League of Women Voters in Georgia*. Atlanta: League of Women Voters, 1995.

<sup>62</sup> "Mrs. George Poulson," Transcript of 7<sup>th</sup> District Meeting, Georgia General Assembly Committee on Schools, 78-79 in John A. Sibley Papers, Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>63</sup> Mildred Knight to Frances Pauley, 8 May 1960, Southern Regional Council Papers, Woodruff Library Special Collections, Atlanta University, Atlanta, Ga.

interracial organizing in Rome and why did they believe it was necessary or important?

The 'splendid spirit of cooperation' that existed in Rome in 1960 may have, on some level, been concocted by the Chamber of Commerce, yet it may also have actually existed within the small community of activists there who had ties to other moderates and "radicals" throughout Georgia and who worked for social change through a variety of Atlanta-based organizations and connections.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Romans for Social Change in Mid-20th Century Georgia: A Statewide Network of Activists**

Because Atlanta was the seat of the white, rural power structure as well as the center of the growing, coalition-based fight for racial equality, individuals and organizations from smaller cities and towns such as Rome established connections with Atlanta-based and statewide organizations for crucial outside support of their local efforts. Romans, black and white, engaged in activism for—or against—social change not only in efforts related to race but also in effort to reform some aspects of state government. In order to understand how a network of activists emerged to confront racial inequality in Rome in the middle of the twentieth century, then, it is necessary to look at the political issues of the decade that preceded the 1961 formation of the Rome Council on Human Relations.

From the outset of Herman Talmadge's governorship of the state of Georgia in the early 1950s, the chief executive and General Assembly had taken great pains to ensure that a segregated school system would remain intact in Georgia no matter what federal courts might decide in school-related cases on the horizon. In 1951, Talmadge had convinced the General Assembly to pass a statewide sales tax to shore up enough funds to support two "separate but equal" public school systems in Georgia—one for

whites and one for blacks. In 1952, against Talmadge's wishes, an amendment to make the county-unit system of government part of the state's constitution failed to pass a vote of the people. In 1953, the General Assembly passed another one of Talmadge's measures, creating the innocuously named Georgia Commission on Education, charged with seeing that black and white schools appeared to be equitably funded, again in an effort to thwart potential lawsuits over disparity between segregated schools. In the same year, Talmadge and his advisors, including Roy Harris of the segregationist newspaper, the *Augusta Courier*, developed a controversial 'private school plan' for Georgia, which provided for tuition reimbursement to white parents who chose to withdraw a child from any school that a federal court forced to desegregate.<sup>64</sup>

Already geared to fight desegregation, the elected representatives of the people of Georgia went into a frenzy in May 1954 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the case of Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas that segregated public school systems were unconstitutional. Individuals and organizations all over Georgia took sides in a growing debate over whether the state should shut down the public school system altogether in order to avoid meeting the federal court's orders. Almost immediately, the national White Citizens Council organized in Jackson, Mississippi. A Georgia version, the States' Rights Council of Georgia, formed that same year and was headed by Talmadge, Harris, and other politically influential Democrats. Talmadge, however, was ineligible for reelection in 1954. Thus, Marvin Griffin, a member of the Talmadge camp,

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<sup>64</sup> Jeff Roche, *Restructured Resistance: The Sibley Commission and the Politics of Desegregation in Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1998), 17-26.



followed his tradition of combining white supremacist rhetoric with the county-unit system to become governor.<sup>65</sup>

During 1955, the General Assembly passed several measures to avoid meeting the requirements of the Brown decision. It then passed a resolution in 1956 to impeach the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1957 and 1958, federal intervention at Little Rock's Central High School led to passage of more measures to circumvent federal law. By November 1959, Georgia had another new governor, Talmadge-supporter Ernest Vandiver, who appointed a special committee to hold hearings that would, supposedly, gauge public opinion about what to do with the state's school system. The state legislature and appointed members of the committee agreed despite or, perhaps, because of their almost unanimous belief that the public—blacks and whites alike—wanted school systems to remain segregated. Comprised of influential citizens from throughout the state, including some members of the state Senate and House of Representatives, the Georgia General Assembly Committee on Schools, better known as the Sibley Commission, in honor of its chair, John Sibley, an Atlanta banker.<sup>66</sup>

In addition to holding many other positions in Atlanta and around the state, John Sibley was a member of the Board of Trustees of Berry College in Rome. More directly connected to Rome and also a member of the Sibley Commission was J. Battle Hall, Rome and Floyd County's representative in the state legislature. Hall was an outright segregationist, a member of the States' Rights Council, and an original member of Herman Talmadge's Commission on Education. Hall chaired the Education Committee

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<sup>65</sup> Kenneth Coleman, ed. *A History of Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1991), 395-396.

<sup>66</sup> Roche, *Restructured Resistance*, 32-39; 83-87.

of the State House of Representatives and served on that body's Rules and Local Affairs committees.<sup>67</sup>

All ten hearings hosted by the Sibley Commission around the state of Georgia took place in March of 1960. An ice storm and some unusually cold weather brought Floyd County and the rest of Northwest Georgia to a near standstill during the first weeks of March. Schools and many businesses were closed. Despite the terrible weather, however, the area's Sibley Commission hearing went ahead as scheduled on March 10, with citizens from Rome making a twenty-mile trip to nearby Cartersville to voice their opinions on the matter of public schools.<sup>68</sup>

Romans present at the hearings included downtown business owner and Chair of the Chamber of Commerce, Jule Levin, with his wife, Rose Levin; Mildred Knight and "Mrs. George" Polston of the Rome League of Women Voters; Russell Moulton, superintendent of schools in the textile mill village of Lindale; Robert Norton, chair of the Rome Board of Education; Presbyterian minister, Reverend R.C. Pooley, of the Georgia Council of Churches; Marion Rice, director of a Rome extension of the University of Georgia; Nathan Morris and William "Buck" Rodgers of two local Parent-Teacher Association groups; Berry College chaplain, Reverend Harold McDaniel; Leon Gresham of the American Legion, E.K. Grass, who spoke for the Rome Central Labor Union; and a handful of other individuals. Representing the Board of Directors of the

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<sup>67</sup> Roche, 87, which incorrectly refers to Hall as Robert Hall; J. Battle Hall to F. P. Turvey, Jr., September 12, 1959, Frances F. Pauley Papers, Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta.

<sup>68</sup> *Rome News-Tribune*, March 10, 1960, 1.

Rome-Floyd County Chamber of Commerce at the hearings was Dr. Randall Minor, president of Shorter College.<sup>69</sup>

The hearings of the Sibley Commission were devised by Governor Ernest Vandiver along with his cabinet and advisors, as a means of, ostensibly, allowing the people of Georgia, rather than the state's elected leadership, to decide how the state would respond to federal court orders to desegregate the public school system. The state seemed to divide geographically over the issue: Southern counties, with higher percentages of African Americans in their populations, favored segregation at any cost and displayed massive resistance, while northern counties, including Floyd County, favored local option or the ability of local municipalities to decide for themselves how best to meet federal court orders.<sup>70</sup>

In keeping with this pattern, few speakers from Rome and Floyd County favored segregation at the cost of the state's public schools. Of those who did, one claimed to represent the entire Rome Central Labor Union, the other the Shanklin-Attaway Post of the American Legion, which, in anticipation of the hearings, had adopted a petition commending state leaders for their "segregation stand" and encouraging the state to maintain separate schools.<sup>71</sup> The *Rome News-Tribune* highlighted the opinions of these speakers and organizations in its coverage of the story, quoting E.K. Grass of the Rome Central Labor Union who told Chairman Sibley and the audience that Rome union locals

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<sup>69</sup> Transcript of 7<sup>th</sup> District Meeting, Georgia General Assembly Committee on Schools, John A. Sibley Papers, Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

<sup>70</sup> For more on the hearings, see Roche, *Restructured Resistance*.

<sup>71</sup> "E.K. Grass," Transcript of 7<sup>th</sup> District Meeting, Georgia General Assembly Committee on Schools, 76 in John A. Sibley Papers, Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

had voted unanimously to keep intact state laws that insured segregation. "Even if this means closing schools?" the Chair asked. "Yes," Grass replied.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to some quotes, the paper listed by name and affiliations all white speakers from Rome who testified, and it had to disclose that the majority at the Cartersville hearing—those from Floyd County and elsewhere in the Seventh District—favored a local option plan. The paper, however, did not name African American speakers in its coverage of the initial day of the hearings. It stated briefly instead that "Two of the half dozen Negroes who testified at yesterday's hearing openly favored integrated schools, although others were harder to pin down."

If "Negro" speakers were "hard to pin down," it was probably due to the line of questioning they received from the chair of the commission, John Sibley. When he rose to testify, one African American pastor of a church in the Seventh District was asked whether he preferred "mixed" schools or "separate" schools. The questioning resulted in a statement that the *Rome News-Tribune* was happy to print in a caption under the black minister's photograph after the second days of hearings. The pastor, who did say he tried to teach his people to be "law abiding," could not say that he knew that integrated schools would work. He could only admit that African Americans had "never seen anything else but separate schools."<sup>73</sup>

While representatives of the labor union and the American Legion testified that they favored closing public schools over desegregating them, Dr. Minor, speaking for the more moderate Chamber of Commerce, endorsed a "local option" plan popular in other areas of the state that had low percentages of African Americans among their

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<sup>72</sup> *Rome News Tribune*, 11 March 1960, 1.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

populations.<sup>74</sup> Local option was probably the choice of the majority of Rome and Floyd County citizens. Under such a plan, the state's public school system would remain intact and local communities would determine for themselves when and how to comply with federal court orders to desegregate.

