

## Memory, History, and the Desegregation of Greenville, South Carolina

STEPHEN O'NEILL

Communities, like individuals, remember the past selectively. What a community remembers and what it chooses not to remember often reflect that community's self-identity in the present and its aspirations for the future.<sup>1</sup> The historical memory of the civil rights years in Greenville, South Carolina, recalls desegregation of public facilities and schools undertaken voluntarily on the part of the establishment, "integration with dignity," integration carried out carried out with "grace and style."<sup>2</sup> However, events reveal a different and more complex picture. Contrary to prevailing memories, the fight for equal rights was fraught with indignities for Greenville's blacks; and whites did not concede integration voluntarily. Racial change came to Greenville only at the insistence of local black protesters and under the coercion of federal courts. Only when every reasonable avenue of resistance was rendered hopeless did white civic leaders associated with the chamber of commerce enlist the support of their counterparts in the black community to protect Greenville's image and to try to assure a peaceful transition to a desegregated society. Greenville's white leaders were not always successful in their efforts to keep the peace; their efforts to protect the city's image as racially progressive, despite facts to the contrary, have fared better. Greenville was desegregated not by blacks and whites "working together for integration," as the title of a 1992 article by a participant in the chamber's biracial committee asserted. Rather, six lawsuits filed by local attorneys Willie T. Smith and Donald Sampson from 1960 to 1964 left white Greenville no choice but to bow to the inevitable.

On the eve of the civil rights movement, Greenville was a proud New South city that touted itself as the "Textile Capital of the World." In 1960 textiles made up more than one-half of the total value of products made in Greenville County, and textiles factories ringing the city employed twenty-one thousand when the total city population was a little more than fifty-eight thousand.<sup>3</sup> Greenville's

textile industry shaped not only the economy but also the values and attitudes of the city's civic, business, and political elite. Optimistic, energetic leaders took civic boosterism, common in many textile towns, to new heights. Although this boosterism often led businessmen to treat civic affairs as corporate enterprise, there is evidence to suggest that in doing so business leaders sincerely believed they could benefit all who lived in the community and at the same time improve their own prospects for wealth.<sup>4</sup> The merger of civic improvement with economic gain was augmented by a business leadership tied tightly together by interlocking directorates in the largest textile, banking, insurance, utility, and real estate companies in the county; and by a strong chamber of commerce that had served as the most powerful voice in civic matters since the early twentieth century.

During the first half of the twentieth century, race and class tensions had, at times, threatened the business elite's vision of Greenville as a progressive New South city and a smart place to invest. These pre-civil rights decades had also established the racial and social dynamic that further unfolded during the 1960s. Before the fight for desegregation began in earnest, a black population roughly one-third of the total in the city and less than 20 percent in the county confronted political and economic impoverishment with efforts that were game for the fight but ultimately overmatched.<sup>5</sup> In 1930 J. A. Brier and William Anderson established an NAACP branch that by the end of the decade had made some progress with a voter registration drive.<sup>6</sup> Two other institutions worked within the segregated and white-dominated system to improve education and cultural life for blacks. Sterling Industrial School, founded by D. M. Minus in 1902, was dedicated to "the intellectual, industrial and religious training of the boys and girls of the Negro race." The Phillis Wheatley Association, established by Hattie Logan Duckett in 1919, served as a community center for blacks.<sup>7</sup>

A white population that was strictly divided by class reacted to black efforts at uplift and self-improvement in two different ways. Mill workers, threatened in their social standing by every advance made by blacks, resorted to violence or threats of violence against blacks.<sup>8</sup> Klan demonstrations swelled in the 1920s in Greenville, and in the 1930s the Klan struck violently against interracial labor groups and against the NAACP voter registration campaign.<sup>9</sup> Greenville's reputation was also stained by five lynchings between 1905 and 1933.<sup>10</sup> At the other end of the economic ladder, the white establishment, fearing these violent reactions to black efforts at advancement but also embracing black uplift as beneficial to the New South economy, sought to control black efforts and coopt black institutions. In 1923 Thomas F. Parker, owner of sixteen cotton mills and the South's foremost advocate of corporate-run welfare programs for workers, cited the dangerous "fears and prejudices" of the "unthinking white population" when he persuaded the chamber of commerce to take over the Phillis Wheatley Association. The chamber replaced the all-black board of trustees with a mixed board

having, according to the bylaws, "a majority of white members and white officers." Immediately the association published a revised statement of its aims, including the assertion, "We do not believe in the social equality of the races, as possible or desirable."<sup>11</sup> In 1929 Sterling Industrial School also lost its independence when the city board of education took over its operation, reflecting a statewide trend of converting private black schools to public.<sup>12</sup>

