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### Family Life in 1960s America: The Parnell Family Home Movies



**Figure 1.** Ronald Baron Parnell and Mary Louise Hiers Parnell at 06:31. Screenshot from RFC\_PARNELL\_2.

#### Introduction: Provenance of the Parnell home movies

The Parnell home movies arrived at the Moving Image Research Collections (MIRC) at the University of South Carolina from a man named Jack Harris, a local videographer who has long donated abandoned home movies to MIRC. Harris had received a few boxes of film from the Summerville branch of the Dorchester County Library after they were left outside the library's doors. After arrival at MIRC, these boxes were accessioned into the Regional Film Collection and sorted by Assistant Director and Curator Lydia Pappas based on box information and handwriting. The 14 reels of 8mm film eventually included in the Parnell home movie collection were labeled with "Baron L. Parnell" and sometimes further identifying information.

Pappas spliced the reels together to make them easier to scan.<sup>1</sup> This assembly means that the digital files often jump around in subject; however, original reel divisions are identifiable and maintained by long sections of white leader printed with “Processed by Kodak” in red.

## Technical details

The Parnell films were recorded on 8mm Kodachrome II film, a gauge and stock common to post-1950s home moviemaking. 8mm cameras and stock were originally introduced in 1932, but began to dominate the market in the 1950s as the release of cheap 8mm cameras from Kodak, Bell and Howell, and others made home moviemaking accessible to the middle class.<sup>2,3</sup> Kodachrome, a subtractive color process famous for the vibrant and long-lasting color it produces, was introduced for 8mm film in 1936 (the year after it was marketed for 16mm).<sup>4</sup> Kodachrome II was a faster (as in, more light-sensitive) version of Kodachrome produced beginning in 1961 and intended to produce less grain and contrast than the original Kodachrome formulation.<sup>5</sup> The stock codes on the edge of the Parnell films range from 1962 through 1968. As Kodachrome could not be developed by amateurs, most users sent their film to Eastman Kodak to be developed, after which the film was returned with edge information on the processed date.<sup>6</sup> The Parnells sent batches every six months or so in 1963 and 1964. In most cases, the window between the edge code and “processed by” dates narrow the filming dates down to a year or so, allowing us to confidently say the majority of the footage was filmed from 1962 to 1964.

The image quality of the Parnell home movies is marred by technical difficulties. Light leaks and blown-out frames obscure a significant amount of content (see Appendix E for examples); much of the surviving content is overexposed, particularly footage from the Parnells’ national parks road trip. Such light leaks, particularly around the perforations of the film, are common in 8mm filmmaking. In this process, a single 25-foot strip of 16mm film (with additional sprocket holes) is loaded so that only one side of the film will be exposed. At the end of the strip, the spool of film is flipped and threaded through the camera again, exposing the other side of the film. In these moments of loading, the film is exposed to light, appearing as a blown out frame; the same light travels through the sprocket holes to expose that negative space on the layers of film below.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lydia Pappas, email message to authors, October 18, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Alan D. Kattelle, “The Evolution of Amateur Motion Picture Equipment, 1895-1965.” *Journal of Film and Video*, 38, no. 3/4 (1986), 52.

<sup>3</sup> Patricia Zimmermann, *Reel Families* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 117.

<sup>4</sup> Kattelle, “Motion Picture Equipment,” 56.

<sup>5</sup> “Kodak Introduces Faster Kodachrome Color Film.” *Popular Mechanics*, May 1961, 220.

<sup>6</sup> “U.S. v. Eastman Kodak Co., Brief for Appellee United States of America: Termination of Consent Decree” (United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, 1994), 3.

<sup>7</sup> Bill Brand, as quoted in Eddy Colloton, “The Films of James Colloton, Sr.,” *Eddy Colloton* (blog), Oct. 12, 2016, <http://eddycolloton.com/blog/hmd2016>.



**Figure 2.** Light leaks with “ghost sprockets” at 24:26. Screenshot from RFC\_PARNELL\_2.

Much of the interior footage is also of inferior color, likely for want of light; the Parnells filmed a significant amount of their home movies inside their home, church, and civic spaces, yielding a certain graininess and lack of detail in these interiors. The only non-Kodachrome II stock in the Parnell home movies is an interior church ceremony shot on Gevaert stock (see Appendix E).<sup>8</sup> It is possible that the cameraman imagined a different type of film would do better in such low light. However, footage from the same event appears on another reel of film shot on Kodachrome II in much better contrast and detail.<sup>9</sup> Such technical mishaps are typical of amateur film, though still regrettable given the amount of information (as well as the beauty of the national parks) they obscure.



**Figure 3.** Overexposure at 27:57; underexposure on Gevaert stock at 09:19. Screenshot from in RFC\_PARNELL\_2.

<sup>8</sup> Parnell home movies. Regional Film Collection, Moving Image Research Collections, University of South Carolina, RFC\_PARNELL\_2 08:30-13:10.

<sup>9</sup> Parnell home movies, RFC\_PARNELL\_1 12:18-14:31.

## Overview of content

The content of the Parnell home movies can be divided into two main subjects: travel and the home. Within these subjects are a few notable subtypes. Over the course of the home movies, the Parnells go to a family reunion and a funeral; celebrate Christmas, Easter, and an anniversary party; and mark coming-of-age moments including prom, graduation, and a debutante presentation. Their travel covers large swathes of the western and Southeastern United States, constituting a road trip through famous western national parks, cities, and Disneyland, as well as a road trip to Florida for a family reunion, during which they visited historic sites, amusement parks, and a cemetery.