When he testified before the Sibley Commission, Randall Minor explained that he spoke at the request of the Rome-Floyd County Chamber of Commerce and that the Chamber endorsed the local option choice.<sup>75</sup> As President of Shorter College, Randall Minor answered to the Southern Baptist Convention and the Georgia Baptist Convention, supporters of the small Baptist school. He was a southerner but not a native of Rome. Shorter College had a good liberal arts reputation and hired faculty from throughout the country. Though the school was considered conservative, Minor invited socially active ministers, politicians, writers and editors to the Shorter campus on a regular basis. Visiting speakers in 1959 had included the *Atlanta Constitution* editor and well-known southern liberal, Ralph McGill, and recently un-reelected Democratic Congressman Brooks Hays of Arkansas who had also been president of the Southern Baptist Convention from 1957 to 1958.<sup>76</sup>

At the time of the Sibley Commission hearings, Jule Levin was "immeasurably proud of...[Shorter] president Randall Minor" for opening his campus to activists and leaders who were considered controversial in the South. Though he was chair of the Board of Directors of the Rome Chamber of Commerce, it was as a private citizen that Levin testified on behalf of open schools and a local option choice. Levin, like other

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<sup>74</sup> Roche, *Restructured Resistance*, 116-120.

<sup>75</sup> *Rome News-Tribune*, 11 March 1960, 1.

<sup>76</sup> Jule Levin to Harry Golden, May 2, 1959, Rose Levin "Voices in Protest" Collection, Archives, Rome Area History Museum, Rome, Georgia; "Baptists to Hear Rep. Hays," *Arkansas Democrat*, 20 September 1957, <http://www.ardemgaz.com/prev/CENTRAL/central0920c.html>.

members of the prominent Jewish family into which he had married, worked for the family business, a popular department store in downtown Rome called Esserman's. A native of Cincinnati, he and his wife, Rose Esserman Levin, were active together in Rome's small Rodeph Sholom Congregation and had two daughters in the public school system. At Levin's request, Randall Minor had spoken to the B'nai B'rith of Rome a few months before the hearings, and he had reciprocated by asking Levin to lead a chapel service and student discussion session on Judaism at Shorter that same year.<sup>77</sup>

Though she did not speak at the Sibley Commission hearing in Cartersville, Rose Levin accompanied her husband to the hearings. She had spent the better part of the winter of 1960 engaged in political activity, writing letters to Governor Vandiver and to J. Battle Hall in the state legislature expressing her opinion that it would be unjust to close the public school system.<sup>78</sup> Rose Levin was active in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) at her daughters' school. As an outgrowth of her PTA work, she had also involved herself in the new Rome chapter of a statewide group called HOPE—Help Our Public Education.

HOPE, Inc., based in Atlanta, had organized in 1958 in response to some moderate white Georgians' concerns that the state legislature would close the public school system rather than follow federal court orders to desegregate. Initial leadership of the group consisted primarily of Atlanta area members of the League of Women Voters of Georgia. The organization grew quickly and formed a board of directors and state advisory board, both of which drew mostly from the Atlanta area. One member of the

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<sup>77</sup> Levin to Golden, Rose Levin "Voices in Protest" Collection, Archives, Rome Area History Museum, Rome, Georgia.

<sup>78</sup> Sidney Lowry to Mrs. Jule Levin, January 30, 1960 and Ernest Vandiver to Mrs. Jule Levin, February 1, 1960, Frances F. Pauley Papers, Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

state advisory board was a Cartersville attorney named W. C. Henson who was also a very active alumnus of the Berry Schools in Rome. How Henson felt about Berry Trustee John Sibley being appointed by Vandiver and company to chair the public school hearings is not clear; however, in 1958, Henson stated his belief that segregationist political operative and *Augusta Courier* publisher "Roy Harris and his ilk ought to be put out to plow in a field somewhere where they can do no more harm to the state of Georgia than they have already done."<sup>79</sup>

Henson and the rest of HOPE's statewide leadership, in addition to spearheading a letter-writing campaign, worked closely with individuals and organizations at local levels, such as Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), to organize HOPE's representation at the Sibley Commission hearings. The Rome chapter of HOPE had organized just a few months prior to the hearings and its president for a time was William Rodgers, active in the statewide PTA as well as president of a local PTA. Rodgers took the stand at the Sibley hearings in support of local option and put a great deal of energy into the schools issue. However, the Rome chapter of HOPE organized due mostly to the work of women of the Rome LWV and the outside support and encouragement of Frances Pauley.

Pauley represents the strongest human link connecting events and organizations of 1950s Atlanta and Georgia to the negotiations on behalf of student protestors in Rome in 1963—and to all that occurred in the meantime. Pauley's friendships with men and women in Rome and her connections from nearly a decade of networking helped

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<sup>79</sup> W.C. Henson to George W. Battey, III, September 12, 1958, Battey Papers, Special Collections, Sara Hightower Regional Library, Rome, Georgia; Confined to a wheelchair since childhood, Henson had been personally invited to school by Miss Martha Berry herself and graduated at the top of his class. Henson was forever grateful to Martha Berry and supportive of her schools.

determine how Rome handled inevitable social change.<sup>80</sup> Though reared in Decatur, Georgia, she was not a typical southerner. Nevertheless, her course to activism came, in part, from experiences that were not unusual for an upper middle class white southern woman: graduation from all-female Agnes Scott College, marriage and children in her early twenties, membership in the exclusive Junior League and, later, the League of Women Voters.<sup>81</sup>

Pauley credits her mother's relative respect for African Americans with influencing her own commitment to equality. Though Pauley's family, like their neighbors in upscale Decatur, had employed black women as cooks and domestic servants and black men as chauffeurs and gardeners, Pauley's mother went against local customs by inviting her black employees to walk through the front door and eat at the same table with her family.<sup>82</sup> By the mid 1950s, Pauley, in her forties and determined to educate herself about "race," had joined some interracial organizations around Atlanta, including the predominantly black Atlanta chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Her children, by this time, were also leaving home for college and her father had passed away. Her husband, Bill, supported her work and kept the family financially secure by operating his own landscape architecture business.<sup>83</sup>

From 1952 through 1955, Pauley had served as President of the League of Women Voters of Georgia (LWVGA), traveling extensively through the state to help establish and support local chapters. In the process, she developed relationships with

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<sup>80</sup> *Rome News-Tribune*, 11 March 1960, 3; Frances R. Breeden (Chairman, Board of Directors of HOPE, Inc.) to William Rodgers, September 14, 1959 and Betty M. Harris (Executive Director, HOPE, Inc.) to William Rodgers, March 31, 1960, both in Frances F. Pauley Papers, Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta.

<sup>81</sup> Nasstrom. *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool*, 7-34

<sup>82</sup> Nasstrom, 10-11.

<sup>83</sup> Nasstrom, 165.



individuals and organizations concerned about adult civic education and willing to sponsor community development activities and organizations.<sup>84</sup> The Rome chapter of the League of Women Voters was often weak in comparison with other Georgia chapters, but a connection Pauley made with at least one of its members—chapter president, Mildred Knight—carried through to the women's collaboration later in the decade.

From 1955 to 1958, Pauley was an unpaid staff member of the American Foundation for Political Education (AFPE). Small in scope, its official purpose was to develop materials and programs for liberal adult education in politics, law, and international affairs. As a southern staff member, it had been Pauley's responsibility to organize interracial world politics discussion groups in various Georgia communities in partnership with local Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) groups, local colleges, and other sponsors. World politics discussion groups were a forum for sharing ideas, not only about international affairs, race relations, and foreign cultures, but also about a highly sensitive topic: communism. Looking back on the AFPE and the Red Scare of the 1950s, Pauley feels that the foundation and its programs were influential in paving the way for some change to be made in the South later in the decade. Despite the fact that the AFPE was a New York-based political organization that encouraged interracial discussion groups, Shorter College had sponsored an early group in Rome in 1957. It is possible that Pauley met some of the persons who would become activists for social change in Rome at one of the discussion group meetings.<sup>85</sup>

By the time of the Sibley Commission hearings in March 1960, Frances Pauley was working almost full time for HOPE, Inc. as a volunteer coordinator. Her friend

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<sup>84</sup> Nasstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool*, 61.

<sup>85</sup> Nasstrom, 61-63; Shorter College Dean to Frances Pauley, Frances F. Pauley Collection, Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta.

Mildred Knight, in addition to appearing at the Sibley Commission hearings with a fellow LWV member who spoke in favor of a local option plan, helped Pauley organize Rome's representation at a statewide HOPE program in the aftermath of the Sibley Commission hearings. "My dear Frances," Knight wrote in 1960, "Please don't think that I am wanting only Romans on your program, but just thought in case you need them I would recommend them. Please excuse this letter. My seven months grandson is insisting on helping write."

This personal, familiar tone in a letter about serious efforts to organize citizens on behalf of open public schools indicates that Knight's activism may have been sustained to some degree by friendship with Pauley. Correspondence between the two indicates a particularly feminine approach to organizing that Pauley and her colleagues took when working together—one that relied on interpersonal relationships to sustain the day to day work of organizing and built on them to reach new members or partners for their cause or activity.<sup>86</sup> In addition to news of LWV meetings and hearings, letters between the women almost always contained warm greetings, remarks about grandchildren or husbands, and closings "with love." Knight and Pauley understood the value of networking among women's associations to pull together meetings that might get middle class activist men and women to discuss issues about which they had remained silent for too long.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> For more on the idea of a "female ethic" and organizing for social change, see Susan Lynn, "Gender and Progressive Politics: A Bridge to Social Activism of the 1960s," in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 122.

<sup>87</sup> Mildred Knight to Frances Pauley, 8 May 1960, Frances Pauley Papers, Special Collections, Emory University, Atlanta, Ga.