The Willie Earle lynching in 1947 seemed to confirm the powerlessness of blacks in Greenville and the divided racial attitudes of Greenville's white citizens. In February a white mob lynched Earle, a black suspected of murdering a white cabdriver. Thirty-one men confessed and were indicted. In May a jury of twelve white males—nine mill workers, one farmer, and two salesmen—acquitted the defendants on all counts. Prominent Greenville citizens reacted with dismay, although years later Schaefer Kendrick, at the time a young lawyer observing the case, admitted that "the real concern, deep down, of the white group, of which I was a part, was the effect the Earle lynching and resulting trial would have on Greenville's image as a progressive, cultural, growing city of the New South."<sup>13</sup>

In the 1950s the *Brown* decision and South Carolina's massive resistance forcefully and continuously pushed race to the forefront of Greenville's attention. Throughout the decade the city's morning daily, the *Greenville News*, mounted vigorous opposition to the *Brown* decision and racial change in general. The *News* had been founded by textile pioneer Ellison A. Smyth in 1874 and remained closely associated with the textile industry. In 1954 the *News's* editor, Wayne C. Freeman, accepted the position of secretary of the South Carolina Segregation Committee, unofficially known as the Gressette Committee after state senator Marion Gressette, who chaired the group. Freeman remained in both positions throughout the civil rights years.<sup>14</sup> As editor Freeman defended segregation "as morally right, legally right, and necessary for the preservation of peace and good order."<sup>15</sup> The *News* also urged only "substantial citizens" and "business and professional men" to lead the state's resistance to integration while warning of the dangers of the Klan's tendency toward violence.<sup>16</sup> In light of later developments it is important to note that Freeman's editorials also rejected President Dwight Eisenhower's recommendation that southern states and cities establish biracial committees to solve the region's racial problems. The *News* called such committees "useless" because agitation had narrowed any middle ground "to the point of disappearance."<sup>17</sup>

Despite the heightened rhetoric in the *News*, Greenville in the 1950s managed to deflect negative publicity over racial issues. In 1956 the nation's most popular magazine, *Life*, published a collection of articles on race relations in five southern cities. The article on Greenville, titled "No Trouble Here Unless . . .," was generally positive. It quoted Mayor Kenneth Cass: "there's always been a good feeling in the race situation." The mayor did not expect that to change "unless an agitator comes in and stirs it up."<sup>18</sup>

Economic growth seemed to confirm the mayor's optimism. In the 1950s Greenville experienced strong industrial growth, prompting Charles E. Daniel, a construction magnate and Greenville's leading proponent of economic development, to call reports to the contrary "substantially propaganda" from northern competitors.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, Klan activity and racial violence in the area rose precipitously in 1956 and 1957.<sup>20</sup>

In 1959 an episode at the airport in Greenville initiated a series of direct action protests and federal lawsuits that chased Jim Crow from Greenville. Over the course of the next eleven years the white establishment in Greenville moved from vocal and massive opposition to quiet but ineffective resistance, and finally, to self-interested and begrudging compliance. With each new episode, the Greenville establishment steadfastly refused to acknowledge any justice behind civil rights changes, citing only practicality and the need to maintain law and order.

The airport incident involved Richard Henry, a civilian employee of the Air Force from Michigan, who was forcibly removed from the "white" waiting room at the airport in February 1959. Henry retained attorneys Lincoln Jenkins of Columbia and Willie T. Smith of Greenville to sue the Municipal Airport Authority. While the Henry case was pending, in October 1959, baseball star Jackie Robinson, visiting Greenville to speak at a national NAACP conference, encountered similar treatment, drawing national attention to Greenville's Jim Crow system. On January 1, 1960, Greenville's branch of the NAACP organized a march of 250 people at the airport to protest the "stigma, the inconvenience, and the stupidity of racial segregation." The plaintiff Henry suffered an initial setback in the federal court of Judge George Bell Timmerman, where the judge ruled "the right to equality before the law . . . invests no one with the authority to require others to accept him as a companion or social equal." However, Henry won his case on appeal, and the Greenville Airport desegregated under court order on February 20, 1961.<sup>21</sup>

Although the march at the airport had been organized and led by adults, students and recent graduates from Sterling High School carried out direct action protests over the course of the next two years. The arrests of the students by Greenville authorities and successful court challenges to those arrests would be the chief force in desegregating Greenville. In March 1960, inspired by Jackie Robinson's example, the airport march, and lunch counter sit-ins then sweeping the South, black students from Sterling attempted to use Greenville's main library. On their second "study-in," seven were arrested. By July local lawyers Willie T. Smith and Donald Sampson had filed suit against the city of Greenville and the library board of trustees. Joining Smith and Sampson were the high-powered and high-profile duo of Jack Greenberg and Thurgood Marshall of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund as well as Matthew J. Perry, state counsel for the NAACP.<sup>22</sup>

