

A PRIVATE HISTORY OF SCHOOL SEGREGATION IN GEORGIA

by

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(Under the Direction of James Cobb)

ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that segregation academies were founded in Georgia to provide upper class white families with white havens away from school integration. These schools were created in the late 1960s after white politicians in the state failed to deliver on their promise to preserved white supremacy. By the 1960s, it was politically and socially unacceptable for white citizens to publicly declare their dedication to segregation. Thus, white flight academies used coded rhetoric to hide their racial motivations from the public and the federal government. Many segregation academies now accept token numbers of minority students. However, their student bodies are still overwhelmingly white, and thus they continue to create racial and socioeconomic divisions within communities.

INDEX WORDS: Segregation academies, Private schools, School desegregation, Race relations, Massive resistance, White flight, Georgia

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

John Hancock Academy does not look like a school. The grey, industrial steel frame is more suited to a warehouse than a center for learning. The side parking lot is a dusty, unpaved swatch of orange Georgia clay. The tennis court is one of the few visible clues that children play here. But it, too, is cracked and broken. Grass grows between the fissures in the concrete. The inside of John Hancock Academy is similarly worn down. The linoleum tile has remained unchanged since the building was constructed in 1971. When it rains, the ceiling leaks onto the tile and the children.

Yet, despite the school's weathered appearance, parents routinely pay \$5,000 dollars a year to send their children to John Hancock Academy (JHA).¹ Moreover, parents, teachers, and students of JHA take extreme pride in their school. Athletic awards line the building's entranceway. A cabinet to the left holds portraits of the school's first graduating class in 1967. Thirteen smiling white faces welcome incoming guests. They sport the bouffants and cat eyeglasses that were so popular in the 1960s, the decade in which John Hancock Academy was founded. The entrance hall opens out to the gym, which is the heart of John Hancock. It houses everything from basketball games, to PTO meetings, to Friday morning devotionals. It has to. It is the only room that can comfortably fit more than thirty people.

¹ John Hancock Academy, "tuition," <http://johnhancockacademy.com/tuition/> (accessed Oct. 5, 2014).

² Lakeview Academy, <http://www.lakeviewacademy.com/page/Home> (accessed

John Hancock Academy covers its well-worn gym walls with banners and memorabilia, but nothing garners more pride from the students of JHA than the Confederate flag. The rebel standard is everywhere at John Hancock Academy. Teachers put it on their nametags and students wave it proudly during spirit week. A mural glorifying the Confederacy covers an entire wall of the U.S. history classroom. John Hancock Academy's mascot, the Rebel, often stands guard near the Confederate flag. Clearly a planter of the old order, the Rebel leans on his long cane as he peers sideways at his audience. His large red cowboy hat lies at a jaunty angle, but there is no hint of a smile beneath his white handlebar mustache.

It makes sense that the founders of John Hancock Academy would choose the Confederate Rebel as their mascot. He represents so much of what they stand for. John Hancock Academy was founded to evade court-ordered public school desegregation in Hancock County. In 1965, a year before John Hancock Academy was chartered, a single black student enrolled in the historically white Sparta High School under the county's new "freedom-of-choice" plan. One was enough. A group of white parents immediately began organizing and fundraising to build a new whites-only private institution. That institution would become John Hancock Academy. The school's Rebel mascot draws clear parallels between white residents' flight from public schooling and Confederate secession from the Union. Both groups clung steadfastly to white supremacy.

Miles away, Lakeview Academy, in contrast, is an elegant study in brick atop ninety acres of North Georgia's wooded hills. A small bell tower crowns the upper school, where high school students can choose from a selection of seventeen

advanced placement courses and innovative electives like robotics and poetry. Over two-thirds of the faculty members at Lakeview Academy have advanced degrees, and students are issued personal laptops and granted individualized college counseling. Everything about Lakeview Academy is structured to help students get ahead, and parents pay a high price for the school's amenities. Tuition costs \$15,000 for a single upper school student, three times the price of tuition at John Hancock Academy. The school's mascot is a lion and its colors are blue and gold, neither of which hints at a racially divisive past.²

Yet, like its sister school 100 miles south, Lakeview Academy is a product of local white parents' obstinate dedication to segregated education. In 1965, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) began pressuring the Gainesville City School Board to move beyond its nominal freedom-of-choice plan and actually desegregate its schools. As a result, a small number of African American students were admitted to previously all-white institutions in Gainesville. Freedom-of-choice programs were implemented in school districts across the South to keep desegregation at a minimum while nominally complying with the *Brown* ruling, and Hall County is no exception.³ Gainesville's white parents began talking about opening a private school even then, but they jumped into action in 1967 when HEW threatened to sue Hall County for ignoring its recommendations and maintaining all-black schools. The Tethers, with the support of several other upper class families

² Lakeview Academy, <http://www.lakeviewacademy.com/page/Home> (accessed Jan. 8, 2015).

³ Winfred E. Pitts, *A Victory of Sorts: Desegregation in a Southern Community* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America Inc., 2003).

in Gainesville, chartered Lakeview Academy on August 21, 1968.⁴ You would never know it from the stately appearance of the school today, but Lakeview Academy held its first classes in an abandoned business school downtown. Parents contributed a minimum donation of \$2,000 per family to secure a loan to construct a new building, but they were unwilling to leave their children in the soon-to-be integrated public school system while the new academy was under construction.⁵

This thesis seeks to explain why and how two schools founded on the principle of segregation developed along such different paths, and the impact these schools have had on their local communities. These case studies will thus illuminate the lasting legacies of the segregation academy movement. John Hancock Academy and Lakeview Academy represent a phenomenon much larger than themselves. When the Supreme Court declared that segregated schools were unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954, public school integration became ground zero for white resistance to the Civil Rights Movement. After the ruling was announced, senator Harry Byrd of Virginia asked southern state governments to adopt a policy of massive resistance, which was characterized by absolute and unyielding commitment to segregated schooling. White politicians across the South embraced massive resistance by adopting interposition resolutions, which declared the *Brown* decision null and void as a violation of states' rights, and trying to

⁴ Members of the Lakeview History Project Class of 1990, "Education Without Compromise: Lakeview Academy. A History of the First Two Decades," 1990. Richard Kenyon, Judge of the Superior Court, Hall County, Georgia, letter approving the incorporation of Gainesville Independent School, Inc., Aug. 21, 1968. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy. Gainesville, Georgia.

⁵ Lakeview Academy Payment Records, 1970. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy. Gainesville, Georgia.

circumvent the *Brown* ruling by passing bills to privatize education rather than integrate it.

The Georgia State Government was one of many southern states that attempted to privatize public education to avoid the Supreme Court order. Herman Talmadge was the Governor of Georgia in 1954. Herman Talmadge, like his father and a long line of southern politicians before him, was an ardent supporter of segregation. Talmadge won the governor's office in 1948 by making race the central component of his platform, pledging his support for the white primary and vowing to oppose all aspects of the "civil rights program."⁶ In 1950, Talmadge again won reelection, this time using the threat of school integration as a scare tactic to win white votes.