Though not present at the Sibley Commission hearings in Cartersville and not a southerner, Shorter College faculty member, Franziska Boas, also understood the value of networking, albeit from a different, more radical perspective. It is possible that Boas, a dancer, choreographer, ethnographer, therapist, and modern dance instructor who had moved to Rome from New York City in 1950, had met Frances Pauley at a world politics discussion group meeting in at Shorter. Born in New York City in 1902, Boas was the youngest daughter of Columbia University anthropologist Franz Boas, whose idea that "race" did not equate to biological differences between various peoples of the world probably influenced his daughter's social activism and notions of racial equality. When Boas was three years old, her father had delivered the commencement address at Atlanta University where his friend and colleague, W.E.B. DuBois, was a member of the faculty. Franz Boas' combination of activism and science was controversial; he had begun writing and speaking about equality for all human beings as early as the 1890s, after leaving his native Germany and becoming an American citizen.

The Boas family was Jewish but apparently not religious. During Franziska's youth, her father had often opened the family's home to students and researchers from other cultures, including Africans and Native Americans from British Columbia. At Barnard, the women's college of Columbia, she had studied zoology and chemistry. After college, she had married a psychiatrist named Nicholas Michelson, with whom she had one daughter. During the 1920s and '30s, Boas had studied dance and accompanied her famous father to British Columbia in the Pacific Northwest, contributing to the field of anthropology by studying Native American dance and percussion traditions. She had also established an interracial summer dance school in upstate New York that operated

for several years. After teaching at institutions including Bennington College in Vermont and Bryn Mawr in Pennsylvania, Boas had founded her own school of dance in New York in 1933 and accepted several African American dancers into her company.<sup>88</sup>

During the 1930s and '40s, Boas had published many articles and a book about dance and had worked to relate dance to diverse cultures and to teach her students to think of body movement as a form of therapy and expression.<sup>89</sup> As a teacher and director in New York, she made careers in dance possible for many African Americans, thus leading to her reputation as a social activist as much as a dancer. Somehow, Franziska Boas had decided to move to Rome, Georgia just as her dance studio was closing and her daughter was grown. She had been divorced for eight years and was experiencing financial difficulties that had led to the closing of her school.<sup>90</sup>

At mid-century, in leftist circles of the country's larger cities, particularly in Boas' native New York, interest had developed in the culture and traditions of both Appalachia and the deeper American South. It was the Cold War. The Red Scare was pressuring some political activists and artists into labeling their friends and colleagues as Communists rather than be blacklisted and unable to make livings. It is possible that Boas had felt pressure as an artist and wanted to leave New York. More likely, she might have sought work in the South for political reasons, out of a sense of romantic mission and adventure, or simply because she had connections there. For whatever reason she moved to Rome and Shorter College, Boas had immediately begun to share a home with a fellow artist, a native of Rome named Martha Griffin.

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<sup>88</sup> Vicky Risner, "Social Activism and the Struggle for Racial Equality in the Life and Work of Franziska Boas," unpublished conference paper, 1991, 1.

<sup>89</sup> For example, see Franziska Boas, "The Negro and the Dance as an Art," *Phylon: The Atlanta University Review of Race and Culture* (1949): 38-42.

<sup>90</sup> Risner, 6.

A visual artist, Martha Griffin was born in Rome in 1906 and reared there. The Griffins were well established as owners of Griffin Foundry & Manufacturing Company. Martha had received Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Art from Peabody College. She had also studied at the University of Chicago, the Cleveland Museum of Art, and the Claremont Graduate School in California. It is thought that she went to Columbia University at some point to teach art and associate with the Art Students League. She had likely spent a good deal of time in the New York area with her younger sister, Jane, who was married to the director of the Princeton University library.<sup>91</sup> Whether Franziska and Martha had met through Columbia University connections, Princeton connections, or only after Boas moved to Rome and Shorter College is unclear.

Soon after Boas first arrived in the South, she and Griffin had shared an apartment in faculty housing on the Shorter College campus. Within two years, both had moved to the Griffin family farmhouse outside of Rome. It was a large, stone two-story house with gardens, goats, and fruit and nut trees. Former students of Boas and Griffin recall that the two hosted quiet interracial dinner parties in the mid-1950s. Students also recall poetry readings, hot dog roasts, and improvisational dance gatherings—all rather “avant garde” for Rome at that time. The women sought to give their students a taste of the world outside of Rome and Georgia. To that end, they took students to music and dance conferences and performances in Atlanta and out of state. Former students at the Southern Baptist—and, primarily, women's—college also remember being taught about global conflicts and the importance of respect for all cultures.

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<sup>91</sup> George M. Battey, III, “The Jingle Bell or Rebel Yell,” 1963, 13, Battey Papers, Special Collections, Sara Hightower Regional Library, Rome.

Though neither woman had children in Rome's public schools, both were active in the Shorter College community and in the lives of their students. However, like most Shorter and Berry College faculty members, their lives were not completely confined to campus. Martha Griffin, whose family lived in town, was involved to some degree in the Griffin manufacturing business as late as 1960.<sup>92</sup> And Franziska had many contacts with black colleges and ministers in Rome and Atlanta. How those contacts were made is unclear. It is possible that Boas had sought out friends in the African American community when she moved to Rome, seeking friendships and intending to learn about the dynamic of race in the small southern town.<sup>93</sup>

A former student of Martha Griffin registers surprise at the idea that Griffin might have been actively involved in any interracial activities or organizations.<sup>94</sup> Because she was from Rome, Griffin was likely in a very different position from Boas when it came to leading or participating in activities perceived as left wing or communist by members of the larger community. When it came to the matter of debate over public school closings and desegregation of public facilities, Griffin was a behind-the-scenes supporter in comparison to Boas, whom Frances Pauley considered a friend and whose connections and correspondents extended beyond Georgia and Atlanta to the Socialist circles of New York.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> The Rome City directories for 1953 and 1954 list Griffin's occupation as "Vice President--Griffin Manufacturing and Foundry Co." and "Prof., Shorter College."

<sup>93</sup> Gertrude Michelson (daughter of Franziska Boas) to author, 19 February 2002, e-mail correspondence.

<sup>94</sup> Special thanks to Shorter College faculty and graduates for sharing their memories of Franziska Boas and Martha Griffin with me: Terry Morris (E-mail correspondence, July 12, 2001); Carolyn Ward (E-mail correspondence, July 17 & 18, 2001; October 22, 2001); Ellen Burks Zeller (E-mail correspondence, July 25, 2001 & August 17, 2001); Barbara Newton (E-mail correspondence, November 2, 2001); and David McCord (Personal interview, August 29, 2001, Atlanta, Georgia).

<sup>95</sup> Nasstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool*, 74.

At some time prior to the Sibley Commission hearings early in 1960, Jule and Rose Levin had enrolled their two daughters in after-school piano and dance lessons at Shorter College. By virtue of that arrangement, Franziska Boas and Rose Levin got to know one another and formed a friendship that would figure into Rome's course to social change. At the time of the hearings, however, the pivotal figure, Frances Pauley, had yet to take her first paid position as a statewide organizer—the position that would push a web of friends and acquaintances from Rome and Atlanta to interact and link with still other friends and acquaintances at Shorter and Berry colleges and emerge to form a protective network around protesting high school students in 1963. Through her volunteer work with the League of Women Voters of Georgia, the American Foundation for Political Education, and HOPE, Inc., Pauley had come to know persons at both of Rome's colleges, Shorter and Berry. However, while she established connections at Shorter during the early and mid-1950s, Pauley's closest connections to Berry came later, through two members of the Rome LWV chapter.

The leadership of the League of Women Voters carried the Rome chapter of HOPE in that they enthusiastically co-sponsored and organized local forums for discussion of the public schools issue with Atlanta-based HOPE leaders and, likewise, saw that Rome HOPE was represented at Atlanta meetings of the organization. During the school crisis, in her capacity as an organizer for HOPE, Pauley had identified as a member and past president of the League of Women Voters of Georgia.<sup>96</sup> Sometime in the late 1950s, Annabelle Bertrand had joined the Rome chapter of the League of Women Voters.

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<sup>96</sup> William Rodgers to Mrs. J.C. Harris, August 30, 1960, Frances F. Pauley Papers, Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta.

Bertrand and her husband, Berry College President John Bertrand, were natives of Texas. They had moved to Rome in 1956 from Nevada, where John had overseen that state's agricultural extension service as Dean of the University of Nevada College of Agriculture.<sup>97</sup> The Bertrands had moved to Berry at the behest of one-time Federal Reserve Board chair, McChesney Martin, Jr., who also chaired the Berry College Board of Trustees on which John Sibley served. The Board of Trustees had searched for someone with an agricultural background who could manage the large Berry campus—said to be the largest in land area in the world—and also see the college through its first accreditation process. Bertrand was a decorated veteran of the Navy, having served on a submarine in World War II. He also had a doctorate in Rural Sociology from Cornell and teaching and administrative experience from Texas A&M University.

Annabelle Bertrand had completed graduate work in Texas and obtained a pilot's license there in the early 1930s. In 1936, she had married John and they began their partnership in education. The couple had four children. When the family moved to Rome, Annabelle, who was also an artist, had joined John as a member of the downtown First Methodist Church. She also kept the Bertrand home open to family and campus visitors, many of whom were from other countries and cultures.<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile, John Bertrand had assumed his duties at the college and joined the Rotary Club and Chamber of Commerce.

Though southerners and familiar with Jim Crow, John and Annabelle had been relative newcomers to Rome at the time the public school crisis erupted in Georgia in 1958. They had sought to understand the situation and ensure that Berry students and

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<sup>97</sup> "Bidding Rome adieu after half a lifetime, John Bertrand," *Rome News-Tribune*, June 14, 1998, 5A.