On September 2, after the attorneys for the plaintiffs filed for a temporary injunction to allow blacks to use the library, the board voted to close all branches of the library system. On September 15 Federal Judge C. C. Wyche then used the closings as a basis to deny the plaintiffs' request for the temporary injunction. Within a week, however, the library reopened on a nondiscriminatory basis, and Wyche declared the case moot.<sup>23</sup> By the time the threat of federal action had forced the desegregation of the library, sit-in protesters had begun to target downtown lunch counters, and racial violence broke out on Greenville's streets. On July 21, 1960, a brawl erupted following a sit-in at Kress's lunch counter. The melee involved more than thirty white and black teenagers and ranged over an entire block. Over the course of the next week blacks and whites clashed, exchanging gunfire, rocks, and bottles.<sup>24</sup> The city council responded with a 9:00 P.M. curfew on persons under twenty years of age. The sit-ins continued into August, when the first lunch counter arrests were made.<sup>25</sup> Early in 1961 youthful demonstrators targeted the whites-only skating rink operated by the city's Parks and Recreation Department. Again protesters were arrested. As a result of the arrests at the lunch counter and the skating rink, attorneys Smith and Sampson defended those charged with violating Greenville's segregation ordinance and sought to overturn the laws on constitutional grounds.<sup>26</sup>

In 1961, as the cases were pending, the threat of economic sanctions by the executive branch of the federal government pushed Greenville's business elite to weigh profits against the continuation of segregation. In April 1961 the President's Committee on Equal Employment announced that it would suspend contracts to South Carolina textile plants practicing segregation, and Vice President Lyndon Johnson announced that every future federal contract would contain a nondiscrimination clause.<sup>27</sup> A few months later, on July 1, 1961, at the Watermelon Festival in Hampton, South Carolina, Charles Daniel made what would become perhaps the most influential speech of the civil rights era in South Carolina. Daniel, a Greenville resident, was the most powerful economic voice in the state and a major influence in politics as well. A former U.S. senator and a current member of the State Development Board, Daniel was chiefly responsible for recruiting business and investment to the state from the north and overseas. His company, Daniel Construction, had built more than 400 industrial facilities, more than 240 in South Carolina. His widely publicized speech was titled "South Carolina's Economic Challenge" but quickly came to be known as the "Watermelon Speech."<sup>28</sup>

Daniel asserted that economic circumstances demanded white South Carolinians "forsake some of our ways." He urged economic and political leaders to "handle [the desegregation issue] ourselves . . . or it will be forced upon us in the harshest way. Either we act on our own terms, or we forfeit the right to act." He reminded listeners of the new antidiscrimination laws written into federal contracts and emphasized that the time had come for whites to abandon past

"pattern[s] of inaction."<sup>29</sup> Daniel's speech, in the words of one Greenville textile man, "gave the blessing of the establishment to desegregation."<sup>30</sup>

That may well have been true, but in 1961 with two pending court cases seeking the desegregation of lunch counters and city parks and with local schools still completely segregated more than seven years after the *Brown* decision, the white establishment took no practical steps toward racial change. In the fall of 1962 the explosion of violence at Ole Miss over the enrollment of James Meredith prompted Greenville's civic leaders to take the first tentative steps to follow Daniel's advice of abandoning their "pattern of inaction." In the wake of the rioting and death at Ole Miss, the Reverend John Haley of Westminster Presbyterian Church approached textile magnate Arthur Magill and remarked, "We can't allow Greenville to burn like Mississippi." "No, we can't," answered Magill.<sup>31</sup> In the fall of 1962 the two men organized a meeting of some one hundred white bankers, lawyers, textile executives, and other businessmen to formulate a plan of coping with racial changes facing Greenville. That group decided to form a biracial committee under sponsorship of the chamber of commerce, with an equal number of black and white members chosen by the chamber.<sup>32</sup>

As the biracial committee was being organized, however, three court decisions forced sweeping changes on Greenville. First, on October 19, 1962, Federal District Judge C. C. Wyche ruled on the skating rink case. "It is, of course, now well settled that enforced racial segregation in the public parks of a city is unconstitutional. . . . the plaintiffs had the right to use both skating rinks on an equal basis with white citizens." However, since both skating rinks had been permanently closed by the city council, the case was declared moot.<sup>33</sup> In 1963 the city quietly dropped its policy of segregation in parks, but it never reopened its skating rinks. Next, in January 1963 a state circuit court declared unconstitutional a city law prohibiting blacks from living on residential city blocks deemed "white." That case began in June 1962, when a black man, Noigra Yarn, was arrested twice in his own house for violating the law. He had been convicted in city court before his appeal.<sup>34</sup> The third decision in this seven-month span was Greenville's most significant civil rights case. On May 20, 1963, the United States Supreme Court struck down lunch counter segregation in Greenville and throughout the South. *Peterson v. Greenville* originated in August 1960, when fourteen Sterling High students, including James R. Peterson, had been arrested at the Kress lunch counter on Main Street. Their convictions in city court were upheld upon appeal in both state circuit court and the South Carolina Supreme Court. Lawyers Perry and Smith had argued the case before the nation's high court in November 1962.<sup>35</sup> At the time of the *Peterson* decision, the issue of lunch counter segregation had been before the city's politicians and its business establishment for three years, and, since November Supreme Court arguments in the case, white Greenville had faced the likelihood that desegregation would once again be



forced upon the city by the federal government. Still, white Greenville maintained its "pattern of inaction."