Footage sited in South Carolina includes several sequences in and around the family home, as well as events taking place in close-knit social groups such as churches, rotary clubs, and family reunions or gatherings in local parks. The nuclear Parnell family makes by far the most appearances, and children get a majority of the screen time; this focus follows Zimmermann's conclusion that the "cult of child rearing" in the 1950s prompted camera-wielding parents to consider their (and others') children as the most meaningful subjects they could record.<sup>10</sup> In the nuclear family, the father typically wielded the camera, a patriarchal norm backed up by a 1961 Bell and Howell company report that found "the father produced twice as many movies as the mother."<sup>11</sup> The Parnells are no exception. The father is absent from almost all shots, most obviously in footage of the immediate family; for example, mother, daughter, and son are seen opening their presents at a quiet Christmas, while the father never appears. One of the only points at which someone turns the camera around on the father is while he's asleep on the couch; a blurry medium shot of his slack face has the aura of mischief, a moment that even in its rebellion acknowledges the father as the head of the family.<sup>12</sup>

The Parnells' travelogue footage is a potent combination of the early 1960s' cultural emphasis on family togetherness and access to leisure.<sup>13</sup> The Parnells filmed themselves relaxing, celebrating, and traveling around the country on the post-World War II superhighway system in a car they were able to afford, on a vacation with time they were able to spare. Documentation of these road trips often ignores the family members in favor of recording the vistas and attractions, a documentation of family wealth via experience. Despite this direction in footage, the impetus for these trips—a massive Western road trip timed just before the son left for college and a family reunion in Florida—are themselves explicitly family-oriented.<sup>14</sup>

As the reels were rearranged for ease of transfer, we will discuss the Parnell home movies in the broad genres discussed above rather than in the order in which they were digitized. An

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<sup>10</sup> Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, 134.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>12</sup> Parnell home movies, RFC\_PARNELL\_1, 27:00.

<sup>13</sup> Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, 135.

<sup>14</sup> Lydia Pappas, images attached to email to authors, October 23, 2017.

annotated list of the content as digitized may be found in Appendix A; content grouped further by subject and by chronology may be found in Appendix B.

### Identification of subjects

The Parnell family home movies focus on the nuclear family, who we have identified as follows (see Appendix C for screenshots and photos):

- Father: Baron LeBoney Parnell, Jr., born 6 Nov. 1920 in Waycross, Georgia; died 6 Sept. 2008 in North Charleston, South Carolina. A U.S. Navy veteran (WWII and Korea) and a supervisor at the Charleston Naval Shipyard.<sup>15</sup>
- Mother: Mary Louise Hiers Parnell, born 20 Feb. 1921 in Ehrhardt, South Carolina; died 28 Jan. 2011 in North Charleston, South Carolina. A cafeteria manager for the Charleston County School District.<sup>16</sup>
- Son: Ronald Baron Parnell, born 1946, Baptist College at Charleston class of 1969.<sup>17</sup>
- Daughter: LaBonney L. Parnell (now Taylor), born 1949, Clemson University class of 1971.<sup>18</sup>



**Figure 4.** The Parnell children enjoyed dressing up for formal occasions.  
Left, Ronald Baron Parnell before prom at 26:09. Screenshot from RFC\_Parnell\_1;

<sup>15</sup> Find a Grave, Baron LeBoney Parnell, Jr., record created 2008:

<https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=29369176>

<sup>16</sup> Find a Grave, Mary Louise Hiers Parnell, record created 2008:

<https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=29369248>

<sup>17</sup> The films include Ronald Parnell's graduation from high school, which took place between 1962 (edge code date) and Sept. 1964 (processed date); we worked on the assumption that he graduated in 1964, as he appears as a freshman in Clemson's yearbook in spring 1965 (see Clemson University, "Taps (1965)" (1965). *Yearbooks*. 63. [tigerprints.clemson.edu/yearbooks/63](http://tigerprints.clemson.edu/yearbooks/63), 382). Ronald later graduated from Baptist College at Charleston (see Baptist College at Charleston [now Charleston Southern University]. *The Cutlass*. Charleston, SC: Graduating Class of 1969, 218).

<sup>18</sup> LaBonney appears as a senior in Clemson's yearbook in spring 1971 (see Clemson University, "Taps (1965)" (1965). *Yearbooks*. 63. [tigerprints.clemson.edu/yearbooks/63](http://tigerprints.clemson.edu/yearbooks/63), 431).

right, LaBonney L. Parnell before her debutante presentation at 17:11. Screenshot from RFC\_Parnell\_2.

We identified the family members and filming locations with a combination of tactics. The movies themselves often included establishing shots of plaques and signs, as well as unlabelled but identifiable landmarks; group members identified locations from Table Rock State Park in western South Carolina to Yosemite National Park by sight. Provenance information, ranging from the Summerville public library where the films were dropped off to the original writing on the Kodachrome boxes as scanned by Lydia Pappas, helped narrow down the family's hometown and gave us the (luckily distinctive) name of the patriarch. Records for Baron L. Parnell came up on Ancestry.com and the website Find a Grave, from which we were able to find information on his wife, children, parents, and in-laws. Yearbooks and obituaries constituted the bulk of the rest of the information we found.

The combination of visual evidence from the movies themselves and related research proved fruitful in our search for identities and locations. As one example of many, a glimpse of an inscription on an obelisk honoring World War II dead listed the South Carolina counties of Allendale and Colleton, with other cut-off names we identified as the neighboring counties of Bamberg and Hampton.<sup>19</sup> In exploring the gravesite of the Parnell family, we found that the maternal grandfather was buried in 1948 in Saint Johns Baptist Church Cemetery, Ehrhardt, Bamberg County, South Carolina, on the southern border with Georgia.<sup>20</sup> A search for nearby historical markers brought up the Four County WWII Memorial, also in Ehrhardt (see Appendix D for comparison images).<sup>21</sup> As this footage falls on the same original 8mm reel as footage in St. Augustine, Florida, and as Ehrhardt lies between Florida and Charleston Heights, we can say with some confidence that it is likely the family had stopped at the mother's father's gravesite on the way back from their trip. Connections like these allowed us to describe the footage in a way that could facilitate a keyword search, as compiled in Appendix A.

### **Church Culture, Southern Image Creating, and Community Building**

In identifying the names of the family members through the Find A Grave site, our group was able to determine the exact location and current name of the church where the Parnells practiced their faith. While the grave of Baron LeBoney Parnell Senior has Dorchester-Waylyn Baptist Church inscribed on his tombstone, Doorway Baptist Church is the church name used on Baron LeBoney Parnell Junior's grave. After corresponding with administrators at Doorway Baptist Church, we learned that the church only began to be known by this name in its later years, a clever abbreviation of its home neighborhood. The timeline for this change may have

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<sup>19</sup> Parnell home movies, RFC\_PARNELL\_2 02:28 and 02:37.