<sup>98</sup> "Obituary for John Raney Bertrand," from "A Celebration of the Life of Dr. John Raney Bertrand," March 9, 2002, in possession of author.



faculty felt free to discuss the issue openly and without threat of censure. Four months prior to the Sibley Commission hearings, John Bertrand had written a letter to Rome and Floyd County's representatives in the state legislature in which he expressed his personal belief that Georgia should maintain its public school system and work to resolve problems posed by resistance to segregation.<sup>99</sup> Though he had written as an individual citizen, Bertrand had gone out on a limb in composing and sending such a letter. Students, parents, and alumni of the Berry Schools had begun to get the idea, correctly, that Bertrand was a man of principle—and not necessarily the principles of Progressive-era nativism and white supremacy on which the schools had been founded more than a half-century earlier.<sup>100</sup>

Mae Parish, a Berry faculty member who had moved to Rome shortly after the Bertrands, had also joined the local LWV chapter with Annabelle Bertrand and knew Frances Pauley by the time of the Sibley Commission hearings. Whether or not it was coincidence that she ended up a Social Science professor at Berry, Parish had been a student of John Bertrand at Sam Houston College in Texas just after World War II. In teaching a course on "race relations," Bertrand had considered from an academic perspective the attitude-changing personal relationships that he had experienced with African American fellow servicemen during the war.<sup>101</sup>

During the week following the Sibley Commission hearings in Cartersville in March 1960, both the League of Women Voters of Rome and the Business & Professional

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<sup>99</sup> John and Annabelle Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations, 1962-1988: Historical Survey Based on Documentary Sources," 2, unpublished paper, 1 December 1988, Special Collections, Sara Hightower Regional Library, Rome.

<sup>100</sup> Susan Asbury, "'Far Up From the Hills': Rethinking Oak Hill, Martha Berry's Home," (M.A. thesis, University of South Carolina, 2000), 16.

<sup>101</sup> Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations, 1962-1988: Historical Survey Based on Documentary Sources," 3.

Women's Club of Rome held their monthly luncheon meetings. On the agenda for the LWV luncheon was a report on the Sibley Commission hearing by Mrs. George Poulson, who had testified on behalf of open public schools as Chair of Education for the chapter.<sup>102</sup> In contrast, the B&PW chapter was addressed by Judge H.E. Nichols of the Georgia Court of Appeals, a supporter of the Talmadge faction in state politics and its favored form of government, the county unit system. In addition to hearing from Judge Nichols, the women elected a new chapter president: Inez Henry, assistant to the president of the Berry Schools.<sup>103</sup>

Inez Wooten Henry, a fixture at Berry, was a carryover from the administration of Martha Berry herself, having served as Miss Berry's personal assistant during the 1930s. During that period, the founder and her schools had struggled to remain viable even though the school attained four-year college status and wealthy donors, including Henry Ford, bestowed hundreds of thousands of dollars on the schools for building projects and progress. Thus, Inez Henry was well connected throughout Georgia, as she personally maintained correspondence with many of Miss Berry's friends and benefactors in Atlanta and beyond—influential persons she had met when she was a young woman traveling with her mentor on fundraising ventures and trips in service to the schools.<sup>104</sup>

Given the period of transition that the college and the South were experiencing in the late 1950s and early 1960s, relations between the new college president and long-term faculty and staff at Berry were naturally somewhat strained beneath a veneer of

<sup>102</sup> "League of Women Voters to Hear School Report," *Rome News-Tribune*, March 13, 1960, 15.

<sup>103</sup> "Mrs. Inez Henry New President of B&PW Group," *Rome News-Tribune*, March 17, 1960, 3.

<sup>104</sup> See Harnett Kane with Inez Henry, *Miracle in the Mountains: The Inspiring Story of Martha Berry's Crusade for the Mountain People of the South* (New York: Doubleday, 1956). *Miracle in the Mountains*, published the same year that the Bertrands moved to Rome, deified Martha Berry and contributed to her continued 'presence' on campus fourteen years after her death.

cordiality, as in the case of Dr. Bertrand and his assistant. Tensions rose a bit as Bertrand gradually allowed his opinions on issues such as "race relations" to be known. In October of 1960, five months after the Sibley Commission delivered its final report on the outcome of the hearings to the people of Georgia, Bertrand released a personal statement in which he publicly shared the viewpoint that he had previously expressed in letters to members of the local delegation to the General Assembly—and the opinion that the Sibley Commission had vaguely recommended: that public schools in Georgia should remain open, despite "the problems of integration."

During that same school term, Bertrand made a decision about a class project that would have ramifications for the campus, the larger community, and the network of persons already aware of the injustices facing African Americans in Rome and Floyd County and across Georgia. Five students at all white Berry College exchanged tape-recorded discussions related to race with five students at all black Morehouse College in Atlanta. Some Berry faculty, staff, and students considered Professor William Gordon's class project inappropriate. However, it was a letter from a community member off campus that prompted Bertrand to address his student body and encourage them to think "Beyond Racism," as the speech he delivered in April of 1961 was entitled.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> John R. Bertrand, "Events in Berry College's Race Relations Since 1959," April 29, 1961, John R. Bertrand Papers, Special Collections, Memorial Library, Berry College, Rome, Georgia.

## Chapter 3

### **“It Gave Our Lives a New Dimension”: Formation and Early Work of the Rome, Georgia Council on Human Relations, 1961-1963**

Writing almost thirty years later about her participation in the work of the Rome Council on Human Relations, Rose Levin, speaking for unnamed others as well as herself, said that it “gave [their] lives a new dimension.” She remembered how she had first ended her personal silence about racial inequality in the late 1950s by speaking out against white resistance to desegregation during a Parent Teacher Association meeting at her daughters’ public school. Not until she joined the Rome Council in 1961, though, did she join with others to voice her formerly quiet conviction that racial segregation was unjust.<sup>106</sup> Because their voices were never loud in opposition to racial inequality, Levin’s statement about its personal meaning to herself and other members of the Rome Council reveals a particularly meaningful quality about the group. Its formation and early work meant a great deal to those involved in organizing it. Though the members knew one another through connections formed during Georgia’s public school crisis in 1959 and 1960, individual and collective reactions to events on the Berry College campus and around the South in 1961 finally compelled them to seek association with the larger Georgia Council on Human Relations and form a local chapter.

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<sup>106</sup> Rose Esserman Levin, “Civil Rights,” 8.

Early in 1961, five students from Berry College visited students at Atlanta's Morehouse College on their campus. The trip resulted from the collaborative communications project sponsored the previous fall by William Gordon, Professor of English at Berry and Lionel Newsom, Professor of Sociology at Morehouse. Though the project became controversial, it was undertaken quietly enough that the Berry students made their visit to Atlanta without incident. Upon their return from Morehouse, the Berry students wished to reciprocate. Thus, planning began for an April visit to Berry by the Morehouse students.<sup>107</sup>

Meanwhile, in Atlanta, Frances Pauley accepted a paid position as Executive Director of the Georgia Council on Human Relations, an organization she described later as "black and white people together...trying to help the [black male civil rights movement] leadership." She took on the job with a mind toward moving the Council "out of the church basement" and widening its membership to include younger people interested in the "new movement" as opposed to the "separate but equal" movement of most other liberal white and black Georgians her age and older who had worked through churches and religious communities in an attempt to equalize conditions and opportunities in their state and the rest of the South.<sup>108</sup>

The Georgia Council was an initiative of the Atlanta-based Southern Regional Council (SRC), successor to the Council on Interracial Cooperation (CIC). The CIC had organized after World War I under the chairmanship of John J. Eagan of both Atlanta and Birmingham. Eagan was president of Alabama Cast Iron Pipe Company, as well as an

<sup>107</sup> John R. and Arinabelle H. Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations, 1962-1988," 2.

<sup>108</sup> Nassstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool*, 66.

early chair of the Board of Trustees at Berry College.<sup>109</sup> The purpose of the CIC was to address racial unrest after black and white troops returned from the First World War without directly challenging Jim Crow laws. During World War II, the CIC dissolved and the Southern Regional Council (SRC) took over its work. The SRC had originally been established in 1944 as a biracial council committed to attaining, for black and white southerners, the ideals and practices of equal opportunity, yet, like the CIC, without directly addressing the issue of segregation.<sup>110</sup> By the time Frances Pauley became Executive Director of the Georgia Council, however, the Southern Regional Council was addressing the issue. It sought to do so through formation of state and local chapters of the Council on Human Relations,

Pauley's first responsibility as a state director was to raise money for projects. The SRC paid her small salary and provided a part time secretary, but to do anything more than talk about racial equality, to do anything that cost money such as travel beyond Atlanta, she had to raise funds herself. Early in her tenure Pauley enlisted the aid of Martin Luther King, Jr. to hold a big fundraiser for the Council in Atlanta. The event was successful, but organizing it took too much time away from the work. Thereafter, most money came from large out-of-state foundations and smaller, in-state family foundations that Pauley courted by taking them to see the work of the Council in various parts of Georgia.

One of Pauley's first decisions as director was to hire Oliver Wendell Holmes, a black minister in Savannah and a native of Atlanta, to be Assistant Director of the

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<sup>109</sup> Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations, 1962-1988," 1.

<sup>110</sup> John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 311.

Georgia Council.<sup>111</sup> The two traveled the state, attempting to organize local chapters of the Council on Human Relations. Usually they worked in separate locations and met at headquarters in Atlanta. However, on at least one occasion, they both stayed in the home of Franziska Boas and Martha Griffin in Rome. According to Pauley, the strange sight of a black man and a white woman arriving together and eating together at the table gave the cook and the gardener such a start that a plate of biscuits was ruined and the gardener dropped his rake.<sup>112</sup>

Insomuch as Pauley and Holmes made connections and networked in different towns to organize chapters, the work of the Council was not grassroots. However, Pauley counts the work as part of the larger civil rights movement that was nationwide, grassroots, and possible only because countless numbers of people in places of all sizes and reputations contributed in large and small ways to bringing about social change.<sup>113</sup> Cognizant of the need to help local communities react to what bothered them most about racial injustice in their particular locations, Pauley strove to take the Georgia Council on Human Relations to a new level of activism.