Only in the wake of *Peterson*, the fifth court case in three years forcing desegregation specifically in Greenville, did the city government and white business leaders react. The city council rescinded Greenville's segregation laws, and the chamber's biracial committee carefully arranged for black and white diners to eat together at selected restaurants, working behind the scenes to prepare proprietors and to minimize disruptions.<sup>36</sup> In the spring of 1964 the biracial committee targeted theaters and motels. Black patrons chosen by the committee carried out a gradual desegregation plan over the course of six weeks at preselected establishments. The plan nearly came unhinged when fifteen blacks not affiliated with the chamber sought lodging in the Downtowner Motor Inn. When they were denied rooms, one of the group demanded, "Why don't you people go ahead and cooperate with us instead of waiting and letting the government put a gun to your head." Greenville's Innkeepers' Association, offended by the episode, threatened to back out of ongoing discussions with the biracial committee. Negotiations resulted in the innkeepers agreeing to accept blacks on a limited basis only. The committee assented.<sup>37</sup> Two months after the agreement was reached, the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 effectively outlawed discrimination in public accommodations. The committee's focus for the rest of the year and in 1965 would be on employment opportunities for blacks and on removing offensive Jim Crow signs in public places.<sup>38</sup>

The biracial committee helped to ease Greenville's transition to a desegregated society; however, two of its ground rules guaranteed that the group would not act as an agent of real change. First, it operated under a strict "no publicity rule." This policy reflected the argument that more progress could be made working behind the scenes and that a low profile would avoid "chaos and discord" that might threaten "law and order and the good name of the community."<sup>39</sup> However, the policy also assured that the chamber of commerce, one of the most traditionally influential voices in Greenville civic affairs, an organization comprising the city's most powerful citizens, would be unable to affect attitudes or shape public opinion. The second operating procedure that undermined the committee's effectiveness was the decision to take the issue of school desegregation off the table for discussion.<sup>40</sup> Since the *Brown* decision, school desegregation had been the South's most volatile civil rights issue. By the time, the Biracial Committee had formed, every southern state but South Carolina had desegregated its schools. Moreover, by 1964 desegregation in nearly every other phase of public life was a *fait accompli* in Greenville. The school issue was looming and demanded the best efforts of the best people in the community. The biracial committee's inactivity helped assure that the last phase of desegregation in Greenville, the most difficult one, would yet again be carried out under federal compulsion.

Greenville County schools were desegregated over a six-year period, from 1964 to 1970, as a result of a locally initiated federal lawsuit and two sweeping Supreme Court decisions that originated elsewhere. During this period the all-white school board, with the overwhelming support of the city and county politicians, businesspeople, and the *Greenville News*, fought to keep blacks out of white schools. When that proved futile, the board sought to limit black student transfers to the minimum that would satisfy federal mandates. However, in that effort the board miscalculated, and in 1970 a Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling forced a midyear dismantling of Greenville's dual system of schools for blacks and whites.

On August 19, 1963, A. J. Whittenberg, a black gas station owner, filed suit to desegregate Greenville's schools after the superintendent of schools denied transfer requests for his daughter Elaine and five other black children to attend white schools. Just three days later, federal judge Robert Martin Jr., a native Greenvillian, ordered the desegregation of Charleston's schools in *Brown v. School District 20*, a case with similar facts to those in Greenville. Nevertheless, the Greenville County School District contested Whittenberg's suit, seeking a dismissal. In March 1964 Judge Martin denied that motion and offered the school district's lawyers thirty days to reconsider the transfer requests and to formulate a policy on future applications.<sup>41</sup> A month later Martin issued a consent order admitting the students and accepting the school board's new policy for "enrollment, assignment, and transfer of pupils without regard to race, creed, or color."<sup>42</sup>

Judge Martin's consent decree came to be known as the "freedom-of-choice" plan. It was used in Greenville County and throughout the state until 1970.<sup>43</sup> In practice the freedom-of-choice plan maintained the dual racial school system and gave the school board control over the pace of desegregation. Freedom of choice also placed the burden for desegregation on black parents and children. Every summer black parents who wanted their children to transfer to white-majority schools would have to apply to the board, which would then accept or reject the request. In the first year, 1964, 55 of 75 applications were approved.<sup>44</sup> For the 1965–1966 school year, 146 black student transfers were granted out of 260 requests.<sup>45</sup> In 1967 the United States Department of Health Education and Welfare, acting under the authority of Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, declared that Greenville's school board was moving too slowly and threatened to cut off federal funds.<sup>46</sup> White citizens reacted by drawing up a list of complaints concerning the consequences of forced integration.<sup>47</sup> Before the school board could effectively respond to the HEW's demands, in May 1968 the Supreme Court, in *Green v. New Kent County*, found freedom of choice an ineffective means of integrating schools and demanded that school boards immediately create plans to dismantle dual racial school systems where they existed.<sup>48</sup>