Over the next few years, Talmadge and the Georgia State Legislature repeatedly proved their commitment to segregated education by passing legislation meant to preserve the state's dual school system. In 1951, Talmadge pushed a sales tax bill through the Georgia State Legislature to fund school equalization measures for black schools. In this, Talmadge replicated the belated efforts made by many southern state legislatures to prove that separate could actually be equal as mandated by *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In 1953, just one year before the *Brown* ruling was announced, Talmadge and his advisors created a preliminary private school plan, which passed through the Georgia State Legislature as an amendment to the Georgia State Constitution. Georgia's voters affirmed the amendment by a slim margin in a

⁶ Jeff Roche, *Restructured Resistance: The Sibley Commission and the Politics of Desegregation in Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 16.

statewide vote in 1954.⁷ The plan promised to provide public funding for private segregated education if the federal government forced the state's public schools to desegregate. Georgia's General Assembly strengthened the private school plan over the next two years, passing measures that allowed public school districts to lease their land to private schools, extended state retirement benefits to private school teachers, and finally, authorized private school vouchers for students to attend private segregated schools.⁸

However, when a federal court ordered Atlanta to desegregate its schools in 1959, public school advocates and business interests in the city became concerned about the ramifications of ending public education. Business elites saw how confrontation with federal forces in Little Rock, Arkansas hurt local businesses. From 1950 until the Little Rock integration crisis of 1957, Little Rock experienced tremendous industrial growth. The city attracted an average of five new industrial plants every year, which created 2,500 new jobs, and the city's existing plants expanded in size. However, controversy over school integration put a dramatic stop to this economic growth. In 1958 and 1959, no new industrial plants were built in Little Rock. The head of the Little Rock Industrial Development Corporation, Everett Tucker, told business leaders across the South that massive resistance was to blame for Little Rock's economic decline.⁹ Business elites in Atlanta listened; they did not want the same economic stagnation to occur in their city. The Georgia General

⁷ Ibid, 17-20. Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South during the 1950's* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 54-55.

⁸ Roche, *Restructured Resistance*, 33.

⁹ Ibid, 66.

Assembly created the Sibley Commission to assess public opinion on closing schools rather than submitting to desegregation. Sixty percent of those surveyed by the commission said that they preferred absolute segregation to minimally desegregated public education, but the commission nonetheless recommended token desegregation. According to historian Jeff Roche, the commission ruled in favor of token integration because “Massive resistance was bad for business; threats to public schools slowed investment. Sibley and his associates were segregationists, but they were businessmen first.”¹⁰ The commission’s recommendation may have ended massive resistance as Georgia State policy, but it ushered in a new, subtler form of segregation based on geography and privatization.

When massive resistance proved untenable in the 1960s, white politicians moved towards a policy of strategic accommodation, which took the form of tokenism and freedom-of-choice programs that minimized school desegregation. These freedom-of-choice plans were designed to stymie black student transfers to white schools using non-racial requirements, such as test scores, grades, and even cultural differences. When it came to white students, these plans relied on a simple truth: the vast majority of white parents would never choose to send their children to a black school. Even the Supreme Court recognized that freedom-of-choice did not always mean choice for black students. It sought to remedy the problem in the 1968 court case *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*, which declared, “if there are reasonably available other ways, such for illustration as zoning, promising speedier and more effective conversion to a unitary, nonracial school system,

¹⁰Ibid, xiv.

"freedom of choice" must be held unacceptable."¹¹ Georgia's schools illustrate the effectiveness of minimizing techniques like freedom-of-choice. In 1966, twelve years after the *Brown* ruling and the first year John Hancock Academy held classes, only 8.8 percent of black students in Georgia were enrolled in schools with at least one white student.¹²

Furthermore, many southerners refused to acquiesce to federally enforced school desegregation even at a token level. The momentum to abandon public education for segregated private schools did not die with Atlanta's desegregation; white elites carried on the State Government's plan with private money. New private schools materialized all across Georgia in the 1960s. By 1970, there were approximately 400 segregation academies in the state. John Hancock Academy was the first to emerge in the rural Piedmont region.¹³ Dubbed "segregation academies" by the northern press, these schools facilitated extensive white flight in many southern counties. The United States Office of Education documented a 242 percent increase in non-sectarian private school enrollment in the southeast between 1961 and 1970. Likewise, southeastern private schools with Protestant denominational affiliations increased by 168 percent in the same timeframe. These statistics are

¹¹ Green Et. Al. v. County School Board of New Kent County Et. Al. 391, U.S. 430 (1968), No. 695.

¹² Southern Educational Reporting Service, *Statistical Summary of School Segregation-Desegregation in the Southern and Border States* (Nashville: Southern Education Reporting Service, Feb. 1967), 2. The South was defined by the Southern Education Reporting Service as Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

¹³ Charles S. Aiken, *The Cotton Plantation South Since the Civil War* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 274-275.

made more startling by the fact that nationwide, private school enrollment decreased by 23 percent from 1965 to 1971.¹⁴

Many of these parents never returned their children to public schools, and thus white flight remade education in the South. In 1940, private schools enrolled just 3 percent of southern school children. By 2005, they enrolled over 10 percent.¹⁵

Today, these private schools remain much more homogenously white than their public counterparts.¹⁶ Furthermore, this racial disparity is not just a side effect of higher incomes among white southerners. At every socioeconomic level, white students are more likely to be in private schools than black or Latino students.¹⁷

John Hancock Academy and Lakeview Academy thus provide an excellent opportunity to understand the evolution and impact of the segregation academy movement as a whole.

¹⁴ Kitty Terjen, Close-up on Segregation Academies, *New South* 27, no. 4 (Fall 1972): 50.

¹⁵ The Southern Education Foundation, *A New Diverse Majority: Students of Color in the South's Public Schools* (Atlanta, Georgia: Southern Education Foundation Inc., 2010), 11, <http://www.southerneducation.org/getattachment/0c0e454a-b5d0-419b-9eec-bca28d8dddb5/a-new-diverse-majority-students-of-color-in-the-so.aspx>.

¹⁶ 3.1 percent of southern black students attend private school in the South, compared to 10.6 percent of white students. Furthermore, most black students that enroll in southern private schools are enrolled in schools that have a black majority. Sean F. Reardon and John T. Yun, "Private School Racial Enrollments and Segregation" (The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University, June 26, 2002), 4-5, 21, http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/private-school-racial-enrollments-and-segregation/Private_Schools.pdf.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 5, 22.