At the same time, Dr. Bertrand, the five students at Berry College, and their professor, William Gordon, tried to host the student group from Morehouse. The news leaked to students and faculty that an interracial visit was planned. Then the word spread to Rome and Floyd County. Protests by a handful of Berry students in collaboration with

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<sup>111</sup> Nasstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool*, 69.

<sup>112</sup> Nasstrom, 74-75.

<sup>113</sup> Nasstrom, 65-66.

members of the local Ku Klux Klan and the Rome Citizens Council led Bertrand to postpone the visit.<sup>114</sup>

Rome's reputation as a 'moderate' city when it came to matters of race was more the result of self-promotion than actual racial equality. However, with only fourteen percent of the population African American, fewer citizens in Floyd County were apt to express dissatisfaction with laws and customs that made second-class citizens of blacks than might citizens in some counties with greater percentages of African Americans. Likewise, the percentage of whites in the "civil" town of Rome who were vocal and extreme in their opposition to integration or opportunities for blacks seemed smaller still. Thus, John Bertrand and William Gordon may have been surprised when protestors appeared, hoping to spoil a visit to the campus by five black male college students.

Bertrand's reaction—to postpone the visit and assemble everyone at Berry for an address in the chapel—likely resulted less from a sense of being threatened than from a refocused understanding of the climate at Berry and in Rome and Floyd County in 1961. He may have understood in a new way the challenge he faced on campus and that he and other local moderate activists and community leaders faced together in trying to bring about peaceful social change in their area of the state. The University of Georgia had very nearly seen its doors closed just a few months earlier by state politicians after two African American students from Atlanta, Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes, had attempted to enroll. Riots had erupted on the Athens campus, yet many among the white mob inciting violence had not been students at the university. In light of such incidents,

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<sup>114</sup> John R. Bertrand, "Events in Berry College's Race Relations Since 1959," April 29, 1961, John R. Bertrand Papers, Special Collections, Memorial Library, Berry College, Rome, Georgia.



college presidents on campuses all over Georgia and elsewhere in the South were in rather precarious positions in their communities.<sup>115</sup>

Out of town when he made the decision to postpone the visit from Morehouse students to Berry, Bertrand had quickly returned to campus. He responded to tension on campus by assembling the faculty and students of Berry to hear his "Beyond Racism" address. The talk reminded students of Berry's Christian affiliation and commitment and informed them that tolerance and understanding should replace prejudice, violence, and "ugly display of emotion" on campus.<sup>116</sup> Tensions on campus eased, but Bertrand felt increasingly threatened by influential individuals and groups off campus. He may have reached out to moderate friends and colleagues around the South for advice about how to handle the situation. Though it was not dire at the time, it had the potential to become more serious in the future, particularly as Bertrand sought to integrate Berry College.

One week after Bertrand's "Beyond Racism" address to Berry students and faculty, CORE-sponsored Freedom Riders left Washington, DC on two separate bus lines in an attempt to travel through the Deep South states. Meeting little violence or protest along the way, the young people gained the attention of the nation when they reached Anniston, Alabama, sixty miles southwest of Rome. A mob of white supremacists threw rocks and bricks and burned one bus in which they were riding, injuring some of the riders, as well as journalists covering the story for national media outlets. Not to be daunted, another bus of Freedom Riders went on Birmingham, where they, too, were met by violence that afternoon. Local police pretended not to see some of the Freedom Riders being beaten with clubs and lead pipes. Photographers, however, captured images

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<sup>115</sup> Jeff Roche, *Restructured Resistance*, 178-185.

<sup>116</sup> Bertrand, "Beyond Racism," John R. Bertrand Papers, Special Collections, Memorial Library, Berry College, Rome, Georgia.

of the beatings, which were immediately published all over the world, contributing to Birmingham's reputation as a dangerous place, plagued by race-related conflict. As was often the case, outsiders helped build that reputation. Later convicted—and acquitted—of a charge of assault with intent to murder in the Birmingham Trailways bus station on Mother's Day was Hershel Acker, a paper mill worker from Rome, Georgia.<sup>117</sup>

Eighteen days after Bertrand's chapel address and three days after the bus burning and violence in Anniston and Birmingham, Frances Pauley made the seventy-five mile trip to Rome from Atlanta to meet with male and female friends and associates whom she thought might wish, in light of recent events, to organize a Rome chapter of the Georgia Council on Human Relations. Whether John and Annabelle Bertrand had contacted Frances Pauley, or whether Franziska Boas or one of Pauley's other contacts in Rome had made her aware of the situation, she heard about the Berry protests and the Morehouse students' cancelled visit and responded to a request to discuss human relations with concerned citizens in Rome.<sup>118</sup>

Pauley approached the task of helping interracial groups form in local communities by first establishing contacts, not councils. Since she preferred to think of her role as forming a bridge between blacks and whites, she would not work with all white groups or all black groups.<sup>119</sup> In some places Pauley claimed a number of contacts that went back as far as the League of Women Voters' early 1950s fight against the county-unit amendment. In other places, she knew fewer locals but had a sense of the dynamics of the community by way of the news and colleagues' interactions beyond the

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<sup>117</sup> Diane McWhorter, *Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama, The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 204-220.

<sup>118</sup> Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations, 1962-1988," 3.

<sup>119</sup> Nasstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool*, 70.

Atlanta area. Despite her personal efforts to join interracial organizations and drop out of segregated ones, most of Pauley's contacts at the outset of her directorship of the Georgia Council were middle and upper middle class whites. In Rome, Pauley knew a number of white individuals, some associated with organizations and some not, who both kept her informed about race-related incidents and discussions and trusted her when it came time to devise strategies for dealing with resistance to social change. As she helped them organize a local chapter of the Council on Human Relations in 1961, Pauley expanded her network of friends and associates in Rome to include middle and lower middle class African Americans.

When it had become clear to Pauley that Rome might be ready for a local chapter of the Georgia Council on Human Relations, she had called upon contacts and friends from Berry and Shorter Colleges, as well as St. Peter's Episcopal Church, the local HOPE, Inc. chapter, and the League of Women Voters—all institutions and individuals in Rome who had sponsored and been involved in programs with which she was previously associated. Thus, the group that met with Pauley on May 17, 1961 largely represented the more progressive churches, educational institutions, and women's voluntary associations of Rome.

The Reverend Peter Daniel of Saint Peter's Episcopal Church, one of Pauley's contacts from her time with the American Foundation for Political Education, convinced a church board to allow the group to hold a meeting or two in the parlor of St. Peter's.<sup>120</sup> The Episcopal church was located one block from Broad Street in downtown Rome, next door to the Jewish Rodeph Sholom Congregation, which had purchased its building from

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<sup>120</sup> Rose Esserman Levin, "Civil Rights," unpublished paper, 1988, 2, Frances F. Pauley Papers, Special Collections, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta

the Episcopal church in the late 1930s.<sup>121</sup> Pauley had already done preliminary work, through her friendships and contacts in Rome, to make sure that blacks and whites would meet together. However, while both men and women represented the white perspective of life in Rome, only black men were present from the African American community at the exploratory meeting.<sup>122</sup> The group discussed race relations in Rome, whether or not there was need of a local chapter of the Council on Human Relations, and whether or not those present were interested in forming a biracial group from among their various contacts and associations in the community.<sup>123</sup>

At the outset, John Bertrand told Pauley that he thought it best that he not be involved immediately, though he would support any Berry faculty and staff who wished to join such an organization.<sup>124</sup> This initial decision by Bertrand may have reflected concerns about the politics of higher education administration in Georgia. During the continuation of the Red Scare in the early 1960s, Bertrand and other college faculty and administrators in the South had to work against the general public's fears of "Communist infiltration" of campuses in order to maintain a spirit of inquiry on their campuses. Of more practical concern to Bertrand might have been possible reactions from members of the Berry Board of Trustees, including John Sibley, Atlanta banker and head of the Sibley Commission. Nevertheless, John and Annabel Bertrand's earliest service to the Rome Council as active behind-the-scenes supporters made a difference in the success of the group's work. Berry faculty members Mae Parish, William Gordon, and William Hoyt, head of the college's Department of Religion, attended the group's initial meeting and

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<sup>121</sup> Aycock, *All Roads to Rome*, 535.

<sup>122</sup> Levin, "Civil Rights," 2.

<sup>123</sup> Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations," 3.

<sup>124</sup> Transcript of interview with John Bertrand, 26 July 2000, Special Collections, Berry College, Rome, Georgia.

became early members of the formal Rome Council. Also present at an early organizational meeting was Mildred Knight, president of the Rome chapter of the League of Women Voters.<sup>125</sup> Though not connected to Berry, Knight knew Parish, Pauley, and Annabelle Bertrand from LWV activities and through their efforts together as members of HOPE.

John Bertrand's counterpart at Shorter College, Randall Minor, did not attend the meeting. Although vocally supportive of open public schools during the Sibley Commission hearings one year earlier, he may not have felt it politically wise to join such a group. One Shorter graduate expressed surprise that Minor would have allowed Shorter faculty members to be involved and keep their jobs at the small Baptist college. Nevertheless, Franziska Boas of the school's Department of Physical Education spearheaded the Rome Council's formation without known opposition and enticed a fellow Shorter faculty member, Charlotte Vane of the Department of Music, to join as well.<sup>126</sup>

Martha Griffin, Boas' dear friend and housemate, does not appear in records or memories of the formation of the Rome Council. Perhaps because she was a native Roman and not an 'outsider' in town to the same degree as Boas, the Bertrands, and African American members of the emerging group, Griffin felt it unwise to be a founding member. Her involvement, however, as a supporter of Franziska Boas and as a connection to Rome's white middle and upper middle class white establishment, may categorize her as a crucial behind-the-scenes member of the group. Likewise Hyman Esserman, of the Rodeph Sholom Congregation, who participated in early discussion of

<sup>125</sup> Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations, 1962-1988," 3.