<sup>20</sup> Find a Grave, Bradley Carroll Hiers, record created 2010,  
<https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=49084485>

<sup>21</sup> Stroud, Mike. "Four County WWII Memorial." The Historical Marker Database, 2016.  
<https://www.hmdb.org/Marker.asp?Marker=57319>

coincided with the church's relocation to another part of North Charleston. Today, the original site of the church is home to the Shiloh Seventh-Day Adventist Church. In comparing photographs from Shiloh's Facebook page with the original footage, we were able to verify that the current church is indeed the location of the former Dorchester-Waylyn Baptist Church. For example, the communion table at Shiloh, though in its current form different in color, matches the build and size of the communion table featured in the church footage. It is important to note that the lack of persons of color in the Parnell family footage contrasts to the predominantly African-American congregants at Shiloh. This finding suggests that Dorchester-Waylyn, and North Charleston as a whole, may have experienced 'white flight' in the decades following desegregation.



**Figure 5.** Left: Shiloh Seventh-Day Adventist Church today. Photograph from Facebook; right: Dorchester-Waylyn Baptist Church junior cotillions at 12:48. Screenshot from RFC\_Parnell\_1.



**Figure 6.** Left: Shiloh Seventh-Day Adventist Church communion table today. Photograph from Facebook; right: Dorchester-Waylyn Baptist Church debutante ceremony at 13:37. Screenshot from RFC\_Parnell\_1.

The general footage of the church is brief and does not extend too much beyond the main worship area and an informal gathering space adjacent to it. Within these sequences, the family and members of the community are seen participating in jovial get-togethers such as lunches and club meetings. The layout is prototypical of the average Southern Protestant church in that it lacks décor in the form of icons and religious art. The sole image adorning the church is a framed poster of the Bible placed at the very center of the apse. This reaffirms the church's Baptist

teachings—Protestant churches venerate the Bible as an extension of God in that salvation is achieved solely through the written word of God.

Scattered between both Parnell videos is footage of LaBonney Parnell participating in a debutante ceremony, taking place at the church. Of note, the breakup of this footage is due in part to the splicing done at USC to simplify the digitization process, and not as a result of the recording of two separate events, even though there are differences worthy of mention. While the first reel's content is generally clear and vibrant in color, the second reel's footage is grainy and of lower quality, perhaps due to a combination of poor lighting and the less light-sensitive Gevaert stock used. However, we can confirm that the content and event is the same because of the formal attire worn by the subjects of each clip.

In terms of the ceremony, the debutante custom serves to situate the Parnell family's social standing in relation to their community. More commonly known as cotillion, the debutante ceremony is the formal introduction of a teenage girl to society, typically by other established male members of the community. Leading up to the event, debutantes are usually required to take classes on social etiquette and ballroom dance. The general aim of the custom is to prepare youths for adulthood through the inculcation of mannerly social skills and character-building personality traits. Even at the time of filming, the practice was seen as outdated in most parts of the United States. The practice thrived particularly in the South due to a general desire to maintain antebellum cultural ties and customs. In the previous century, some of the largest debutante balls held in the U.S. took place in nearby Charleston, South Carolina. The modest location for LaBonney's induction—in addition to the inclusion of younger participants acting as substitutes to esteemed older men—signals that this was likely an upwardly mobile community becoming accustomed to expendable wealth. The ceremony provided a kind of affirmation and approximation to the upper echelons of Southern life and culture. It also speaks to gender roles expected of women in the American South in the 1960s. In Charles Reagan Wilson's *Myth, Manners, and Memory*, the author posits reasons for such an institution to thrive during the backdrop of tumultuous civil-rights movements in the United States at the time. In maintaining this institution, participants affirm “the South’s pride in its womanhood, a tendency to keep women on a pedestal, a conservative clinging to venerable institutions, the persistence of social distinctions by status, and a belief in a Cavalier heritage.”<sup>22</sup>

## **Family travel**

About half of the Parnell family home movie collection documents their vacation time. In the summer of 1963 they embarked on an extensive trip out west that included a tour of national parks, historic landmarks, and other popular tourist destinations. National parks were conceivably the main focus of this family trip, as they comprise six of the ten stops along their

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<sup>22</sup> Wilson, Charles Reagan, *New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Myth, Manners, and Memory*, The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture Ser. 1st ed. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

travels: Carlsbad Caverns, Grand Canyon, Sequoia, Yosemite, Bryce Canyon, and Zion. By piecing together their footage, one can recreate this past journey as the Parnells wound their way through the states of New Mexico, California, Arizona, Utah, and Colorado. The family sought out sites known for their grandeur and natural beauty, additionally visiting the Garden of the Gods park and the Berthoud Pass in the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests outside Colorado Springs and Denver. They also visited historic landmarks with religious significance such as the Mission of San Juan Capistrano, and Salt Lake City's Temple Square, along with iconic family destinations such as Disneyland and the San Diego Zoo. The following summer, in 1964, the Parnells travelled south from their home in Charleston Heights, South Carolina to northern and central Florida. They visited several tourist destinations in St. Augustine, including the Castillo de San Marcos, Potter's Wax Museum, and Alligator Farm Zoological Park.<sup>23</sup> Just south of St. Augustine they watched the porpoises and seals perform at Marineland, the "World's First Oceanarium."<sup>24</sup> They also journeyed to two now-defunct Floridian family vacation spots, the western-themed Six Gun Territory theme park in Ocala and Tommy Bartlett's International Deer Ranch petting zoo in Silver Springs (see Appendix E for geographic site locations).<sup>25, 26</sup>