Awareness of this legacy is vital to today's educational politics. In the last few years, a minority majority has come to dominate public schools in the South.¹⁸ Southern state governments have responded by putting public funds in the hand of private institutions, schools that are often built on racially exclusive principles. In 2008, Georgia passed a law that allows individuals and corporations to donate their state income tax dollars to student scholarship organizations (SSOs) that provide scholarships for students to attend private schools. These scholarships have diverted \$290 million state tax dollars towards private schools in the last 6 years. The largest SSO in Georgia is the Georgia Greater Opportunities for Access to Learning (GOAL) scholarship foundation, which provides institutional support for private schools by soliciting corporations for donations, filing tax information, and distributing scholarships to schools across the state. John Hancock Academy and Lakeview Academy both receive funds through the GOAL scholarship program.

Even more disturbing, the Georgia state law funding private schools was drafted with deliberate ambiguity. Republican State Representatives David Casas and Earl Ehrhart and former Republican State Senator Eric Johnson introduced and championed the legislation with the stated purpose of "providing low-income students with private education."¹⁹ However, Democratic State Senator Vincent Ford of Atlanta openly questioned the veracity of that statement, calling the new private school tax credit, "part of a Republican effort to dismantle public education."²⁰

¹⁸ The Southern Education Foundation, *A New Diverse Majority*.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 8.

²⁰ Dave Williams, "School Choice Turns Corner with Tax Credits," *Atlanta Business Chronicle*, Atlanta, Georgia, June 9, 2008,

Nonetheless, the Qualified Education Expense Tax Credit bill passed through the Georgia State Legislature over Democratic opposition with virtually no accountability written into the law. Private schools that benefit from SSO scholarships are under no obligation to set the money aside for low-income or minority students. Furthermore, it is against Georgia law for schools to release financial or demographic information regarding their use of the scholarships.²¹ John Hancock Academy and Lakeview Academy are beneficiaries of the new law, and they actively encourage members of their communities to contribute to SSO scholarships. When state governments put public funding in private school hands, they echo the racist policies of white politicians in the 1950s, and programs like Georgia's show how southern governments continue to actively support white flight institutions.

Academia first turned its attention to segregation academies in the 1970s. Journalists had already noticed the budding phenomenon, but historians, sociologists, and educators then set out to quantify it. Neil R. McMillen was the first historian to assess the impact of the budding segregation academy movement. *The Citizens Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-64* was published in 1971, and it remains the definitive history of White Citizens' Councils. One of the White Citizens' Councils' primary objectives was the establishment of private schools to preserve segregated education. However, McMillen saw these private schools as indicative of failure on the part of the White Citizens' Councils. He

<http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/stories/2008/06/09/story2.html?page=all> (accessed April 27, 2015).

²¹ The Southern Education Foundation, "A Failed Experiment: Georgia's Tax Credit Scholarships for Private Schools," <http://www.southerneducation.org/cmspages/getfile.aspx?guid=7d5e36c6-8976-4c86-92c5-fca74ddb3530> (accessed Jan. 15, 2015).

argued that White Citizens' Councils promised more than they could deliver when they said "never" to school integration. Token public school desegregation began undermining the organization in 1958, and Council membership continued to erode as southern states shifted towards strategic accommodation. White Citizens' Councils answered public school desegregation with a private school movement but, to McMillen, this movement just reflected the Council's failure to meet their initial goal of maintaining public school segregation.²²

In 1974 Margaret Rose Gladney focused exclusively on segregation academies in her dissertation entitled, *I'll Take My Stand: The Southern Segregation Academy Movement*, which traced the development of segregation academies as well as the negative effects those schools had on public education. Gladney argued that segregation academies were a contemporary extension of 1950s massive resistance tactics, and that they played a significant role in "the perpetuation of social and political unrest and injustice."²³ However, like McMillen, Gladney believed that the segregation academy movement was "doomed to failure" like the Confederacy, the Redeemers, the Citizens' Councils, and massive resistance movements before it.²⁴ Unfortunately, this was a common supposition among historians of the 1970s. The conservative counterrevolution was not yet fully developed, and early historians did not anticipate the effectiveness of coded language and strategic accommodation at keeping segregation academies open and almost entirely white.

²² Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-62* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1971), xii, 298-304.

²³ Margaret Rose Gladney, "I'll Take My Stand: The Southern Segregation Academy Movement," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1974), 23.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 155-158.

Journalist David Nevin and professor of education Robert E. Bills added to the literature in 1976 with the publication of *The Schools that Fear Built: Segregations Academies in the South*. David Nevin's segment of the book offers a broad, quantitative analysis of growing school separatism. According to Nevin, private school enrollment in the South jumped from roughly 1,012,400 students in 1970 to 1,235,000 students in 1975.²⁵ Bills's contribution compliments Nevin's quantitative technique with a more focused analysis of eleven segregation academies spread across the South. Bill argued that the new academies used religiosity, patriotism, discipline, and belief in the superiority of private enterprises to legitimize schools that were founded almost solely to preserve segregation. The authors' research also indicates that "these schools operate under severe handicaps" because of inadequate financial support, inexperienced staff, and a restricted curriculum.²⁶ Despite segregation academies' apparent deficiencies, parents who sent their children to those schools reported high levels of satisfaction with their children's education. To these white parents, even underfunded segregated schools were still better than desegregated schools. However, while quite useful, this book's assessment of segregation academies remains largely disconnected from the history of massive resistance in the South, largely because the authors are not historians, and their work does not really engage with the historical scholarship that came before it.

²⁵ David Nevin and Robert E. Bills, *The Schools that Fear Built* (Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books LTD, 1976).

²⁶ *Ibid*, 175.

Over time, segregation academies as a primary subject of study lost popularity as those schools began to desegregate in token numbers. However, the study of segregation academies lives on in more recent historiography as an example of white flight. Kevin Kruse's *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*, published in 2005, documents the rise of segregation academies in Atlanta. The Ku Klux Klan and segregationist suburbanites founded segregation academies in the city during the 1950s. These schools hoped to tap into new legislation that would redirect state income tax dollars towards private school tuition. However, the state commissioner of revenue refused to fund Atlanta's new white academies because he was concerned that the legislation would bankrupt the state. The segregation academies in the city collapsed without funding but, as Kruse notes, older religious private schools quickly took their place as bastions of white education. However, Kruse never examines the fate of segregation academies outside of Atlanta. This is an important historical gap because in communities too small to have established private schools or separate suburban school districts that serve as white havens, segregation academies became the method of choice for white southerners who wanted to avoid public school desegregation.