<sup>126</sup> Carolyn Ward to author, 18 July 2001, e-mail correspondence.

the need for a Rome Council chapter also provided behind-the-scenes support. Esserman was a World War I veteran and part owner, with other family members, including Jule Levin, of Esserman's Department Store.

C.W. Aycock participated in early meetings and joined the Council. He had grown up in Rome, attending its all-black public schools. After college, he had returned to Rome to become the first principal of Main High School, the segregated high school for African American students. Jule Levin had been the Honors Day speaker at Main High School a year before talk of a Rome Council chapter started, yet how he and Aycock became acquainted and how well they knew one another are not clear.<sup>127</sup>

Speaking from the perspective of an administrator and educator, C. W. Aycock introduced white members of the Council to the special problems resulting from a segregated school system. Capus White, an African American cook at Shorter College and a laborer for a prominent local white family was probably involved in early discussions through a connection to Franziska Boas. Both Aycock and White educated white members of the Council about the day-to-day injustices local blacks faced.<sup>128</sup>

These and other individuals met on several occasions between late spring and early autumn of 1961 and formally established their organization in October of that year. Franziska Boas agreed to serve as the Rome Council's first chairperson. During the group's planning meetings and after she accepted a leadership role in the newly formed Council, Boas personally invited friends and acquaintances in Rome to join the group. Rose Levin, for example, expressed interest in membership as soon as her friend, Boas, approached her about it one afternoon as she waited to pick up her daughters from dance

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<sup>127</sup> C.W. Aycock to Jule Levin, 26 May 1960, Rose Levin "Voices in Protest" Papers, Archives, Rome Area History Museum, Rome, Georgia.

<sup>128</sup> Rose Levin, "Civil Rights," 3.

and piano lessons at Shorter College: Levin, who had "great confidence in [Boas'] judgment and ability," welcomed the opportunity to help organize such a group in Rome and joined the cause immediately. Whether or not her husband, Jule, became an official member, he supported the group's intent to address racial inequality in Rome and served as the council's unofficial liaison by communicating with local city officials in his capacity as president of the Board of Directors of the Rome-Floyd County Chamber of Commerce.<sup>129</sup>

Frances Pauley, as Franziska Boas might have already known and as C. W. Aycock, Capus White, the Bertrands, the Levins, and other founders of the Rome Council came to understand, approached organizing and facilitating at the local level by first asking one question of participants in group meetings: "What bothers you the most about segregation?" She asked this of blacks and whites. The idea was to get members of a local community talking in order to arrive at where the local group wanted to start in terms of protesting segregation and working for change. As Pauley put it, "I wouldn't dare go in and tell somebody else what to do."<sup>130</sup>

Eager to experience early success in direct action, the Rome Council settled on goals for the organization's first year that included desegregating local Laundromats, campaigning for African American employment in city government and enrollment in city and county vocational training programs, and integrating the public library. What the group accomplished in terms of the laundries is not clear, nor is there evidence that any black workers were hired by the city due to Council pressure in 1962. By March of that year, however, the executive committee of the Rome Council met to determine a

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<sup>129</sup> Rose Levin, "Civil Rights," 2.

<sup>130</sup> Nasstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool*, 71.

strategy for pressuring local public officials to diversity the city's workforce and help prepare African Americans for positions in fields such as nursing.<sup>131</sup> The gradual process of desegregating Rome's Carnegie Library began in 1962 and continued throughout that year into the next.

Early meetings of the Rome Council represented not only the first time many of its members had discussed segregation in a biracial setting, but also the first social encounters between some whites and blacks, particularly white women and black men. The actions of sharing a seat on the church parlor sofa or shaking hands with a person of another race, though appropriate at the meetings, still stimulated some anxiety given Rome's laws and customs.<sup>132</sup> Most of the local white community believed that blacks and whites should not associate with one another in the manner the group adopted, whether in a church, a school, or a municipal building. Black men and white women meeting together and interacting on a personal level was a special infraction of the rules, betraying a root principle on which Jim Crow was based.

Though black women were noticeably absent from early meetings, Boas encouraged her contacts in the African American community to help recruit African American women to membership. In short time, the Council included Callie Martin, owner of a small community grocery store; Predetha Thomas, an educator; and Beatrice Freeman, a domestic worker employed by John and Annabelle Bertrand at Berry. These women, like other African American men and women who joined the Rome Council, possessed a degree of independence not shared by the majority of African Americans in Rome in the early 1960s. Aside from the fact that her store might get burned, Martin did

<sup>131</sup> Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations," 4.

<sup>132</sup> Rose Levin addresses this in her memoir. See Levin, "Civil Rights," 2.



not fear that negative economic repercussions would accompany her joining the Rome Council. Freeman's employers encouraged her to join.<sup>133</sup>

Probably through Pauley's connections to the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta, the early Rome Council was allowed to gather at St. Peter's Church for several meetings until the church board reversed its decision and asked the group to find another place to meet. After that, the group gathered at night in the basements of "Negro" churches, in the downtown office of Atlanta Life Insurance, and in the homes of individuals willing to risk hosting a "mixed" group. Rose Levin was likely not alone in her fear that wherever they met, members of the group might be arrested for attempting to create civil unrest or on another charge that local law enforcement might apply to prevent the Council from meeting and, thus, gaining ground in the struggle for racial equality in Rome. However, no such arrests occurred.<sup>134</sup>

While members of the fledgling Rome Council formed a community and decided which concerns they would address first in their small city, Rome's local daily newspaper, the *News-Tribune*, asked its readers, "Is This Trip Necessary?" The trip to which the paper referred was a "freedom ride" along U.S. Highway 40 between New York City and the nation's capital by members of the Washington, D.C. chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). The Rome paper editorialized that CORE, which wanted to protest racial discrimination in restaurants in Maryland, was more interested in a "freedom ride" that would sidetrack progress underway in proper legislative channels than it was in waiting for public accommodation legislation to pass the Maryland state legislature in its regular session the following year. As it had throughout the 1950s, the

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<sup>133</sup> Callie Martin interview, 24 September 2001.

<sup>134</sup> Rose Levin, "Civil Rights," 3.

*Rome News-Tribune* preached the virtues of moderation and patience on the part of African Americans. CORE, the paper explained, “agitated” for change that would grant “the American Negro the same freedom to be served in restaurants along Highway 40” as “African statesmen” deserved, referring to diplomats the editors claimed often traveled the corridor between New York and Washington.<sup>135</sup>

The *Rome News-Tribune* regularly reported on civic, voluntary, and religious organizations whose members were partners in the earlier work of HOPE and, by 1961, the Georgia Council on Human Relations, yet it did not cover the formation or the early work of the Rome Council itself. Choosing to focus on violence that erupted as a result of African Americans’ non-violent protests for change, the newspaper seemed to blame “impatient Negroes” for much of the violent images related to racial unrest that by this time entered Americans’ homes every night via television news. As Rome and the rest of Georgia looked to meet the recommendation of the Sibley Commission—that public schools remain open and local municipalities resolve for themselves how to approach desegregation—the role the local newspaper took was to add little nuance to debates. Rather, it gave propagandistic support to the majority of moderate white readers who spoke volumes with their silence on the matter of racial inequality throughout the South and in Rome.

Members of the Rome Council on Human Relations, if they did not speak volumes, were at least not altogether silent about racial injustice. For example, rather than stage a sit-in or boycott the library, Council members determined to visit the library in small groups and inquire politely as to whether or not the library wished to desegregate. After an undetermined number of such visits throughout 1962 and early

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<sup>135</sup> “Is This Trip Necessary?” *Rome News-Tribune*, 7 November 1961, 4.

1963, the library quietly changed its policy against loaning books to African Americans. One day in early March of 1963, Capus White, who had attempted to check out a cookbook or two on previous occasions, was escorted to the cookbook shelves where he was left to peruse the books, rather than being escorted to the exit.<sup>136</sup>

In its efforts to desegregate the public library in a quiet, meaningful way, the Rome Council on Human Relations took the approach it wanted to take, rather than the approach that editors of the *Rome News Tribune* claimed to think that "outside agitators" such as Frances Pauley or the national leadership of the NAACP encouraged persons to take in local communities into which they went as outside organizers. While they recognized their need for outside support and networked with social activists in Atlanta and other parts of Georgia, members of the Rome Council on Human Relations took actions against racial inequality in their own way.

Rome's Carnegie Library, in addition to having a new director in 1963 who was not averse to the notion of integrated facilities, was governed by a Board of Trustees who may or may not have been aware of the persistent efforts of members of the Rome Council to integrate the library. For whatever reasons it did so, the library board saw wisdom in desegregating the facility in March 1963. However, in an attempt to avoid attention that might draw protest—protestors who likely would not be library patrons—the policy change was made without a public announcement.<sup>137</sup>

Though Frances Pauley traveled to Rome a couple of times in 1962, most of her time that year was spent in Albany in Southwest Georgia, where she encouraged black and white citizens and organizations to form a biracial group that could work with the

<sup>136</sup> Nasstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool*, 72.

<sup>137</sup> Hutzler, "History of Rome, Georgia Carnegie Library, 1911-1961," 100-101.

