

Parnell Written Report

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Summary

Parnell consists of 14, 50 foot reels of 8mm color film. There is no soundtrack to the film. The Parnell films are over an hour long, split up into two sections: *Parnell I* and *Parnell II*. According to Lydia Pappas, our contact, these films were donated to the University of South Carolina Library after being found in a library dropbox in Summerville, South Carolina. They originally belonged to the Parnell family of Charleston, SC but the family no longer lives in the area.

Historical Context - Lindsay Erin Miller

Finding historical context for these home movies was not that difficult, mostly because the Parnell's had a habit of filming signage wherever they went! I paid attention to any building or text that appeared on screen, hoping it might lead me to a clue. Most of the time, that paid off; I could locate 18 different locations the Parnell's visited on vacation.

Verified Locations in Parnell I + II

- Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park, CA
- Jackson Street, San Francisco, CA
- Garden of the Gods Visitor and Nature Center, CO
- Red Rocks Amphitheater, CO
- Continental Divide, Berthoud Pass, CO
- Disneyland, CA
- Mission San Juan Capistrano, CA
- San Diego Zoo, CA
- Carlsbad Caverns National Park, NM
- Six Gun Territory, FL
- Marineland of Florida, FL

- Tomoka State Park, FL
- St. Augustine, FL
- Potter's Wax Museum
- Castillo de San Marcos
- Anderson, SC
- Salt Lake City, UT
- Bryce Canyon National Park, UT
- Grand Canyon National Park, AZ
- Zion National Park, UT

I was also able to date one of their excursions, Disneyland on April 18, 1963, thanks to a banner advertising the Ward Singers. I was able to find out that the Ward Singers recorded a live album that same day in Disneyland at the Horseshoe Revue, who matches up perfectly with the sign that is seen in the film (Daveland).



Banner advertising the Ward Singers at the Horseshoe Revue, as seen in Parnell I

But other times, it just led to more confusion. I spotted the name ‘Bernice Howard’ in a classroom or churchlike setting, and off I went on a wild goose chase to track down any Bernice Howard to have ever lived in South Carolina. I got no clear answer.

The name Bernice Howard, as seen in Parnell II



Another helpful clue came from Lydia at the University of South Carolina. She said that the name ‘Baron L. Parnell’ is on the film’s processing boxes, along with the address 4745 Langridge Drive, Charleston Heights, SC 29405. From there, I was quickly able to locate an obituary for Baron and his wife, Mary, and verify that the house featured in the film sits at the address on the processing boxes (Baron LeBoney Parnell Jr. Obituary). I am honestly really amazed at much information I was able to find about the Parnells, especially when considering that Lydia said the library knew nothing about them.

I did, however, feel like I was intruding on private affairs at times. One of the locations featured in the film is Riverview Memorial Park, which is the cemetery where Baron is currently resting; in fact, most of the Parnells are at rest here. Although I could successfully locate the graveyard thanks to the obituary, I do not plan to report this to the rest of the class. These home movies aren’t my own, and I would rather the Parnell’s be in charge of narrating that portion of their story. Overall, this project was rather enjoyable, and I am glad to have had the opportunity

to work on it. I realize that this is a rather time-consuming effort, but if I am given a chance to investigate another home movie, I will accept it.

Film Content - Kayla Henry-Griffin

Film content was fairly easy to write down, but going through the entire films *Parnell 1* and *Parnell 2* made me realize a few things about researching family films and film without sound. I wrote down each activity that was done by the Parnell family and each shot that was filmed. Because the film did not have any sound nor did it directly point out who was who, I hypothesized that it was a paternal figure or the head of the household filming the family events and vacations. There are a few family members that reoccur in both *Parnell 1* and *Parnell 2* and I assume they are part of the nuclear family of the person behind the filming. These recurring family members were a part of some significant events outside of family vacations. For instance, one male family member went to a dance I believe was prom and also participated in a graduation where I believe it was high school graduation. One particular event with a recurring family member was held in what seems like a small church with pews completely filled. The recurring family member was in a long, somewhat intricate, white dress going down the aisle. When first watching, I believed it would be some sort of marriage; however looking through the entire part of that film, it became less apparent to what that event was. The female figure (the family member) was standing in front of the pews on stage waiting to be crowned with what appears to be a paper crown and given a book (possibly a bible). Other women figures were also crowned with this paper symbol as well. All the figures who were crowned were also in long, white dresses. The film then shows what could have been after the event, where there are scenes of the woman family member with the crown bearer and bible bearer. It is uncertain if those

children are also part of the Parnell family. Some extensive research was done to figure out what this event was about. Lydia from University of South Carolina had one clue to this event where the event was written as “Queen’s Court 1964” on the box the film reel came from.