These two trips were prototypical examples of how many white, middle-class Americans spent their leisure time in the mid-20th century. Specifically, several factors converged in the mid-1950s that gave birth to the "golden age" of the American family vacation: the rise of the family automobile and leisure time, the creation of the Eisenhower Interstate Highway System, and the post-World War II economic boom.<sup>27</sup> In addition, two significant cultural events emerged that influenced where middle-class families would travel: the "See the U.S.A. in Your Chevrolet" ad campaign and the creation of Disneyland in Anaheim, California. Capitalizing on these movements, non-profit organizations such as the National Parks Service would follow in their footsteps. The road trip traces its roots to the explosion of the car ownership in the 1920s where registered motor vehicles expanded from 500,000 in 1910 to almost 10 million.<sup>28</sup> That growth taxed the existing maze of local and state roads, forcing state and federal highway officials to commit public funds to road improvement. They developed a numbered highway system, of which one of the most famous examples was Route 66, a 2,448 mile, two-lane road

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<sup>23</sup> "Homepage," *St. Augustine Alligator Farm Zoological Park*, 2015, [www.alligatorfarm.com](http://www.alligatorfarm.com).

<sup>24</sup> "Our History," *Marineland Dolphin Adventure*, 2017, [www.marineland.net/home/about-us/our-history](http://www.marineland.net/home/about-us/our-history).

<sup>25</sup> Rick Allen, "Remembering Six Gun Territory," *Ocala Star Banner*, Dec. 29, 2010, [www.ocala.com/article/20101229/News/604199852](http://www.ocala.com/article/20101229/News/604199852).

<sup>26</sup> Robert H Brown, "Tommy Bartlett's International Deer Ranch," *Florida's Lost Tourist Attractions*, 2011, [www.lostparks.com/bdeer.html](http://www.lostparks.com/bdeer.html).

<sup>27</sup> Judith L. Meyer, "Are We There Yet?: The Golden Age of American Family Vacations by Susan Sessions Rugh," in *Indiana Magazine of History* vol. 108, no. 1 (2012): 83-85, (hereafter cited Indiana Magazine of History).

<sup>28</sup> Christina Crapanzano, "A Brief History of Route 66," *Time*, June 28, 2010, [content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2000095,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2000095,00.html) (hereafter cited Time).

that connected Chicago to Los Angeles.<sup>29,30</sup> Route 66 was the main artery to the west for several decades, and the source of inspiration to many artists who wrote and sang about the “Mother Road.”<sup>31,32</sup> A tourism industry developed around these new highways and with it the publication of maps and guidebooks.<sup>33</sup> Now the allure of the open road was more predictable and comfortable, thus encouraging new car owners to use their leisure time to explore the countryside or the seaside. Several pieces of legislation were passed from 1921 to 1954 in an attempt to improve the mix of road types across the U.S. These efforts culminated with the passage of the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act, which created the Interstate Highway System. President Dwight Eisenhower was a strong proponent of the Interstate system, inspired both by his work on highway assessment testing conducted by the army in 1919 and his exposure to Germany’s Autobahn during WWII.<sup>34,35</sup> The 1956 law also received strong support from the auto, tire, and oil industries as well as the unions and construction interests from steel and cement industries.<sup>36</sup> The first sections of the system were opened by 1957 with an original completion date of 1969. However, as is often the case with complex public works projects, some sections were not finished until the 1980s. As of 2013, the Eisenhower Interstate System had a total length of 47,856 miles and existed in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.<sup>37</sup> The third element that led to this golden age of family vacations was post-war economic prosperity, which, among other factors, helped people purchase family cars in order to take advantage of the new interstates.<sup>38</sup> Middle-class workers also received the benefit of paid vacation time and were encouraged by their employers to take vacations.<sup>39</sup> Various business interests—auto and oil

<sup>29</sup> *Time*.

<sup>30</sup> “History and Cultural Impact of the Interstate Highway System,” *University of Vermont Landscape Change Program*, 2011, [www.uvm.edu/landscape/learn/impact\\_of\\_interstate\\_system.html](http://www.uvm.edu/landscape/learn/impact_of_interstate_system.html) (hereafter cited *University of Vermont*).

<sup>31</sup> *Time*.

<sup>32</sup> Deborah Vankin. “Autry Museum’s ‘Route 66’ Exhibit Drives Influence of the Road Home,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 2014, [www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et\\_cm-ca-route-66-autry-20140622-story.html](http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et_cm-ca-route-66-autry-20140622-story.html).

<sup>33</sup> Peter J Blodgett, “How Americans Fell in Love with the Open Road,” *Zócalo Public Square*, Aug. 13, 2015, [www.zocalopublicsquare.org/2015/08/13/how-americans-fell-in-love-with-the-open-road/chronicles/who-we-were](http://www.zocalopublicsquare.org/2015/08/13/how-americans-fell-in-love-with-the-open-road/chronicles/who-we-were).

<sup>34</sup> “The History of the Interstate Highway System: Background,” *A History of American Technology* (blog), 2009, [highway.umwblogs.org](http://highway.umwblogs.org).

<sup>35</sup> *University of Vermont*.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Office of Highway Policy Information. “Highway Statistics 2013,” USDOT, Federal Highway Administration, Oct. 21, 2014*, [www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2013/hm20.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2013/hm20.cfm).

<sup>38</sup> “The History of the Interstate Highway System: Impact,” *A History of American Technology* (blog), 2009, [highway.umwblogs.org/impact](http://highway.umwblogs.org/impact).

<sup>39</sup> Mitchell Hartman, “The Middle-Class American Vacation: A History,” *Marketplace*, July 22, 2016, [www.marketplace.org/2016/07/22/world/middle-class-american-vacation-history](http://www.marketplace.org/2016/07/22/world/middle-class-american-vacation-history).

companies, motel chains, local chambers of commerce, and public tourism boards—used mass-media promotion to fuel “the middle-class ‘travel habit’ in America.”<sup>40</sup>



Figure 7. United States Interstate Highway System map. Map from OnlineAtlas.us.