Albany Chamber of Commerce and force Albany's white power structure to listen to African American citizens' 'just' grievances.<sup>138</sup> Despite massive demonstrations in Albany, civil rights activists considered their work there a failure. None of their efforts resulted in immediate desegregation of public facilities.<sup>139</sup> Albany ultimately saw the involvement of Martin Luther King, Jr. and other headline-grabbing figures of the national civil rights movement leadership in its local movement. Thus, by fall of 1962, municipalities all over the state were working to avoid an "Albany" in their town. The Board of Trustees of the Rome library, as stewards of a public facility, would have been no exception.

In the wake of the movement activity in his town, Albany Chief of Police Laurie Pritchett became a celebrity, touring the South to speak to law enforcement groups about how and why to adopt his method of "strict adherence to the law" when dealing with civil disobedience. The Albany experience served as a model for chiefs of police, town councils, and Chambers of Commerce all over Georgia who wished to prevent similar incidents from happening in their communities.<sup>140</sup> Though progress was a long time coming in Albany and the events of 1962 could have felt like a setback, Frances Pauley had plenty else to work on. In late March of 1963, less than one month after desegregation of Carnegie Library, Rome saw its first direct action protests by sixty-two African American students in the form of the sit-ins so dreaded by many white people.

For weeks prior to the sit-ins, the *Rome News-Tribune* had published stories of violence and race-related conflicts in other southern communities. On March 28, the day before the sit-ins, two articles related to Albany's continued troubles appeared in the

<sup>138</sup> Nasstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool*, 64-65.

<sup>139</sup> Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta*, 147-153.

<sup>140</sup> "Strict Law Needed in Dealing With Civil Rights—Pritchett," *Rome News-Tribune*, 28 March 1963, 12.

newspaper, along with coverage of "race riots" provoked by "Negro racial agitators" in Greenwood, Mississippi.<sup>141</sup> On the day after the sit-ins, the newspaper speculated that local police had been tipped in advance about them and noted that Rome city police had studied the Albany experience and Chief Laurie Pritchett's methods for handling civil rights demonstrators in preparation for any such events. The paper also mentioned that a nameless "Chamber of Commerce spokesman said periodic meetings [had] been held between Negro and white leaders in an effort to iron out racial problems" in Rome. Whether the Chamber of Commerce spokesman was Jule Levin and whether Levin would have referred to the Council on Human Relations by name is not known.<sup>142</sup>

Whether members of the Rome Council on Human Relations and its behind-the-scenes supporters tipped local police is not certain either. Some members and associates of the Council were in positions that placed them in the center of a circle of decision-makers that included the police and City Manager, as well as the Chamber of Commerce. Thus, though it may be true, as some of the protesting students remember, that no adults were involved in the protest, it is difficult to believe that Main High principal, C. W. Aycock, would have been oblivious to the students' plans. With knowledge of the students' intent to demonstrate in downtown Rome, it is conceivable that Aycock would have communicated with Jule Levin, President of the Rome-Floyd County Chamber of Commerce, who would then have judged whether or not to tip local law enforcement. Whatever occurred in regard to forewarnings about the sit-ins, Jule and Rose Levin, along with Franziska Boas, played roles in an "underground communication system" that

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<sup>141</sup> "Publisher Offers to Buy Swimming Pool in Albany" and "Mississippi Town Tense Over Racial Incidents," *Rome News-Tribune*, 28 March 1963.

<sup>142</sup> "Rome Jails 62 Teens in Sit-Ins," *Rome News-Tribune*, 29 March 1963, 1,9.

kept students' parents and principal Aycock informed of law enforcement's plans for dealing with students on the day of the sit-ins and arrests.

It is difficult to gauge the community's reaction to the students' protests. Editors of the paper granted that the sit-ins had been "quiet and orderly," but indicated no belief that they would lead to change, arguing that there was "no more inassailable [sic] right than that of a private businessman to conduct his affairs as he sees fit, serving or refusing service as he desires." With a nod toward civility, the paper noted that "police officers [had] performed an unpleasant duty [arresting the students] firmly but considerately" and they deserved "the commendation and support of the community."<sup>143</sup>

From the paper's coverage of the story, and from protesting students' version of jail time, it would seem that the sit-ins caused little interruption of life as usual in Rome aside from the parents' worries and local officials' efforts to contain the story. Frances Pauley's notes from a trip to Rome on the Monday after the sit-ins, however, describe the trip's purpose as being "to put out the fire." Notes also include her recollection that Rome city officials and the Chamber of Commerce thought that the Council on Human Relations "helped" in the situation and that the group's "public image greatly improved."<sup>144</sup>

Because the local paper also did not credit the Rome or Georgia Council with a role in negotiations over the students' arrests and the African American community's just grievance regarding segregated lunch counters, it is also difficult to gauge the average Roman's awareness of the Council's work or estimation of its value. Word of the Council's role in events such as the sit-ins did manage to spread throughout Rome and

<sup>143</sup> "Court Will Decide on Demonstrators," *Rome News-Tribune*, 31 March 1963, 4.

<sup>144</sup> Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations, 1962-1988," 4.

Floyd County. In mid-October of 1963, almost six months after sit-ins by Main High School students in downtown Rome had ended, the still fledging Rome Council on Human Relations met one night at a local church. Unbeknownst to them, members of the local Rome (White) Citizens Council waited outside the church with cameras. When members of the Council on Human Relations exited the church together in small groups, flashbulbs popped off around them as members of the Citizens Council snapped photographs of the interracial group.<sup>145</sup>

One week later, on October 22, segregationist restaurant owner Lester Maddox of Atlanta made a trip to Rome to speak to the local Citizens Council. Maddox had organized the Georgia Citizens Council and was infamous statewide for his vocal opposition to allowing African Americans to eat in his downtown Atlanta restaurant, the Pickrick. In addition to hearing Maddox deliver a talk about "Communistic interests" and their influence on racial trouble in the South and North, Rome Citizens Council members passed around the photographs they had taken that month of members of the Rome Council on Human Relations.<sup>146</sup> Because an article in the *Rome News-Tribune* had advertised that the meeting would be open to the public, one of the new members of the Council on Human Relations attended Maddox's talk and then introduced himself to the crowd as one of the persons in the photographs.

The "spoiler" at the Citizens Council meeting was Berry College's Director of Information, Max Schaible, a native of Kansas. Schaible and his wife, Barbara Schaible, had recently moved to Rome from Michigan, where Max Schaible had studied at the University of Michigan. While in Michigan, the Schaibles had become acquainted with

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<sup>145</sup> Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations," 5.

<sup>146</sup> "Maddox Hits Kennedy Regime as 'Renegades,'" *Rome News-Tribune*, 23 October 1963, 1.

one of Frances Pauley's daughters, who lived in Michigan with her husband. When the Schaibles had announced they were moving to Berry College in Rome, Georgia, Pauley's daughter encouraged them to contact her mother, whom she had explained worked in Rome and could get them involved in the Council on Human Relations.<sup>147</sup>

Members of the Citizens Council were less than pleased that Schaible had identified himself in such a fashion. A slight fight is said to have occurred. Soon thereafter, John Bertrand, President of Berry, began to receive threatening telephone calls urging him to discourage members of the Berry faculty from joining interracial organizations and involving themselves in the civil rights movement.<sup>148</sup>

Frances Pauley went to Rome to talk with Bertrand about how to handle the situation. She also met with the entire Rome Council, whom she believed would "stand firmly and not chicken" in the face of the Citizens Council threats. Tired of the telephone calls and feeling obligated to speak once again to the Berry faculty and student body, Bertrand delivered a speech on campus during the first week of November in which he defended the right of Berry College faculty and staff to participate in interracial activities and organizations. No demonstrations or violence occurred, but a member of the Citizens Council was present for the speech.<sup>149</sup>

Later in November, at the group's monthly meeting, Franziska Boas passed her responsibilities as chair of the Rome Council on to Max Schaible. However, circumstances and Boas' unique character made her last meeting as chair memorable. A group from the Citizens Council had gathered outside the church in which the Council on Human Relations was meeting. Motioning to the group, Boas invited them to enter the

<sup>147</sup> Interview with Barbara Schaible, 18 January 2002, telephone interview.

<sup>148</sup> Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations, 1962-1988," 5.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.



church. They did so but sat in the back. Not satisfied with this arrangement, Boas motioned again, welcomed them to the meeting, and insisted that they join the group in the front. After some reluctance, the white men of the Citizens Council gave in to Boas' encouragement and heightened tension in the room by joining the rest of the group in the front of the church.<sup>150</sup>

Those visitors never became members of the Council on Human Relations, but neither did any altercation occur. Boas conducted the meeting as if the men were supposed to be there. Because her political views, education, life experiences, and intellectual pursuits gave Boas a different perspective on how to deal with people, black and white, it might be said that her actions toward the Citizens Council members reveal more common sense than courage. However, the time and place in which the incident occurred made very real the possibility that someone could get hurt. Boas' show of "chutzpah" or utter nerve, then, in dealing with the segregationists inspired her fellow members of the biracial Council on Human Relations to increase their membership. Indeed, after this and the other incidents of resistance to their group from the Citizens Council, the Rome Council on Human Relations seemed to soar.

Perhaps the group had needed to feel opposition from within the community to understand itself, for little time had passed between the formation of the Rome Council on Human Relations in October 1961 and its role as a mediating force in Rome's first demonstrations of direct action protest against racial inequality at downtown lunch counters in early 1963. And yet, as the Rome Council sought to meet its purpose through the remainder of the 1960s—"to devise, develop, publicize, and execute techniques and programs which would promote good will and understanding and

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<sup>150</sup> Nasstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool*, 74.

counteract prejudice and discrimination based on racial, national, or ethnic group membership”—few citizens of Rome knew that it existed.