Joseph Crespino likewise reexamined segregation academies in his book *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution*. Crespino focuses on how segregation academies in Mississippi appealed to conservatives across the country by calling attention to how the supposedly overreaching federal government threatened Christian education. In 1970, the Supreme Court ruled in *Green v. Connally* that private schools that discriminate

based on race would not be eligible for tax exemption. Segregation academies responded by publicly proclaiming that they did not discriminate while simultaneously maintaining their homogenously white student bodies. The burden of sorting through this coded rhetoric thus fell on the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). When the IRS attempted to identify private schools that enrolled only white students, segregation academy leaders countered by accusing the IRS of putting oppressive racial quotas on religious schools and therefore attacking Christian education. Conservative Christians from across the country rallied in support of these white private school leaders. In fact, conservative condemnation of IRS tactics went all the way up to the national level. The 1980 Republican Party platform pledged to halt IRS investigations, and Reagan himself called the IRS guidelines “evil.”²⁷ Crespino thus demonstrated how segregation academies have effectively used coded rhetoric to garner national support and evade federal prosecution. Nonetheless, very little work has been done on the evolution of these segregation academies once they were established. Integration, real or superficial, has hidden the later developments of segregation academies from public scrutiny.²⁸

To understand this complex story, I compared school records, oral history accounts, and national studies on private school enrollments. I supplemented this written record with oral history interviews that I conducted personally with

²⁷ Joseph, Crespino, *In Search of Another County: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 250-256.

²⁸ Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). Joseph, Crespino, *In Search of Another County: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

parents, teachers, and school officials. I used newspaper articles from two local papers, *The Sparta Ishmaelite* in Hancock County and *The Daily Times* in Hall County, to corroborate information and dates told to me by interviewees. The *Atlanta Journal* and the *Atlanta Constitution* were also fruitful for my research, as they both covered school controversy and racial conflict in Hall County and Hancock County during the 1960s and 1970s. To establish the wider implications of my research, I drew on educational studies by the U.S. Department of Education, the Southern Education Foundation, the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, and the Civil Rights Project at UCLA. For a full account of my oral history methods, see Appendix A.

Lakeview Academy and John Hancock Academy demonstrate how local white communities responded to the legal impetus of integration and how effective white flight strategies have been in maintaining racial and socioeconomic separatism in many southern counties. Throughout the course of this thesis, I explore a variety of questions about the formation and eventual token desegregation of Lakeview Academy and John Hancock Academy, such as; how has the relationship between segregation academies and the Georgia State Government evolved over time? How do segregation academies contribute to racial division within communities? What factors influence the sustainability of segregation academies into the twenty-first century? And, how do school communities grapple with their racial histories today?

One important factor I encountered when answering these questions was economics. John Hancock Academy is located in Sparta, Georgia, the county seat of Hancock County, in middle Georgia's lower Piedmont region. After it was founded in

1793, local white elites quickly rose to prominence using slaves to farm cotton. By 1840, the county was the richest per capita in the state. White planters continued to successfully farm cotton until the Boll Weevil began decimating the county's cotton production in 1920. New Deal crop reduction programs followed by rising standard wages during World War II devastated the agricultural economy further, eventually leading Hancock County to economic devastation. Hancock was one of many southern counties to experience agricultural collapse. However, unlike a number of these counties, Hancock County never found a significant industry to replace agriculture. As a result, it is now one of the poorest counties in the state. In 2010, the median household income in Hancock County was \$22,716, less than half the state average of \$49,604. A full 31.4 percent of the county's population is living below the poverty line.²⁹

Such a small, poor county would seem ill-equipped to sustain a private school. However, the white citizens of Hancock County have a strong motivating factor. Over 70 percent of Hancock County citizens are black.³⁰ The majority of Hancock County's white citizens still refuse to let their children be part of a racial minority in the public school system. In 2012, three of John Hancock Academy's 102 students were black.³¹ Conversely, two of Hancock Central High School's 352

²⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, "Hancock County, Georgia," <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/13/13141.html> (accessed Jan. 17, 2015).

³⁰ The racial composition of Hancock County has remained stable since 1970. In 1970, Hancock County's population was 73 percent black and 26 percent white. In 2010 it was 72.6 percent black and 25.5 percent white. Ibid.

³¹ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&ID=00297758 (accessed Jan. 17, 2015).

students were white.³² The white patrons of John Hancock Academy have never made peace with the county's black majority, and John Hancock Academy illustrates the strategies used by white southerners to maintain segregation in the twenty-first century. The parents of John Hancock Academy are not alone in this sentiment. Whites generally resist school integration most vigorously in counties with black majorities, many of which are located in the South's black belt.

Lakeview Academy, on the other hand, is located in Hall County, on the outskirts of the comparatively prosperous city of Gainesville, Georgia. Hall County has not suffered economic stagnation like Hancock County. In fact, Hall County's wealth and population have boomed in recent years due to the success of the county's poultry industry. In 2010, Hall had approximately 180,000 residents, a full 21 times the population size of Hancock County.³³ The residents of Hall County also have a medium income of \$50,853, with a significantly lower 18.7 percent of the population living below the poverty line.³⁴ The, larger, more affluent population of Hall County is thus better able to sustain a private school.

The demographic make-up of Hall County is also very different from Hancock County. Hall County started with a much smaller black population in 1970, only 10 percent. The black population has declined slightly in terms of percent of the

³² U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&SchoolID=130264001178&ID=130264001178 (accessed Jan. 17, 2015).

³³ Hall County's population has increased by 202 percent in the last forty years from 59,405 residents in 1970 to 179,684 residents in 2010. U.S. Census Bureau, "Hall County, Georgia," <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/13/13139.html> (accessed Jan. 17, 2015).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

population in the last 40 years, from 10 percent in 1970 to 8 percent in 2010. However, another minority population has grown. In 1970, African Americans constituted the biggest minority population in the county. Today, white, Hispanic persons occupy that position. Mexicans have migrated to the area in significant numbers to work in Gainesville's many poultry processing plants. A full 27 percent of Hall County residents now identify as Latino.³⁵ However, while these two counties may differ greatly in the socioeconomic and demographic status of their citizens, they do have one thing in common. The vast majority of their private school patrons are white. During the 2011-2012 school year, only 2.9 percent of Lakeview Academy students identified as Latino, and African American students were an even more marginal 1.6 percent.³⁶

Both John Hancock and Lakeview Academy have histories steeped in racial prejudice, but one would never know that from the histories they display on their websites. The same is true all across the South. While segregationists were proud of their dedication to white supremacy in the 1950s, they quickly learned that the federal government and civil rights activists would not stand for explicit discrimination. But instead of acquiescing to school desegregation in the 1960s, some white parents opened private white havens to maintain their segregated world. Private school officials told their community and their government that they started their private school to support Christian values, free market enterprises, and

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ PSS Private School Universe Survey data for the 2011-2012 school year, National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&Zip=30502&Miles=10&ID=00299733 (accessed Jan. 17, 2015).

superior education. They did not acknowledge that they built schools primarily to protect the perceived superiority of white education. These schools have come a long way since their prejudiced beginnings. The vast majority of segregation academies now accept minority students. However, despite the progress segregation academies have made, many of these institutions still serve as havens for white flight. Furthermore, most segregation academies fail to acknowledge their discriminatory pasts. When members of the Georgia General Assembly passed the Georgia Private School Tax Credit, they accepted the coded rhetoric promoted by segregation academies at face value, and in doing so, they sanctioned diverting public tax dollars to private schools that sustain racial and socioeconomic divisions in communities across the state. The histories of John Hancock Academy and Lakeview Academy in the following chapters illustrate why politicians must take the private school sector's racially divisive past and present into account when they evaluate voucher programs like Georgia's.