In light of the *Green* ruling, Greenville's school board was required to submit a revised plan of desegregation to Judge Martin. It proposed maintaining freedom of choice through the 1969–1970 school year and creating a unitary, non-racial system beginning with the 1970–1971 school year, a full two years after the Supreme Court in *Green* ordered school districts to act “now.”<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, in July 1969 Judge Martin accepted the revised plan.<sup>50</sup> Within three months, however, the school board's plan was effectively rendered unconstitutional. In *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education*, a unanimous Supreme Court proclaimed, “The obligation of every school district is to terminate dual systems at once and to operate now and hereafter only unitary systems.” That case involved thirty-three school districts in Mississippi that, like Greenville, had postponed compliance with the *Green* decision.<sup>51</sup> Now in light of the *Alexander* decision, attorneys for Whittenberg appealed Judge Martin's acceptance of the school board's plan for delay. On January 19, 1970, Clement Furman Haynesworth, a Greenville native and presiding judge in the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, was “left with no discretion” and therefore ordered Greenville's dual system dismantled by February 16, 1970. The school system could devise its own plan or accept one imposed by the court or HEW.<sup>52</sup> Greenville's fight to contain desegregation was over.

The school board had delayed integration for seven years since the *Whittenberg* case had first been filed (or sixteen if one counts back to *Brown*), but now chafed that the law “could be imposed with such brutal unconcern for the consequences.” Nevertheless, the school board submitted, and the court accepted, a plan that would transfer twelve thousand of the fifty-eight thousand pupils in the system and five hundred faculty in seeking to achieve an 80/20 white to black ratio in all schools.<sup>53</sup> It was a logistical challenge of epic proportions in one of the largest school districts in the nation. The reaction of the community to the court order and the plan was mixed. The chamber's biracial committee, though still in operation, had atrophied; and in the 1970 crisis it stayed true to its policy of noninvolvement in school desegregation.<sup>54</sup> The *News* denounced the courts' orders as “absurd” but urged compliance to maintain the peace.<sup>55</sup> Leading Greenville's efforts for peaceful compliance with the federal mandate was the citizens' committee of the Greenville County School District, a group of thirty black and white men and women, who took the lead tackling both logistical matters and public relations involved in the transition. Ernest E. Harrill, a political science professor at Furman University, chaired the citizens' committee. Adopting the slogan “Education Is the Important Thing,” Harrill's committee enlisted the support of the chamber of commerce, and a number of members of the citizens' committee were former or current members of the chamber's biracial committee.<sup>56</sup> The crisis spawned opposition as well. The Citizens for Freedom of Choice, led by R. L. Eskew, raised \$2,500 and organized a rally of three thousand people.<sup>57</sup> The Citizens' Committee to Prevent Busing, led by Carroll Campbell

(future governor of South Carolina), organized a motorcade to the statehouse in Columbia on January 25. Campbell claimed more than three thousand cars participated in the protest.<sup>58</sup>

As the court-imposed deadline approached, the national media attention grew intense; however, except for a few minor glitches, the transition day itself, February 17, 1970, went off with little trouble. *The CBS Evening News*, UPI, the *New York Times*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, the *Mexico City Daily Bulletin*, the *Charlotte Observer*, and a host of other media outlets covered the story, generally applauding Greenville as a city whose “compliance [with the law] contrasted sharply” with other southern cities.<sup>59</sup> CBS anchor Walter Cronkite, as well as many of the newspaper journalists, quoted Ernest Harrill to characterize the desegregation of Greenville's schools: “we did what we had to do but the people have done it with grace and style.”<sup>60</sup>

Unfortunately the “grace and style” of February 17 contrasted sharply with underlying aspects of the school district's desegregation plan. Most of the formerly all-black schools were closed or demoted from high schools to junior highs. For example, Sterling High and Lincoln High, the flagship schools of black Greenville, were both shut down in 1970. Blacks also bore the brunt of transfers and busing. Sixty percent of the district's 11,600 blacks were reassigned, but only 10 percent of the 46,400 whites were transferred. Blacks also shouldered 75 percent of the busing burden.<sup>61</sup> Black principals and head coaches were forced into assistant roles much more frequently than their white counterparts.<sup>62</sup>