One of the most famous and effective examples of this was the Chevrolet’s “See the U.S.A. in Your Chevrolet” television ad campaign. In 1951 Chevy sponsored the bi-weekly *Dinah Shore Show*. Dinah Shore was a popular singer who had entertained the troops in WWII and projected a clean, wholesome image. Chevy was eager to associate its brand with her in an attempt to reach female consumers. They capitalized on her singing voice by creating a catchy jingle about driving around in a Chevy seeing America, the “greatest land of all.” Throughout the show, Dinah would promote the latest Chevy model and sing the jingle. Dinah became synonymous with General Motors (GM) and also filmed several commercials and short films for them. GM’s sponsorship lasted until the early sixties, during which time GM cemented itself as the dominant U.S. auto company, accounting for about half of all vehicles sold in country. In the final year of the *Dinah Shore Show*, Americans were purchasing about 2 million Chevys a year.<sup>41</sup>

GM wasn’t the only company to take advantage of the power of television to influence consumers. In 1955 the Walt Disney Company teamed up with ABC to produce a weekly

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Jack Doyle. “Dinah Shore & Chevrolet, 1956-1963,” *PopHistoryDig.com*, March 22, 2009, <http://www.pophistorydig.com/topics/dinah-shore-chevronet-1950s-1960s>.

television show called *Disneyland*, later renamed *The Wonderful World of Disney*.<sup>42</sup> The show featured a Disney movie followed by an update from Walt Disney on the construction of Disneyland, his new theme park. In essence, *Disneyland* served as a weekly commercial for the park before it even existed.<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, Walt Disney's inspiration for Disneyland came from two sources. First was his desire to take his own children to an "amusement experience that the entire family can enjoy together," and second was to fulfill children's wishes to meet their favorite Disney characters and ride Walt's train.<sup>44</sup> In a stroke of genius, Walt combined the two ideas to create the first theme park—a family-friendly, safe place where kids could meet Mickey Mouse and immerse themselves in all things Disney.<sup>45</sup> Disneyland officially opened on July 17, 1955 and soon became one of Southern California's main tourist attractions, a status that persists to the present day.<sup>46</sup>



**Figure 8.** Walt Disney presenting a painted map of his newly-built theme park, Disneyland. Photo from Disney Dose.

This increase of popular tourism in the postwar period across the United States also led to a renewed interest in the country's natural wonders within the national parks. In response to an anticipated surge in visitor numbers, the National Parks Service implemented a developmental

<sup>42</sup> Gavin Doyle. "Disneyland History and Why Theme Parks Ever Happened," *Disney Dose* (blog), 2012, [disneydose.com/disneyland-history/#ixzz4wZ2bw9A2](http://disneydose.com/disneyland-history/#ixzz4wZ2bw9A2) (hereafter cited *Disney Dose*).

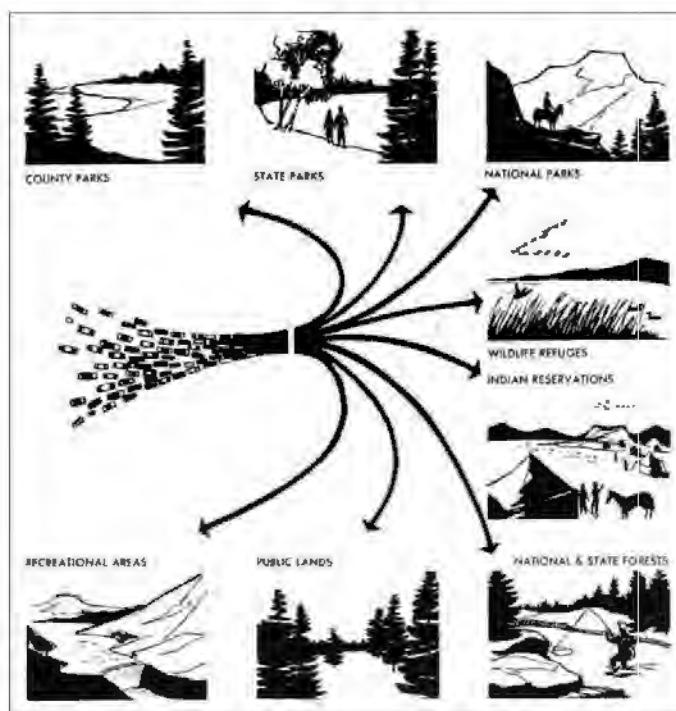
<sup>43</sup> Adelia Cellini, "All Shook Up," *Variety*, April 28, 2005, [variety.com/2005/scene/people-news/all-shook-up-2-1117921888](http://variety.com/2005/scene/people-news/all-shook-up-2-1117921888).

<sup>44</sup> *Disney Dose*.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Visit California, "Discover Los Angeles County: Ultimate Southern California, Disneyland," *Visit California*, 2017, [www.visitcalifornia.com/trip/ultimate-southern-california](http://www.visitcalifornia.com/trip/ultimate-southern-california).

program in 1955 by the name of Mission 66 to establish infrastructure within the parks that would highlight parks as desirable car destinations, right on the heels of the Interstate Highway System. Following the war the parks were in a sorry state, having been resource-strapped for many years; this condition would likely not improve by increased foot traffic on the already overloaded infrastructure within park land. Instead of limiting access to the parks, the Eisenhower Administration ordered the construction or expansion of road systems, visitors centers, and overnight accommodations. This served the hypothetical dual purpose of both regulating the impact and movement of visitors by controlling where they could travel within the parks, and in turn protect land that needed preservation.<sup>47</sup> Director at the time, Conrad L. Wirth, was planning for a bright future following this “renaissance for the Park Service” in anticipation of over 80 million visitors travelling by road by the year 1966.<sup>48</sup>



**Figure 9.** Illustration from a 1956 NPS brochure detailing the dispersion of vehicle traffic throughout the parks system. Illustration from the National Park Service.

Unfortunately, Wirth’s entrepreneurial approach to parks management was what author Richard West Sellers calls “the antithesis of the scientific approach to park management,” and came with its own sacrifices.<sup>49</sup> After World War II, biology programs in the parks became

<sup>47</sup> Peter Peters, “Roadside Wilderness: U.S. National Park Design in the 1950s and 1960s,” in Patin, Thomas, *Observation Points: The Visual Poetics of National Parks* (University of Minnesota Pred, 2012),

<sup>48</sup> M. Guy Bishop, “Mission 66 in the National Parks of Southern California and the Southwest,” *Southern California Quarterly*, Vol. 80, No. 3 (Fall 1998), 293-294.