CHAPTER 2

JOHN HANCOCK ACADEMY

When John Hancock Academy opened on August 29, 1966, it had no trouble attracting students. More than 200 white students walked the halls of JHA that fall, almost half of all white schoolchildren in the county.³⁷ These days, however, John Hancock Academy has trouble staying open. The current headmaster, Steve James, admitted that the school is “constantly on the verge of closing,” which makes parent contributions vital to keeping the school afloat.³⁸ When the gym needed painting, the parents did it. When the school needed more classroom space, a parent sold them a portable classroom for \$1.³⁹ John Hancock Academy is also a beneficiary of the GOAL Program, which allows citizens and corporations in Georgia to divert their income tax dollars towards private schools, and the combination of these individual and State contributions allows John Hancock to remain open. In keeping the school afloat, those same parents and State representatives extend modern day segregation in Hancock County. In 2012, the student body at John Hancock Academy was 97 percent white, whereas the student body at Hancock Central High School was over 99 percent black.⁴⁰

³⁷ Southern Educational Reporting Service, *Statistical Summary of School Segregation-Desegregation in the Southern and Border States* (Nashville: Southern Education Reporting Service, Feb. 1967), 14.

³⁸ Steve James, interview by author, Sept. 2, 2014.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics,

John Hancock Academy's economic struggles are a symptom of the environment in which it is located. The main street of Sparta is a telling reflection of the city's chaotic descent into poverty. The first thing visitors see when they enter Sparta from the north is the burned out shell of the Victorian-era county courthouse. The fire occurred in August 2014, but the charred remains of the large, brick building look like something out of the Civil War.⁴¹ The much-weathered monument to Confederate soldiers positioned in front of the courthouse serves as a reminder that the Civil War ended over a century ago. Nonetheless, Hancock County is still dealing with the consequences of slavery. Once you turn left onto Main Street at the charred courthouse, you will see rows of once stately white buildings sagging in the summer heat. Their white paint is peeling, and most were boarded up long ago. The insides of these buildings are similarly dilapidated. The marble floor in the back of still-open Webster's pharmacy has worn away completely in places from decades of use.

Sparta is the county seat of Hancock County, and the poverty of Sparta's Main Street reflects the poverty of Hancock County as a whole. But it was not always this way. Hancock County was founded in 1793 in middle Georgia's lower Piedmont region. Over the next several decades, a few white residents rapidly rose to

http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&ID=00297758 (accessed Sept. 28, 2014). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&SchoolID=130264001178&ID=130264001178 (accessed Sept. 28, 2014).

⁴¹ Amy Leigh Womack, "Cause Undetermined for Fire that Destroyed Hancock County Courthouse," *The Telegraph*, Aug. 11, 2014, <http://www.macon.com/2014/08/11/3243614/fire-destroys-hancock-county-courthouse.html> (accessed Oct. 27, 2014).

prosperity by establishing cotton plantations. By 1840, the county was the richest per capita in the state. Of course, that supposed wealth obscures “the impoverished producers of that wealth.”⁴² African American slaves made up 68 percent of Hancock County’s population in 1860, but the census did not count these individuals as people in its per capita equations. In reality, that wealth was highly concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy white planter elite. This merchant-planter class was able to maintain its economic hegemony after the Civil War. Hancock County was barely touched by Sherman’s March to the Sea, and white landlords quickly adapted to abolition by employing their former slaves as sharecroppers. The black community created schools and churches during Reconstruction, but most black residents remained economically dependent on white landowners.⁴³

White planters continued to successfully farm cotton until 1920, when the Boll Weevil decimated cotton production in the county. The New Deal introduced a minimum wage law and crop reduction programs, which took an even greater toll on Hancock County’s labor-intensive agriculture. The final nail in the coffin came during World War II, after defense industries in nearby cities such as Milledgeville and Macon raised standard wages and made cotton an unprofitable enterprise. Hancock County was slow to adopt mechanized farming, but higher wage competition forced local farmers to finally embrace the tractor and the mechanical cotton picker.⁴⁴ Hancock County was one of many counties that experienced the ramifications of agricultural collapse. Areas recovered best when they attracted

⁴² Mark Shultz, *The Rural Face of White Supremacy: Beyond Jim Crow* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 2.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

industry to replace the lost source of income.⁴⁵ However, Hancock County never found an industry to replace agriculture, and as a consequence it remains one of the poorest counties in the state. The 2010 census reported that the median household income in Hancock County was \$22,716, less than half the state average of \$49,604. Over 30 percent of the county's residents are living below the poverty line.⁴⁶

This high rate of poverty would seem to make a private school impractical. The student body of John Hancock Academy has always served more blue-collar families than the average private school. Nonetheless, many white families make great economic sacrifices to send their children to the white academy. Susan Haywood, an alumna and parent of John Hancock, "ran her car into the ground" because she chose to make monthly payments on private school tuition rather than on a new car. Yet, despite the hardship, Haywood never considered public schools an option.⁴⁷ Melanie Brassell, also an alumna and parent, agreed, saying "We didn't even think of them [the public schools] anymore. Not even an option."⁴⁸ These patrons of John Hancock are unwilling to let their children be part of a racial minority in the public school system. The patrons of John Hancock Academy are not alone in this sentiment. The single strongest predictor of white enrollment in

⁴⁵ Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy Since the Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

⁴⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, "Hall County, Georgia," <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/13/13139.html> (accessed Jan. 17, 2015).

⁴⁷ Susan Haywood, interview with author, Oct. 7, 2014.

⁴⁸ Melanie Brassell, interview with author, Oct. 7, 2014.

Georgia private schools is a high population of minority students enrolled in the public sector.⁴⁹

Hancock County's black schools weren't just segregated; they were severely underfunded. Financial handicaps were common in southern schools for black children, and prior to World War II, most black schools in Hancock County were just "pitiful shacks."⁵⁰ Mrs. Dennis Turner, who served on the Hancock County School Board in the 1920s, remembered the terrible conditions of some of the black schools. She lamented, "Schools were supposed to be separate but equal. If they had been more equal back then things might be better now." How she defines "better" is unclear.⁵¹ Hancock County finally built a modern school for its black residents in the 1950s as a last ditch effort to prove that separate schools could be truly equal.⁵² Of course, one school was not enough to house the county's black majority, and the new Hancock Central was overcrowded.⁵³ The all-white school board completely ignored the school's overcapacity; they considered their investment in a new black school to be adequate compliance with *Brown*. In the 1950s, many Southern counties funneled money into black schools to belatedly prove that separate could be equal. However, according to one historian, "the black community saw this

⁴⁹ Georgia Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, "Desegregation of Public Districts in Georgia," Dec. 2007, 82-84, <http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/GADESG-FULL.pdf> (accessed March 25, 2015).