In the fall of 1970, once the spotlight of the national media had dimmed, unresolved complaints and festering discontent exploded in racial fights and riots in several schools. Shots were fired at one, and tear gas and state troopers were required at two more. More than three hundred students were eventually suspended, and several were arrested.<sup>63</sup> *U.S. News and World Report* was one of the few national media outlets to return to Greenville to examine what had gone wrong. It reported that “stunned school officials are groping for answers.” For Ernest Harrill, the man who had coined the phrase “integration with grace and style,” the answer was not hard to discern. He explained the unrest simply: “Sad to say, we've been moved only by the law and not by our own spirit.”<sup>64</sup>

Moved by law, Greenville's white leadership was indeed moved by law: law challenged by the civil disobedience of young protestors; law argued by attorneys Smith and Sampson, Perry, Marshall, and Greenberg; law overturned in federal courts. White Greenville was also moved by sincere concern for the community and its reputation. And because reputation was closely tied to an inviting climate for business investment, Greenville was moved by a concern for money. White Greenville was not moved by a desire for justice or a spirit of equality.

Since 1970 participants in the desegregation of Greenville have recounted these events in oral histories, for newspaper retrospectives, in masters' theses, in unpublished memoirs, in widely circulated articles for the general public, in



public forums sponsored by civic organizations, and no doubt in hundreds if not thousands of personal conversations.<sup>65</sup> These memories reflect a great divide in the recollections of black and white Greenvillians. Blacks recall the arrests, the resistance of the white establishment, the court victories, the indignities they faced in fighting for rights guaranteed by the Constitution. Whites usually remember "working together for integration," the interracial cooperation of the chamber of commerce committee, the "grace and style" of the enormous effort to dismantle peacefully an old system of racially divided schools in order to build a new racially unified system. These memories of white Greenville and especially the memories of chamber's biracial committee have formed the basis for most written accounts of the events. For whites looking back there is a feeling of self-congratulation that is incomprehensible to blacks who lived through that period. Perhaps Greenville's tradition of civic boosterism compels whites to remember selectively and to mythologize those events in ways that continue to enhance Greenville's reputation as a good place to live and invest. On the other hand, ongoing racial tensions in Greenville during the post-civil rights years remind us that selective memories and self-serving myths are a poor foundation on which to build a community of justice and equality.<sup>66</sup>

## Notes

1. For an insightful examination of collective memory and southern history, see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

2. Both of these phrases originated contemporaneously with events; however, each has been employed multiple times since then to characterize civil rights in Greenville, the Upstate, and, inexplicably, the entire state. The former phrase was first used by George McMillan in "Integration with Dignity: The Inside Story of How South Carolina Kept the Peace," *Saturday Evening Post*, March 16, 1963, 16–21. McMillan's article described the efforts by state and college officials to desegregate peacefully Clemson College in January 1963. Dr. Ernest E. Harrill, faculty member at Furman University and a leader in the effort to dismantle peacefully Greenville's dual school system, coined the latter phrase. The phrase was repeated by Walter Cronkite in his report on *The CBS Evening News* on February 17, 1970, and subsequently by the *New York Times*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Washington Post*, and *Newsweek*. For historical accounts that have used those terms or asserted the interpretation that Greenville desegregated voluntarily, see Keith Morris, "Desegregation with Dignity: Those Who Made It Work in Greenville—in Their Own Words," *Upcountry Review* (Fall 1999): 28–51; Betty Stall, "With Grace and Style: The Desegregation of the Greenville County Schools in 1970," *Proceedings and Papers of the Greenville County Historical Society* 9 (1990–1991): 80–92; Robert Hart, "Amend or Defend: The End of Jim Crow in Greenville and Charleston" (M.A. thesis, Clemson University, 1997); Alfred L. Burgess, "Working Together for Integration," *Carologue: Bulletin of the South Carolina Historical Society* 8 (Winter 1992) 7, 14. For a similar interpretation of the desegregation of the state as a whole, see John Sproat, "Firm Flexibility: Perspectives on Desegregation in South Carolina," in *New Perspectives on Race and Slavery in America: Essays in Honor of Kenneth M. Stampp*, ed. Robert H. Abzug and Stephen E. Maizlish (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1986), 164–84; and Walter B. Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South

Carolina Press, 1998), 538–41. For a less sanguine view of events see Archie Vernon Huff Jr., *Greenville: The History of the City and County in the South Carolina Piedmont* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 401–6. Tomiko Brown Hall's "'Moved by Law and Not by Spirit': Public School Desegregation in Greenville, S.C." (independent study, Furman University, 1990), which is in my possession, argues persuasively that whites conceded little voluntarily on civil rights in Greenville and the state. The ideas behind the present work first started germinating for me when I moderated a symposium titled "'We Were There' . . . Integration of Greenville County Schools," sponsored by the Historic Greenville Foundation on March 19, 2002. I was struck by the very different viewpoints that black and white panelists held concerning the desegregation of Greenville's schools.

3. Cliff Sloan and Bob Hall, "'It's Good to be Home in Greenville' . . . but It's Better If You Hate Unions," *Southern Exposure* 7 (Spring 1979): 88.