<sup>49</sup> Richard West Sellers, “The War and Postwar Years, 1940-1963,” in *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (Yale University Press, 1997), 173.

virtually nonexistent. Scientists' roles were reorganized under the supervision of park rangers or cut out entirely, leaving the parks to seek out contractors on a strained budget via research universities that capitalized on the work of graduate students. This time period led to a decline in science-based park management, "with only two biologists in research and policy, that aspect of the biology programs remained virtually powerless in the surge of Mission 66 activity."<sup>50</sup> Included in these biology programs were systems of observation that led to informed conservation and land preservation efforts. It seems Wirth believed in the practicality and potential economic viability of the American public to the detriment of producing decades worth of valuable research, especially leading into a time of growing environmental concern.

As evidenced by the Parnells' footage of sweeping vistas and significant landmark signposts, they too were part of the ninety-nine percent of tourists to the park areas who were not concerned with the science that was conducted within them.<sup>51</sup> As author Alfred Runte notes, "[t]he annual pilgrimage of three million visitors to Yosemite National Park, for example, does not result from any preoccupation with sugar pines and peregrine falcons; Yosemite's cliffs and waterfalls are the premier attractions."<sup>52</sup> Instead, what drove the Parnells and other families to the parks they visited is a public statement of social status and national identity through the exploration and admiration of America's great landscapes. This aesthetic mode of appreciation for their environment stems from nineteenth century intellectuals who asserted that the distinctiveness of national landscapes was proof that the United States was as civilized and powerful as the European nations who fell from power during the war.<sup>53</sup> "As sanctioned, sacred, and often strategic public places, national parks do much more than preserve natural resources. These forests, lakes, deserts, canyons, and glaciers are often displayed as evidence of America's maturity as a nation—as one of democracy's finest achievements—in ways that make particular claims on civic pride and citizenship"<sup>54</sup>

The Parnells were visiting at the peak of this type of activity that was essential to crafting the image of the powerful and proud American democracy: Mission 66 was nearing completion, more and more visitors were flooding into the parks for recreational automobile-based tourism, and conservation was at an all-time low. In fact, they may have visited at a key moment before the parks management pendulum swung back in favour of science-based management. As Sellers describes, "[o]nce the studies requested by Secretary Udall from the Leopold Committee and the National Academy of Sciences were released in 1963, the Park Service truly would enter a new era, in which park management would be judged far more on ecological criteria. Yet this era

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Sellers, "The War and Postwar Years," 168.

<sup>52</sup> Alfred Runte, "The National Parks in Idealism and Reality," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Summer, 1988), 75.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Lynn Ross-Bryant, "Nature and Nation in the U.S. National Parks," in *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter 2005), 31.

began at the height of national park development under Mission 66 and would confront a half-century of Park Service tradition emphasizing recreational tourism.”<sup>55</sup>

The Western Adventure became one of three broad categories of U.S. tourist destinations that typified this time period.<sup>56</sup> More broadly, author Susan Sessions Rugh notes in her book, *Are We There Yet? The Golden Age of American Family Vacations*, the four characteristics of white, middle-class family vacations: “(1) they traveled by car; (2) the entire family traveled together; (3) the vacation itself became a public symbol of economic and social status; and (4) the trip became a way to cultivate ‘a sense of civic identity and attachment to American history’ in children.”<sup>57</sup> All four of these ideas are reflected in the Kodachrome images of the Parnell home movie collection.

### Evaluation and preservation recommendations

The Parnell home movies are prototypical of their era of home moviemaking not just in technology, but in cultural conformity. As white, middle-class families began moving out to the suburbs after World War II—centering family life on the home, rather than the neighborhood—recreation as a family unit reinforced the bonds that were meant to defend the family against isolation (notwithstanding the irony that this strained essentialism often isolated individual family members from each other).<sup>58</sup> Home moviemaking was a hobby that perfectly hewed to the 1950s concept of family. A camera-wielding father orchestrated his family into recording evidence of familial harmony even as it happened—and even if it were not, strictly speaking, honest.<sup>59</sup> Richard Chalfen notes that home movies made by white middle-class Americans selectively suppress any kind of disappointment or abnormal content in favor of the depiction of approved activities and milestones for their milieu.<sup>60</sup> The Parnells are no exception. We see the family exclusively in moments of celebration (Christmas, Easter, prom, graduation, an anniversary party and a debutante presentation); at leisure (trips to local, national, and amusement parks); or in the context of their morally upright community groups (at church and at the Lions Club).

The unyielding positivity of the Parnells’ home movies is neither an objective nor a dishonest representation of their family. Rather, what such a collection of moving images demonstrates is the (often unconscious) process of self-definition. The Parnells conceived of themselves as successful participants in mainstream American society, and represented themselves as such in their home movies. In making home movies, they created a family

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<sup>55</sup> Sellers, “The War and Postwar Years,” 203.

<sup>56</sup> *Indiana Magazine of History*.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, 133.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Richard Chalfen, “The Home Movie in a World of Reports: An Anthropological Appreciation.” *Journal of Film and Video*, 38, no. 3/4 (1986), 106.

narrative that adhered to the cultural values of the moment. “Home moviemaking promotes the visual display of proper and expected behavior, of participation in socially approved activities, according to culturally approved value schemes,” writes Chalfen, and the Parnells could scarcely adhere more closely to these values.<sup>61</sup> In fact, the Parnells are such prototypical home moviemakers that their home movies are of research value for just that—the self-representation of a family who is, or hopes to be, utterly quotidian by the standards of the early 1960s.