A still from “Queen’s Court 1964”, as seen in Parnell I

With Mary Parnell’s obituary, it was concluded that she was Baptist, which then I assumed that the Parnell family was Baptist. I went to look for more information on whether they were Baptist or Southern Baptist. There was no other clue about their practicing religion. With the information I had, I tried to track down if this event in the film was a religious event or just an event happening in a church. No reliable clues or events came up in my search.

Another strange twist to my research was that multiple religions came up in the film. The Parnell family visits a Mormon temple in *Parnell 2*. This makes the religious views of the Parnell family a bit unclear.

The biggest concept that appeared to me while doing research was the idea of prying into the life of the Parnells. A few days of researching I realized I felt uncomfortable looking at obituaries and grave sites of the members of the Parnell family. I felt uncomfortable because I felt as if I did not get any permission from the direct family to do so. This brings up many

questions like when to halt research when one is investigating a home movie that is not from their own family. I personally asked myself if I would be bothered if someone was researching my family movies for the sake of preserving them; I concluded that I personally would not be bothered. However, not every family is the same. Would the Parnell family be upset if we were researching their intimate family moments for study and preservation? The only people who have that answer are the people in the Parnell family.

Archival and Material Conditions/Preservation Plan - Ifeanyi Awachie

To begin investigating the archival and material conditions of “Parnell,” I conducted a search of the term “Parnell” in the online catalog of the University of South Carolina’s collections. The search returned no results. I realized that because “Parnell” is a home movie, the title may not be a publicly acknowledged title for the film so much as a label given to the film within USC’s library system. For this reason, my next step was to email Lydia Pappas, Interim Director of the Moving Image Research Collections and Curator of Regional Films and the Chinese Film Collection at the USC University Libraries, to ask for any guidance on searching for information on “Parnell.” I continued my own research by searching the collections for “home movies” and entering “Parnell” into each of the searchable finding aids for the home movies that my search returned. Each search for “Parnell” yielded a message saying, “No records found.” I then realized that within the home movie collection results were descriptive titles such as “Camp Jocassee—Lever-Karst—home movies, 1954” (from the [Lever-Karst family home movies](#)). I decided to look for geographic references in “Parnell,” for example, indicators of a locale the subjects of the film had traveled to. For example, viewing tents in the film, I searched for the term “camping,” which returned one search result: the William Esper Czarnitzi collection.

However, none of the film descriptions in this collection matched the content of “Parnell.” Later, I received an email reply from Lydia Pappas, who revealed that “Parnell” was the surname of the family featured in the film, which confirmed that the film was not listed in the library catalogue, or not listed correctly. Lydia Pappas also offered the information that films were “50 ft reels of colour silent 8mm home movies.” I followed this cue as I began to look into the material conditions of the film. In our group project meetings, we discussed the material condition of the film and determined that it is generally in good condition but suffering from some fading. Revisiting the book chapter, “Understanding Film and How It Decays,” I observed that of the types of 8mm film damage that we could identify without having physical access to the film, color fading could be confirmed to apply to “Parnell.” As the chapter states, “As dyes break down, the color balance changes. Contrast is lost, and the film begins to acquire a pinkish brown cast. Eventually the film takes on a washed-out monochromatic look.” Though “Parnell” has not yet become completely monochromatic, it has partially faded. Since heat and humidity are the main causes of color fading, we would recommend to USC that they ensure the original film is stored in a temperature-controlled environment. As we discussed in class, film can be stored below freezing (as opposed to tapes, which must be stored above freezing). We would further recommend that they enter the film into the library catalogue, ensuring that it is labeled in a way that is consistent with the other home movies in the library’s collections, and so that external researchers can conduct research on the film. The library could do this by including details on the film such as the ones that we discovered, for example, indicating that the film belonged to Baron L. Parnell of Charleston, South Carolina. With these specific details, researchers could conduct further research on “Parnell” and (the family’s history in) Charleston, thereby uncovering further context about the film.

Works Cited

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