⁵⁰ Thomas O'Brien, *The Politics of Race and Schooling: Public Education in Georgia, 1900-1961* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 1999), 10-11. John Rozier, *Black Boss: Political Revolution in a Georgia County* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982), 38.

⁵¹ Mrs. Dennis Turner, interview by John Rozier, Oct. 29, 1978. John Rozier papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

⁵² Rozier, *Black Boss*, 39.

⁵³ Lawrence J. Hanks, *The Struggle for Black Political Empowerment in Three Georgia Counties*, (University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 70.

increase in spending as a joke,” and subpar conditions and overcrowding remained common in black schools.⁵⁴

On July 2, 1964, the day the Civil Rights Act was passed, the local white paper, the *Sparta Ishmaelite*, greeted the legislation with resounding silence. Instead, the front-page news reported on Sparta’s new doctor and the recent fallout of cotton storage rates. There was no mention of the historic vote that was taking place in the U.S. House of Representatives.⁵⁵ The tiny “colored news” section that was sandwiched between ads on the paper’s last page likewise stuck to its usual standard of obituaries and thank you notes.⁵⁶ The next edition of the weekly paper was similarly mute on the issue of civil rights.⁵⁷ The only reference to the monumental bill appeared in the regular section “Reports From Washington,” which was written by Governor Herman Talmadge himself. The report made no direct mention of the Civil Rights Act, but Talmadge condemned northern senators for “meddling” in the affairs of the South.⁵⁸

Local government officials made no move to respond publicly to the Civil Rights Act in the *Sparta Ishmaelite*, but that does not mean that city officials were resigned to compliance. Less than two weeks after the Civil Rights Act was passed, the white Mayor of Sparta, Jack Collins, approved a law that forbade citizens from

⁵⁴ Jeff Roche, *Restructured Resistance: The Sibley Commission and the Politics of Desegregation in Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 34.

⁵⁵ *Sparta Ishmaelite*, July 2, 1964.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Sparta Ishmaelite*, July 9, 1964.

⁵⁸ Herman E. Talmadge, “Herman Talmadge Reports From Washington,” *Sparta Ishmaelite*, July 9, 1964, 4.

congregating on the streets from 10:00 PM to 5:00 AM.⁵⁹ The small notice on the front page of the *Ishmaelite* made no mention of race, but the discriminatory nature of the law was made clear by the fact that a full transcript of the new ordinance was published under the “colored news” section of the paper. Aware that demonstrations of all kinds were occurring across the country, local white politicians wanted to ensure that black residents were not conspiring to organize late at night, beyond the watchful eye of the ruling white elite.⁶⁰

But the Civil Rights Act inspired black residents of Hancock County, and after the legislation was passed several black leaders formed the Hancock County Democratic Club (HDCD) to push for greater educational and political equality.⁶¹ The group began to make some headway in 1965 when the Federal Government finally joined their fight against segregated schooling in Hancock County. The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) asked the Hancock County Board of Education to come up with an educational plan that would dismantle school segregation in accordance with the recent Civil Rights Act. The DOE rejected the school board’s first plan, but rather than give in to federal pressure, the new Superintendent of Schools, W. M. “Red” Andrews, traveled to Washington D.C. to meet with the U.S. attorneys who were demanding county action on civil rights.⁶² The desegregation plan that resulted from that meeting was published in full in the *Sparta Ishmaelite*

⁵⁹ *Sparta Ishmaelite*, July 16, 1964, 1.

⁶⁰ *Sparta Ishmaelite*, July 23, 1964, 8.

⁶¹ Hanks, *The Struggle*, 58.

⁶² “You and Your Local Schools: Superintendent in Washington,” *Sparta Ishmaelite*, June 24, 1965, 1.

on July 8, 1965. The plan promised to “comply with the laws of the land” and desegregate the county’s schools.⁶³

The resolution passed by the school board enacted a freedom-of-choice plan.⁶⁴ School boards across the South used freedom-of-choice plans as a way to stall meaningful integration, and this plan was no exception. Hancock County’s freedom-of-choice plan allowed any student, black or white, to apply for a transfer to a school across the color line. In theory, this plan sounded like a fair and voluntary way to achieve school desegregation. In reality, however, white families never applied to transfer their white children to black schools. Instead, Hancock County’s freedom-of-choice plan placed an unfair burden on local black families to desegregate Hancock County’s public school system.

Freedom-of-choice plans often resulted in traumatic experiences for the black students who did courageously volunteer to leave their communities to attend white schools where they were viewed as dangerous interlopers. Such was the case for Sanford Edwards of Hancock County. As a consequence of Hancock County’s new freedom-of-choice plan and black public pressure, school board officials were forced to admit their first black student, Sanford Edwards, to the all-white Sparta High School in August 1965. Sanford was the son of local civil rights activist Reverend R. E. Edwards, and his experience at Sparta High that year was horrific. His father remembered, “My son came home every afternoon as bloody as a hog.”⁶⁵ Gertrina Nelson, a black schoolteacher, recalled that school officials made no effort to protect

⁶³ Hancock County Board of Education, “Policies of the Hancock County Board of Education Relative to the Civil Rights Act of 1964,” *Sparta Ishmaelite*, July 8, 1965, 5.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Rozier, *Black Boss*, 40.

Edwards.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, Edwards persevered through the violence and returned day after day to Sparta High School.

For many white Spartans, even one black student was intolerable. After Edwards was admitted to Sparta High School a group of white parents began organizing and fundraising to build a new whites-only private institution that would become John Hancock Academy. Linda Boyer, one of the first students to attend John Hancock Academy, said that her father supported the new school because Sanford Edwards was in her brother's tenth grade class. "Through my brother we saw the tension," she remembers, "and I was so afraid... that my brother would get in trouble because of this."⁶⁷ By trouble, Linda meant violent confrontation between black and white students. Many other white citizens recall the atmosphere of fear that pervaded in the white community when the black majority began pressing for inclusion. George Darden, one of the founders of John Hancock Academy, commented in 1978 that the only reason the town did not have more "trouble" in the form of violence during the 1960s and 1970s was because "we didn't have that 20 to 40 year group among whites," who were most likely to resort to violent confrontation. The older white generation preferred to maintain power through political and institutional means.⁶⁸

Another pressing fear felt by white citizens of Sparta was the threat of miscegenation. Melanie Brassell, another early transfer to Hancock Academy, said

⁶⁶ Gertrina Nelson, interview by John Rozier, Sept. 21, 1978. John Rozier papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

⁶⁷ Linda Barnes, interview by author, Sept. 2, 2014.