Despite this rich potential for research, it should be noted that the presence of home movies in an archive inherently divorces them from the context of their origins. Home movies were made for personal use, and were edited and projected largely for the benefit of the small group of family and friends depicted.<sup>62</sup> The projection of these images, typically in a communal setting of the family unit, would prompt running commentary and act “as a springboard to a funny story or to a description of what was occurring at the time.”<sup>63</sup> This gulf between the home and the archive gives the Parnell home movies an inescapable aura of wistfulness that colors the experience of the viewer and researcher. Viewing a home movie provokes an almost automatic sense of vulnerability and nostalgia; the Parnell films are an evocative, yet typical mix of charming amateurism (light leaks, awkward framing, lack of narrative and editing), an idealized and uncomplicated love of family, and the “vulnerability of memory” wrought by the knowledge that the subjects were loved, yet are now largely forgotten—a drama enhanced by the fact that the movies were literally abandoned on the steps of a library.<sup>64</sup> The Parnell home movies can represent nothing truly objective from the perspective of the creator or the viewer, and for this reason they will form an important part of a well-rounded, representational regional film collection.

Going forward, we recommend two courses of action for the University of South Carolina Moving Image Research Collections. Both of these sets of recommendations are made with the assumption of appropriate physical storage, i.e. climate-controlled conditions, acetate deterioration monitoring, and chemically inert cans and cores. The first, beyond these baseline measures, is low-investment:

1. Catalog: To make catalog descriptions of the content (such as those provided in Appendix A) available online, with a content overview and brief description of the family at the collection level.
2. Contact: To attempt to contact the living Parnell children (Ronald and LaBonney) about these home movies, in the ethical interest of alerting them to the fact that their family’s home movies are scanned and in an archival collection.

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<sup>61</sup> Chalfen, “Home Movie” 106.

<sup>62</sup> Snowden Becker, “Family in a Can: The Presentation and Preservation of Home Movies in Museums.” *The Moving Image*, 1, no. 2 (2001), 97-98.

<sup>63</sup> Jeffrey Ruoff, as quoted in Becker, “Family in a Can,” 98.

<sup>64</sup> Stefan Szczelkun, “The Value of Home Movies.” *Oral History*, 28, no. 2 (2000), 95-97.

The latter action may elicit joy, excitement, and further useful context for the materials, or it may elicit more complicated emotions; regardless, it is a rare chance for the archives to do due diligence with an orphaned film.

A more elaborate course of action would be as follows:

1. Intellectual processing:
  - a. Physical: To undo the splices made for scanning and reslice the content either by chronology or subject matter, allowing physical storage of the material to match the intellectual control and facilitating researcher access.
  - b. Digital: To rearrange the original reels digitally with an editor such as Final Cut Pro, allowing digital access of the material to match the intellectual control and facilitating researcher access.
2. Context: To bring the Parnells to the archives in order to gather further information on the films; to stage the ritual of projection by watching the films while recording audio, in order to capture identifying information and stories that are elicited by visual cues.
3. Contact: To contact entities glimpsed in the films, such as the local church, the National Parks Service, Clemson University, and Disney, in the event that such organizations would be interested in their representation at a time when many were at their most popular or rapid-growing.

This latter set of recommendations demands much more time of the archivists, who must prioritize their collections for care and upkeep, and are unlikely to be implemented in full. But even the most basic online cataloging can make these home movies accessible to the public, and consequently may launch research projects or emotional reactions. With such care, the Parnell home movies can endure far beyond their own small world.

## **APPENDIX A: Summary of content**

Note that reels are numbered in assembled order, not original. The original boxes of film were numbered by Baron LeBoney Parnell, Jr., but were discarded after being scanned<sup>65</sup> and the film inside can no longer be associated with those original numbers, except in cases where the content was labeled in more detail.

Domestic and local footage is likely in or around Charleston Heights; note that this location is a tentative identification based on the hometown listed in Baron, Jr. and LaBonney's yearbooks. Charleston Heights is a neighborhood in North Charleston, an incorporated city north of Charleston in the county of Charleston, South Carolina.

### **RFC\_Parnell\_1**

*Reel 1, 0:00-03:50:* Western cities and national parks trip: Sequoia National Park (including Auto Log, Tunnel Log, and Buttress Tree); Yosemite National Park; and San Francisco, all California.

Edge code: 1962; Processed by Kodak: Aug 63.

*Reel 2, 03:50-07:45:* Western cities and national parks trip, continued: Unidentified city and campground in woods (may be California); The Garden of the Gods (Colorado Springs), Red Rocks Amphitheatre, Berthoud Pass (Continental Divide), and Arapaho National Forest, Colorado.

Edge code: 1962; Processed by Kodak: Aug 63.

*Reel 3, 07:45-12:18:* Western cities and national parks trip, continued: Disneyland, California; San Diego Zoo and Mission San Juan Capistrano, California; and Carlsbad Caverns National Park, New Mexico; exterior of home, Charleston Heights, South Carolina.

Further named locations: The Enchanted Tiki Room, Adventureland, Columbia Ship, "Native American" dance around fire, The Golden Horseshoe Revue and Saloon, the Ward Singers (Disneyland).

Edge code: 1964, Processed by Kodak: Sep 63.

*Reel 4, 12:18-16:45:* Debutante presentation of LaBonney and reception, both in church; social gatherings in church or Lions Club as well as family visiting at home. All footage likely in Charleston Heights, South Carolina.

Edge code: 1962, Processed by Kodak: Jan 64.

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<sup>65</sup> Pappas, 10/23/2017.

*Reel 5, 16:45-21:12:* People leaving flowers at Riverview Memorial Park (cemetery), likely at grave of paternal grandfather Baron LeBoney Parnell, Sr. (died Dec. 9, 1963), North Charleston, South Carolina; playing ping pong and relaxing at home, Charleston Heights, SC; Easter with several young children at an unidentified park.

Edge code: 1963, Processed by Kodak: Sep 64.

*Reel 6, 21:12-25:45:* Alligator Farm Zoological Park; Tommy Bartlett's International Deer Ranch; Six Gun Territory amusement park (swimming and boating area, wildlife preserve, and snack stand); porpoise and whale show at Marineland amusement park.

Edge code: 1964, Processed by Kodak: Sep 64.

*Reel 7, 25:45-30:15:* Ronald's prom and graduation, Charleston Heights, South Carolina.