4. See Broadus Mitchell, *Rise of Cotton Mills in the South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1921); David Carlton, *Mill and Town in South Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 33–38, 61–74.

5. U.S. Census, 1950, charts 40–23 and 40–25.

6. Edwin D. Hoffman, "The Genesis of the Modern Movement for Equal Rights in South Carolina, 1930–1939," *Journal of Negro History* 44 (October 1959): 356, 366–367.

7. Sterling High Clipping File, South Carolina Room, Greenville County Library; Huff, *Greenville*, 257, 272; I. A. Newby, *Black Carolinians: A History of Blacks in South Carolina from 1895 to 1968* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1973), 229–32.

8. See Bryant Simon, *A Fabric of Defeat: The Politics of South Carolina Millhands, 1910–1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 4–35. Simon offers a more complex explanation of the nature of threats that black advancement represented to white mill workers. He argues that black initiatives threatened white workers' masculinity and sense of independence as well as white supremacy and economic standing.

9. Huff, *Greenville*, 323–25; Hoffman, "Genesis of the Modern Movement," 353, 355–56, 361, 366, 368; *Greenville News*, April 3, 1925; May 6, 1926; June 16, 1931; July 7, 1939.

10. Huff, *Greenville*, 356; *Greenville News*, November 30, 1933.

11. *Greenville News*, December 30, 1923.

12. Sterling High Clipping File; Huff, *Greenville*, 356.

13. Schaefer Kendrick, "What Kind of Place Was Greenville in 1947?," *Carologue: Bulletin of the South Carolina Historical Society* 8 (Winter 1992): 14.

14. Andrew M. Secrest, "In Black and White: Press Opinions and Race Relations in South Carolina, 1954–1964" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1974), 33–39.

15. *Greenville News*, June 7, 1960.

16. *Greenville News*, August 9, 17, 1955.

17. *Greenville News*, January 23, 1955; September 20, 1955.

18. "No Trouble Here Unless . . .," *Life*, September 17, 1956, 109–10.

19. *Southern School News*, May 1956, 14.

20. *Greenville News*, January 22, 1956; March 3, 1956; June 16, 1956; August 19, 1956; July 27, 1957.

21. Samuel L. Zimmerman, *Negroes in Greenville, 1970: An Exploratory Approach* (Greenville: South Carolina Tricentennial, 1970), 31–32; *State*, January 2, 1960; Huff, *Greenville*, 400–402; *Henry v. Greenville Airport Commission*, 175 F. Supp. 343 (D.C. W.D.S.C. 1959).

22. *Greenville News*, March 2, 1960; *Greenville Piedmont*, July 16, 1960; Zimmerman, *Negroes in Greenville*, 25–26.

23. *Greenville News*, September 3, 19, 1960.

24. *Greenville News*, July 19, 22, 26, 1960.
25. *Greenville News*, August 3, 10, 12, 1960.
26. Zimmerman, *Negroes in Greenville*, 25–26; *Peterson v. Greenville*, 239 S.C. 298 (S.C. Sup. Ct. 1961).
27. *Greenville News*, April 14, 26, 1961.
28. C. R. Canup and W. D. Workman Jr., *Charles E. Daniel: His Philosophy and Legacy* (Columbia: R. L. Bryan, 1981), 75; Hart, “Amend or Defend,” 35–36; McMillan, “Integration with Dignity,” 16–19.
29. Canup and Workman, *Charles E. Daniel*, 182–83.
30. The quote is from Yancey Gilkerson, interview with Robert Hart, January 15, 1997; Hart, “Amend or Defend,” 36.
31. Hart, “Amend or Defend,” 41; Morris, “Desegregation with Dignity,” 28.
32. Yancey Gilkerson, “The Greater Greenville Chamber of Commerce Biracial Committee, 1961–1969” (Unpublished manuscript in File Box: “Chamber of Commerce Biracial Committee,” South Carolina Room, Greenville County Library); Morris, “Desegregation with Dignity,” 28–44; Burgess, “Working Together for Integration,” 14–15.
33. *Walker v. Shaw*, 209 F. Supp. 569 (1962); *Greenville News*, October 20, 1962.
34. *Greenville News*, January 16, 1963.
35. *Greenville News*, June 21, 28, 1963; Zimmerman, *Negroes in Greenville*, 29–30; *Peterson v. Greenville*, 373 U.S. 244 (1963).
36. *Greenville News*, May 29, 1963; June 4, 1963; Gilkerson, “Greater Greenville Chamber of Commerce,” 7–9.
37. Gilkerson, “Greater Greenville Chamber of Commerce,” 9.
38. *Ibid.*, 11.
39. “Policy Statement of Greater Greenville Chamber of Commerce Biracial Committee,” July 1, 1963, File Box: Chamber of Commerce Biracial Committee, South Carolina Room, Greenville County Library.
40. Gilkerson, “Greater Greenville Chamber of Commerce,” 6.
41. *Greenville News*, March 20, 1964.
42. *Ibid.*, April 14, 28, 1964.
43. Paul Wesley McNeill, “School Desegregation in South Carolina, 1963–1970” (EdD thesis, University of Kentucky, 1979), 50–56; William Bagwell, *School Desegregation in the Carolinas: Two Case Studies* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), 175–84.
44. *Southern School News*, July–August 1964.
45. Bagwell, *School Desegregation in the Carolinas*, 183–84.
46. *New York Times*, March 12, 1967.
47. *Greenville Piedmont*, March 22, 1967.
48. *Green v. New Kent County*, 391 U.S. 430 (1968); James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 146–48.
49. The decision read in part, “The burden is on a school board to provide a plan that promises realistically to work now, and a plan that at this late date fails to provide meaningful assurance of prompt and effective disestablishment of a dual system is intolerable” (emphasis in the original document). *Green v. New Kent County*, 391 U.S. 430 (1968).
50. *Greenville News*, July 1969.
51. *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education*, 396 U.S. 19 (1969).
52. *Whittenberg v. Greenville*, 424 F.2d 195 (1970).
53. “Proposed Plan,” School District of Greenville South Carolina, January 23, 1970. Copy at the school district office.