⁶⁸ George Darden, interview by John Rozier, Oct. 5, 1978. John Rozier papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

that her parents supported the idea of new private school because “us being girls, they just didn’t want us going with the black boys.”⁶⁹ Anxiety about white women consorting with black men has been prevalent in white supremacist rhetoric since the days of slavery. This terror intensified during the Civil Rights Movement when white citizens were forced to come to terms with white women mingling with black men. Segregationist politicians publicly capitalized on miscegenation to garner support for their causes, which fanned fears even higher.⁷⁰ Superintendent Red Andrews recognized those same worries among the white citizens of Hancock County. When Andrews traveled to Washington to meet with a Department of Education employee about the county’s desegregation plan, Andrews proposed, “since fears were sexual all black males entering class with white females be castrated.” The HEW official responded in kind: “That would be ok, but they had to treat everyone equally so the white males would have to be castrated too.”⁷¹ These interviews indicate that it was the fear of these two extremes, racial violence and interracial love, that motivated white parents to abandon public schooling in Hancock County.

⁶⁹ Melanie Brassell, interview by author, Oct. 7, 2014.

⁷⁰ To examine the relationship between segregationists and miscegenation read, Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens’ Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-62* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1971), Jane Dailey, “The Theology of Massive Resistance: Sex, Segregation, and the Sacred after Brown,” in *Massive Resistance: Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction*, ed. Clive Webb (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), and Phoebe Godfrey, “Bayonets, Brainwashing, and Bathrooms: The Discourse of Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Desegregation of Little Rock’s Central High,” in *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 43.

⁷¹ Red Andrews, interview by John Rozier, Oct., 25, 1978. John Rozier papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

The white establishment was the backbone of the privatization impulse in Sparta. Virtually all of John Hancock Academy's founders were members of the upper class. They owned the bank, the hospital, various businesses, and large farms in the community. They also had prominent roles in local government. The lasting connection between the mayor's office and John Hancock Academy is illustrative of this fact. Jack Collins was the first of three white mayors to serve in the 1960s and 1970s who had a strong connection to John Hancock Academy. Collins, in particular, was instrumental in getting the school off the ground. He began researching how to start a private school in 1966 while still serving out his third and last term as mayor of Sparta. After hearing about the budding private school movement in South Carolina, he and his wife attended a private school presentation in Washington, Georgia. After the demonstration, the Collins family began holding regular meetings at their house for the purpose of organizing a similar private academy in Sparta.⁷²

John Hancock Academy also had connections to government officials on the Hancock County School Board. These connections proved vital, especially in July 1966 when the founders of JHA were scrambling to find a school building before the start of the academic year. Superintendent Red Andrews was already sympathetic to the private school cause, as was school board member Oscar McVey Peden. Peden's daughter, Beth Peden Webster, believes that her father was instrumental in getting the board to put the district's old white grammar school, built in the 1890s, up for sale the summer before the academy was set to open. George Darden quickly bid on the property, officially making it John Hancock Academy's new home. Peden

⁷² "Founding of John Hancock Academy," in John Hancock Academy Yearbook, 1967.

immediately enrolled all of his children when JHA began registering students later that summer. The school board got its first black member later that year, and by 1967, Peden had resigned from office, relinquishing all ties to the public school system.⁷³

The founders of John Hancock Academy had the backing of local officials, but they still needed advice on how to get their school up and running. William L. Presley, the president of The Westminster Schools, founded the Georgia Association of Independent Schools (GAIS) in 1954 to support white flight from public schools.⁷⁴ However, the Westminster Schools in Atlanta opted to voluntarily desegregate in 1965, making GAIS an unattractive option to the founders of JHA.⁷⁵ GAIS even banished six schools from its organization in 1972 because they were accused of being segregation academies.⁷⁶

Since JHA officials could not get institutional support in the state of Georgia, they turned to the South Carolina Independent School Association (SCISA). T. Elliot Wannamaker founded SCISA in 1965 to legitimize segregation academies in South Carolina.⁷⁷ Wannamaker was open about his commitment to segregation, telling the press that he was concerned about “the effects mass integration will have on our

⁷³ Beth Peden Webster, interview by author, Oct. 7, 2014, “The Founding of John Hancock Academy,” in John Hancock Academy Yearbook, 1967.

⁷⁴ George Independent School Association, “About our Association,” <http://www.gisaschools.org/general-info/about-gisa/> (accessed Nov. 16, 2014).

⁷⁵ Michelle Allen Purdy, “Southern and Independent: Public Mandates, Private Schools, and Black Students, 1951-1970,” PhD diss., Emory University, 2011.

⁷⁶ “Six Schools in Georgia Draw Action,” *The Tuscaloosa News*, May 1, 1972, 3.

⁷⁷ Susan Smith Till, “Discourse of School Desegregation Orangeburg, South Carolina,” (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 2007), 129. Segregated Private Schools Increasing Throughout S.C.,” *Spartanburg Herald-Journal*, July 10, 1966, 2.

schools in the future.”⁷⁸ SCISA provided vital organizational support for budding segregation academies in South Carolina similar to the institutional support the White Citizens’ Council offered segregation academies in Mississippi.⁷⁹ SCISA had already founded 26 private segregated academies in South Carolina by the time Dr. Collins reached out to the organization in the spring of 1966.⁸⁰ Tom Turnipseed was the executive secretary of SCISA, and he traveled across South Carolina advising white citizens who wanted to create private schools. In 1966, he left his home state to meet with John Hancock Academy’s founders and counsel them on funding, public relations, organization, and recruitment. Tom Turnipseed’s advice was so valuable that the staff of John Hancock Academy thanked him in the academy’s first annual yearbook.⁸¹

Schools are expensive endeavors, and John Hancock Academy was able to open that first year largely because of individual donations. Buck Patterson, John Hancock Academy’s first chairman of the board, obligated \$60,000 worth of his own property in 1966 to make sure that the teachers would get paid.⁸² Those teachers

⁷⁸ “Segregated Private Schools,” *Spartanburg Herald-Journal*, 2.

⁷⁹ South Carolina Independent School Association, “History and Organization of SCISA,” <http://scisa.org/about/> (accessed November 14, 2014). For information on the ways in which the White Citizens’ Council Promoted Segregation Academies see Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), Michael W. Fuquay, “Civil Rights and the Private School Movement in Mississippi, 1964-1971” *History of Education Quarterly* Vol. 42, No. 2, Summer 2002, 159-180, and Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens’ Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-62* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

⁸⁰ “Segregated Private Schools Increasing Throughout S.C.,” *Spartanburg Herald-Journal*, July 10, 1966, 2.

⁸¹ “Founding of John Hancock Academy,” *John Hancock Academy Yearbook*, 1967.