Edge code: 1962, Processed by Kodak: Sep 64.

## **RFC\_Parnell\_2**

*Reel 8, 0:00-04:05:* Family reunion trip to St. Augustine, Florida; Ehrhardt, South Carolina. Named locations and landmarks: Potter's Wax Museum, Gator Shop, Castillo de San Marcos National Monument, Juan Ponce de Leon statue, Fountain of Youth (St. Augustine); Four County WWII Memorial and Saint Johns Baptist Church Cemetery (?) (Ehrhardt, SC).

Edge code: 1964; Processed by Kodak: Jan 65.

*Reel 9, 04:05-08:30:* Unidentified park; home (Charleston Heights, South Carolina).

Edge code: 1963; Processed by Kodak: Jan 65.

*Reel 10, 08:30-13:10:* Debutante presentation of LaBonney, reception buffet in church basement, Christmastime at home, another buffet dinner. All footage likely in Charleston Heights, SC. Gevaert, no stock code (though attached to "Processed by Kodak" leader).

*Reel 11, 13:10-17:25:* Group portrait shot of older friends and family in church; mountain cabin and state park; LaBonney in white dress for debutante ceremony. Domestic footage likely shot in Charleston Heights, SC. Mountain cabin is in or near a 4-H camp and Table Rock State Park in Pickens County in western SC; cabin plaque reads "P.N. HIERS, ANDERSON, S.C." (Hiers is the maternal family name.)

Edge code: 1963; "EK Co A 4/66" also printed on edge.

*Reel 12, 17:25-22:01:* Lions Club basement?, Charleston Heights, South Carolina; people leaving flowers at Riverview Memorial Park (cemetery), North Charleston, SC, likely at grave of paternal grandmother Bessie Ham Parnell (died April 20, 1966). Long blown-out sections with no visual information.

Edge code: believed 1965 but hard to tell with light bleed; "EK Co A 4/66" also printed on edge.

*Reel 13, 22:01-26:30:* Western cities and national parks trip, including: Temple Square, Salt Lake City, and what may be the Great Salt Lake, Utah; Bryce Canyon and Zion National Parks, Utah; Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona. Footage is mostly of vistas, not family.

Edge code: 1962; Processed by Kodak: Aug 63.

*Reel 14, 26:30-31:07:* 25th anniversary celebration for Parnell relatives; shots of family, friends, and interior of Parnell house, Charleston Heights, SC.

Edge code: 1968; Processed by Kodak: Mar 69.

**APPENDIX B: Content organized by subject and chronology***Reels by subject*

Home movies (set in Charleston Heights, SC): Reels 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14

Other locations in South Carolina: Reels 8, 11

Western road trip: Reels 1, 2, 3, 13

Florida road trip: Reels 6, 8

*Reels in tentative chronological order*

Processed Aug 63: Reel 13, 1, 2

Processed Sep 63: Reel 3

Processed Jan 64: Reel 4

Processed Sep 64: Reel 5, 7, 6

Processed Jan 65: Reel 8, 9

EK Co 4/66: Reel 12, 11

Processed Mar 69: Reel 14

No edge code dates: Reel 10

**APPENDIX C: Parnell family members**

Baron LeBoney Parnell, Jr. (in RFC\_PARNELL\_1, 27:00)



Mary Louise Hiers Parnell (in RFC\_PARNELL\_2 06:31).



CAROLYN M. PARKER

Elementary Education

Charleston

RONALD BARON PARNELL

Chemistry

Charleston

DANIEL D. PENOT

History

Diexcel Hill, Pa.



Ronald Baron Parnell (in RFC\_PARNELL\_2 06:40 and in the Baptist College of Charleston yearbook *The Cutlass*, 1969).



• C. AUBREY PARKS III . . . Charlotte, N.C.  
PSYCHOLOGY  
JOEL D. PARNELL . . . Anderson, S.C.  
POLITICAL SCIENCE  
LaBONNEY L. PARNELL . Chas. Hgts., S.C.  
HISTORY  
LARRY V. PARKER . . . Pendleton, S.C.  
ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING



seniors

LaBonney Parnell (in RFC\_PARNELL\_1 13:48 and in the Clemson yearbook *Taps*, 1971).

## APPENDIX D: Four Counties War Memorial



*Left: RFC\_PARNELL\_2 02:28. Right: Ibid., 02:37.*

## Four County WW II Memorial

### Inscription.

In Memory Of  
Our Heroes  
Of World War II

Erected by the Counties of  
Allendale, Bamberg,  
Colleton and Hampton  
May 1, 1948

**Location.**  $33^{\circ} 3.704' \text{ N}$ ,  $81^{\circ} 5.333' \text{ W}$ .  
Marker is in Ehrhardt, South Carolina, in  
Bamberg County. Marker can be reached from  
State Highway 5-8. [Touch for map](#). reached from  
State Road 5-8 0.2 miles south of 5-31, on the left  
when traveling south. Click for map. Located at  
Rivers Bridge State Park near SC 5-8. At  
Memorial Grouuds (follow arrow). Marker is in  
this post office area: Ehrhardt SC 29081, United  
States of America.



By Mike Stroud  
1. Four County WW II Memorial Marker

Stroud, Mike. "Four County WWII Memorial." The Historical Marker Database, 2016.  
<https://www.hmdb.org/Marker.asp?Marker=57319>.

## Appendix E: Map of Travel Destinations



Interactive map can be accessed at:

[https://drive.google.com/open?id=1ppgsOz\\_uxdo0m4a\\_yjcL16lU-20&usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1ppgsOz_uxdo0m4a_yjcL16lU-20&usp=sharing)

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  - Baron LeBoney Parnell, Jr., record created 2008:  
[www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=29369176](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=29369176)

Baron LeBoney Parnell, Sr., record created 2008:  
[www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=29367464](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=29367464)

Bessie Ham Parnell, record created 2008:  
[www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=29367506](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=29367506)

Bradley Carroll Hiers, record created 2010:  
[www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=49084485](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=49084485)

Mary Louise Hiers Parnell, record created 2008:  
[www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=29369248](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=29369248)

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