54. Gilkerson, “Greater Greenville Chamber of Commerce,” 25–27.
55. *Greenville News*, February 7, 1970.
56. Gilkerson, “Greater Greenville Chamber of Commerce,” 5–20; *Greenville Piedmont*, January 31, 1970.
57. Donald Gordon and William Lavery, “Timeline of Greenville’s School Desegregation” (n.d.). Dr. Ernest E. Harrill Private Papers (hereafter Harrill Papers).
58. “All Desegregation Orders Obeyed—Then, School Chaos in Greenville, S.C.,” *U.S. News and World Report*, December 7, 1970, 26; *Greenville News*, January 26, 1970.
59. The list of media coverage comes from Stall, “With Grace and Style,” 90. The quote is from the *New York Times*, February 18, 1970.
60. Ernest Harrill, letter to Greenville community on behalf of the Citizens’ Committee thanking Greenville for peace during February desegregation, Harrill Papers.
61. Zimmerman, *Negroes in Greenville*, 11; *Greenville News*, February 17, 1980; Stall, “With Grace and Style,” 83.
62. “Grievances from Black Educators,” Harrill Papers.
63. “All Desegregation Orders Obeyed,” 26; *Greenville News*, November 7, 18, 19, 1970.
64. Hall, “Moved by Law,” 35; Harrill’s quote originally published in John Egerton, *The Americanization of Dixie: The Southernization of America* (New York: Harper’s Magazine Press, 1974), 87.
65. In addition to the publications listed in note 1, I am also referring to interviews in an ongoing oral history project by the History Museum of the Upcountry. Those transcripts will be available to the public when the history museum opens. The white attitude of voluntary integration through cooperation is also reflected in many of the more than a dozen interviews with participants in Greenville’s civil rights events conducted by Furman students in the fall of 1999. Those tapes are in my possession. Conflicting points of view are also reflected in a series of *Greenville News* articles published in May 2000. The series was titled “Lost Dreams: Desegregation Thirty Years Later,” May 28–30, 2000. Dueling perspectives on Greenville’s civil rights history were also reflected in a panel, “The History of Integration at Furman in Context,” during the symposium “Race, Religion, and the Liberal Arts: The History of Furman in Context.” The symposium was held at Furman University, April 29–May 1, 2002. A symposium titled “We Were There . . . Integration of Greenville County Schools” sponsored by the Historic Greenville Foundation on March 19, 2002, reflected considerable disagreement along the lines I have described. Civil rights events were also depicted in an exhibition at the Greenville Cultural Exchange Center, “Civil Rights Movement in Greenville,” which ran from September 2000 through January 2001. Finally, for some recent opinions or assertions that reiterate the “grace and style” interpretation, see David Shi, “Greenville Risks Setback on Race,” *Greenville News*, February 22, 2003; Dale Perry, “From Indian Hunting Grounds to Textile Center, Greenville Goes International,” *Greenville News*, May 5, 2002. Clemson English professor Keith Morris’s “Desegregation with Dignity: Those Who Made It Work in Greenville—in Their Own Words,” published in the *Upcountry Review* in 1999 (see endnote 1), is the most comprehensive report of how whites remember their roles in civil rights.
66. Racial tensions in the post-civil rights years are seen most clearly in NAACP complaints and petitions concerning pupil assignment plans in the 1980s; in controversies over where new schools would be built in the 1990s and the early 2000s; and especially in the long, contentious, and nationally prominent battle to persuade the Greenville County Council to establish a holiday to honor Martin Luther King Jr. Greenville was the last county in South Carolina and one of the last in the nation to adopt the holiday, which it did in 2004.