Romans' general lack of knowledge of the group may seem to indicate a lack of accomplishment on the part of the Council. However, it may also indicate members' willingness to work for results rather than publicity. Publicity, after all, could have undermined the goals of the organization. Whatever the level of awareness of the existence of the Rome Council on the part of black and white Romans in the early 1960s, there is little reason to doubt the importance of the organization to the members themselves. For many, and particularly for Rose Levin, life was enriched by the mere act of joining a group of social activists and taking a side in the South's struggle over "race" during the middle of the twentieth century.

## Conclusion

Remembering 1961, her first year as Executive Director of the Georgia Council on Human Relations, Frances Pauley said that she had particular reason to organize local Council chapters that year because "the movement was starting." To her, the civil rights movement was "not an organized effort of one person or a few people or a board's decision" but what seemed to be "a grassroots movement that was coming up all over the United States, and particularly all over the South." Somehow, for Pauley, 1961, a time when events, individuals, organizations, and coalitions converged in different locations to protest racial inequality in the South, marked the beginning of at least a new dimension of the movement in Georgia.<sup>151</sup>

Certainly 1961 was a remarkable year for members of the Rome Council on Human Relations. It was the time when members took the risk of formally organizing an interracial organization. Individually and collectively, Rome Council members saw beyond city boosters' claims or misguided beliefs that relations between the "races" were exceptionally good and sought, instead, to equalize educational and vocational opportunities for blacks and whites. Their work had implications beyond Rome, however, as they constituted supporters of the larger movement headed by black male leadership probably unaware of how the struggle for racial equality was developing in Rome. While Rome itself may have been off the radar screen of CORE and the SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference), its leaders were aware of the growth of

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<sup>151</sup> Nasstrom, *Everybody's Grandmother and Nobody's Fool*, 65-66.

groups such as the Georgia Council on Human Relations and its local chapters. There is even evidence that students from SNCC (the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) sent materials into Floyd County after the Main High students' sit-in protests.<sup>152</sup> Events in Rome, then, did make a difference as part of a groundswell of interest by African Americans and, sometimes, whites, in working toward racial equality in small southern towns and cities in the early 1960s South.

It is possible, though not certain, that the small Rome Council on Human Relations, as early as 1961, could honestly have made claim to "a good relationship between the races" in the midst of a monumental struggle for human rights that is only now beginning to be examined in all its dimensions by scholars. Men and women, black and white, southerners and northerners, church members and non-members, laborers and educators and concerned parents—individuals mentioned in the previous three chapters do not represent the entirety of the group's membership in its early days, nor they do fully represent the diversity of persons involved in the work. The story is really an unfolding mystery.

Though it may not figure prominently—or at all—into histories of Rome previously published or passed from one generation to another, the mystery is important to solve and share. For one thing, it promises to reveal the complicated nature of social change in places of any size or in any place. Events and personal experiences that led to the formation of the Rome Council, such as reactions to the public school crisis and the state's creation of the Sibley Commission, when viewed as background to human movements for social change, help us to consider the possible and far-reaching implications of seemingly unremarkable connections between individuals and

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<sup>152</sup> Bessie Munford, interview by author, March 31, 2002.

associations in and between communities of all sizes. Another key to the importance of the story lies in the example of collective action that it can be to people in Rome today. Finally, the story of Rome Council, when combined with other histories, both broad views and community studies, will help to answer Frances Pauley's call for a full and rich accounting of the grassroots civil rights movement in the South.

As for the work of the Rome Council on Human Relations beyond the early 1960s, little is documented and many details remain to be explored. Members and officers of the local chapter served as officers and board members in the larger Georgia Council throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In 1964, when the federal Civil Rights Act was passed, John Bertrand also announced to Berry College students and faculty that three African American students had been granted admission and would attend the school. Though three white students withdrew in the wake of the announcement, integration was successful and took place quietly.<sup>153</sup>

Rome and Floyd County public schools also began a slow process of integration the same year, but remained segregated at the high school level until 1969. According to Frances Pauley's records, several members of the Rome Council committed to learning about federally sponsored employment and welfare programs. Perhaps the local group put energy into economic and health issues by offering workshops on employment opportunities rather than working to quicken the pace of integration of Rome's public schools.<sup>154</sup>

In 1978, then-President of the Rome Council, John Lipscomb, reported to those present at the group's Annual Banquet that the Rome Council served "as a sort of cultural

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<sup>153</sup> Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations," 5-6.

<sup>154</sup> Pauley in Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations," 6.

bridge.” He went on to explain that the annual banquet was one example of how this bridge worked—“bringing [members] together in a comfortable, pleasant setting” where they shared food and fellowship.<sup>155</sup> The Rome Council may have been a bridge between some members of the black and white communities in Rome. Nonetheless, the city of Rome battled with the United States Department of Justice over alleged violations of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 in a dispute that also involved the State of Georgia and lasted from 1974 until 1980.<sup>156</sup>

The Rome Council remained organized until the 1980s, when membership slowly dissolved. Today, the group is revived, having reorganized in the late 1990s. It is possible that Frances Pauley’s memory of a movement that reached a new dimension in 1960 applies to Rome, Georgia. However, without the story of the formation and early work of the Rome Council on Human Relations, it might be difficult to imagine that the northwest Georgia town ever experienced a period of direct action protest or true biracial cooperation toward the goal of racial equality.

Whatever the group’s primary focus, the Rome Council has always been committed to increasing opportunities for young people. Beginning in 1963 and for the following decade, the group sponsored a local student’s participation in an annual international, interracial summer camp experience. Since at least 1971, the group has also sponsored two scholarships—one at Shorter College and the other at Berry. The

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<sup>155</sup> Bertrand, “Rome Council on Human Relations,” 12.

<sup>156</sup> The case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court where the City of Rome lost their argument, which was essentially a states’ rights argument. See Douglas and Doyle Mathis, *The Voting Rights Act and Rome (Georgia) City Elections*. Athens: Institute of Government, University of Georgia, 1981.

scholarships are awarded to students who "exemplify good race relations in their own lives and personal philosophies." Once again, the emphasis is on the personal.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Bertrand, "Rome Council on Human Relations," 12.

## APPENDIX A

# CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS RELATED TO THE STORY OF THE FORMATION AND EARLY WORK OF THE ROME (GEORGIA) COUNCIL ON HUMAN RELATIONS

1950 – Franziska Boas of New York City moves to Rome to teach modern dance at Shorter College.

1952 – Frances Pauley of Atlanta named state president of League of Women Voters of Georgia (LWVGA); LWVGA, including members of a local Rome chapter, lead successful fight against amendment to make the county-unit system part of Georgia's state constitution.

1954 – U.S. Supreme Court rules in case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas that segregated schools are unconstitutional; Marvin Griffin elected Governor of Georgia.

1956 – Georgia General Assembly passes resolution to impeach members of the U.S. Supreme Court for their ruling on the case of Brown v. Board of Education; John Bertrand named president of Berry College; he and Annabelle Bertrand move to Rome.

1957 – President Dwight Eisenhower calls federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas to intervene when violence erupts over nine African American students' attempts to integrate Central High School; Frances Pauley works for American Foundation for Political Education and organizes World Politics discussion groups in Rome.

1958 – Ernest Vandiver elected Governor of Georgia; Wealthy whites in Rome open a new academy, Thornwood School for Girls; Shorter College accepts male students for the first time.

1959 – Georgia General Assembly forms Committee on Schools, known as Sibley Commission; Help Our Public Education (HOPE), Inc. organized by moderate whites in Georgia to keep public schools open in face of threatened closure by state legislature.

1960 – Sibley Commission holds ten hearings across Georgia in March; Romans testify at Seventh District hearings in Cartersville, Georgia; African American college students



in Greensboro, North Carolina conduct first sit-ins at lunch counters and begin nationwide sit-in movement.

1961 – Protestors force John Bertrand to cancel April visit to Berry by African American students from Morehouse; Bertrand gives speech to Berry campus; Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) sponsored “Freedom Rides” through the South begin; Freedom Riders’ bus burned in Anniston, Alabama; Frances Pauley visits Rome to discuss formation of a Rome chapter of the Georgia Council on Human Relations; Rome Council on Human Relations organizes with Franziska Boas as first chairperson.

1962 – Albany movement in Southwest Georgia; hundreds demonstrate and Martin Luther King, Jr. is arrested but not allowed to serve his term; Albany Chief of Police, Laurie Pritchett, recognized all over the South for his strategies in dealing with civil rights demonstrators.

1963 – Rome Carnegie Library desegregated without public announcement; sixty-two Main High School arrested after conducting sit-ins at downtown lunch counters in Rome’s first experience of direct action protest by African Americans; confrontations between Rome (White) Citizens Council and Rome Council on Human Relations.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **FOUNDING MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES OF THE ROME (GEORGIA) COUNCIL ON HUMAN RELATIONS, 1961\***

C. W. Aycock, Principal, Main High School (Black)  
Annabelle Bertrand, artist, wife of president of Berry College (White)  
John Bertrand, President, Berry College (White)  
Franziska Boas, Instructor of Dance, Shorter College (White)  
Russell Daniel, rector, St. Peter's Episcopal Church (White)  
Beatrice Freeman, domestic worker in the home of John and Annabelle Bertrand (Black)  
William Gordon, Professor of English, Berry College (White)  
Martha Griffin, Instructor of Art, Shorter College (White)  
William C. Hoyt, Professor of Religion, Berry College (White)  
Mildred Knight, President, League of Women Voters of Rome (White)  
Jule Levin, President, Bd. of Directors, Rome-Floyd Co. Chamber of Commerce (White)  
Rose Levin, homemaker, wife of Jule Levin (White)  
Callie Martin, business owner (Black)  
Mae Parish, Instructor of Social Sciences, Berry College (White)  
Charlotte Vane, Professor of Music, Shorter College (White)  
Capus White, cook at Shorter College (Black)

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