⁸² Buck Patterson, interview by John Rozier, July 6, 1978. John Rozier papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

came from the public system, and they voluntarily sacrificed higher pay and retirement benefits to work for John Hancock Academy. Some teachers even volunteered their time. Virginia H. Moore worked for John Hancock Academy for just \$1.00 a year.⁸³ Tuition was also high at \$300 dollars a year. That was a significant sum to the poor white citizens of Hancock County. Some parents had to fall back on investments to send their children to JHA. Susan Haywood's father sold a parcel of land to fund his daughter's tuition.⁸⁴ Many students also contributed to their education. Linda Boyer could not participate in school sports because she had to spend her afternoons working the register at a local convenience store to pay for her cap and gown. Despite these financial sacrifices, JHA could not afford the same services as the public school. Students had to pay for their own books and bring their own lunches every day. The school also had no budget for busses, so parents put tarps over the beds of their pick up trucks and drove from house to house to pick up students for school.⁸⁵

On August 29, 1966, John Hancock Academy held its first day of classes. For the youngest students, little had changed from the year before. John Hancock Academy was housed in what used to be the public elementary school, the staff was comprised of former public school teachers, and well-known members of the white establishment made up the administration and the board of trustees. One student, Fred Webster, who transferred to JHA in his eight grade year, recalled, "We left one school and went to another school and all our friends were there so we didn't really

⁸³ Linda Boyer, interview by author, Sept. 23, 2014.

⁸⁴ Susan Haywood, interview by author, Oct. 7, 2014.

⁸⁵ Linda Boyer, interview by author, Sept. 23, 2014.

notice any difference.”⁸⁶ However, not all of the teachers at John Hancock came directly from the public school. Out of the twelve teachers at the school, two were not certified to teach and a third teacher was a volunteer. Furthermore, the school had no science laboratory or gym. The school itself did not have accreditation when it opened because it failed to live up to the standards set by the state.⁸⁷

Turnipseed came back to speak at the John Hancock Academy’s first commencement in 1967. At the ceremony, Turnipseed used racially coded language to congratulate parents and students for making the right decision to send their children to private school. In his speech, Turnipseed criticized “progressive” education, whose students he said ended up in places like Berkley, California. He also lamented the Supreme Court decision to strike down prayer in public schools. Turnipseed went on the next year to campaign for George Wallace, whom he met while working for SCISA. In the 1970s, Turnipseed made a dramatic turn-around and began publicly advocating for several liberal causes such as civil right for minorities, anti-war campaigns, and environmentalism.⁸⁸ After making his radical transformation, Turnipseed admitted that SCISA was founded to support white flight: “We denied it had anything to do with integration, but it did. It was fear. It was racism.”⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Fred Webster, interview by author, Oct. 7, 2014.

⁸⁷ Jim Leeson, “Private Schools Continue to Increase in the South,” U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare. Office of Education. Reprinted in *The Southern Education Report*, Vol. 2, No. 4. (Nov. 1966), 23.

⁸⁸ “Tom Turnipseed,” <http://www.turnipseed.net/tom.shtml> (accessed Nov. 18, 2014).

⁸⁹ “Private Schools,” *The Post and Courier*, May 1, 2004.

John Hancock Academy used the same sorts of racially coded language in all of its official documents. JHA's first yearbook claims that the school was founded "with malice towards none," and dedicates the book in part to "the friends of independence, local control, and private enterprise."⁹⁰ Coded language such as this was common in the segregation academy movement. By the late 1960s, it was no longer legally or culturally acceptable to be openly segregationist; so white citizens across the South used a misplaced interpretation of free enterprise to legitimize their existence.⁹¹ Yet, despite the coded language that JHA officials used publicly, the residents of Sparta all knew the real reason that John Hancock Academy was founded. Roosevelt Warren, a black attorney and activist said, "The private school system in the county was not established for better education but to maintain segregation."⁹² School officials would also admit this to the press so long as they remained unnamed. For instance, one official at JHA admitted to Vinnie Williams, a correspondent for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "Our children won't receive as good an education in an integrated high school. Economic problems, among other things, have handicapped Negro learners – and helping them catch up will simply

⁹⁰ "Dedication," John Hancock Academy Yearbook, 1967. "Founding of John Hancock Academy," John Hancock Academy Yearbook, 1967.

⁹¹ For more on coded language and the shift from massive resistance to mainstream conservatism see, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁹² Roosevelt Warren, interview by John Rozier, Sept. 7, 1978. John Rozier papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

penalize our children.”⁹³ White citizens across the country echoed this complaint. They saw black schools, teachers, and pupils as inferior. Ironically, white school board leaders would point to the dramatic funding disparity they themselves had created as one reason black children were behind and should therefore be educated separately from white children.

John Hancock Academy also had support networks bigger and more influential than local government and segregationist organizations. The Georgia Legislature may have ended the private school plan in 1959, but white politicians in the state remained dedicated to the segregationist cause. In the spring of 1967, one of the first students at JHA, Linda Boyer, wrote the Governor of Georgia, Lester Maddox, requesting that he purchase an ad in her school yearbook.⁹⁴ It is understandable that Linda would reach out to Lester Maddox. He rose to fame in Georgia politics on his unyielding dedication to segregation. The majority of Atlanta businesses desegregated after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but not Maddox’s. The future governor’s restaurant, The Pickrick, had been serving up Southern cooking and conservative politics since 1947. When three black student activists challenged the restaurant’s discriminatory policies in July 1964, Maddox brandished a gun and his throng of supporters took up axe handles to bar the students’ entrance. This violent confrontation made national headlines and endeared Maddox to a generation of racist white Georgians who resented federal intervention on behalf of

⁹³ Vinnie Williams, “Hancock Serves As School ‘Lab,’” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, April 29, 1967.

⁹⁴ Lester Maddox to Linda Boyer, April 28, 1967.

black citizens of the state. White residents rewarded Maddox for his dedication to segregation with the governorship two years later.⁹⁵

Surprisingly, Lester Maddox wrote back to Linda. Maddox's letter thanked her for her request but politely indicated, "The Office of Governor has no funds allocated for worthwhile projects, such as yours."⁹⁶ The letter went on to thank John Hancock Academy and Hancock County for supporting his campaign. It closed by offering his congratulations to the students of John Hancock and extending his "very best wishes for every possible success in this worthy endeavor."⁹⁷

Four months after Linda received her reply from Maddox, the governor came to speak at John Hancock Academy for its second annual school opening. A large crowd of white citizens from Sparta attended the event, which took place at the local National Guard Armory. The presence of the governor underscored the strong alliance between Georgia State officials and the white segregationists who elected them. The Governor proclaimed his "firm conviction that the greatest enemy of education in America is our own national government."⁹⁸ Furthermore, Maddox made no secret of the fact that he considered the federal government an enemy of education because of its commitment to integrated classrooms. Maddox described integration as an "unnatural requirement," and declared, "The Federal government has placed socialism ahead of our children, ahead of education—and even ahead of

⁹⁵ Justin Nystrom, "Lester Maddox (1915-2003)," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, last modified Sept. 15, 2014, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/government-politics/lester-maddox-1915-2003> (accessed Sept. 28, 2014).

⁹⁶ Lester Maddox to Linda Boyer, April 28, 1967.

⁹⁷ Lester Maddox to Linda Boyer, April 28, 1967.

⁹⁸ "Gov. L Maddox Made Address,' *Sparta Ishmaelite*, Sept. 1967.

the economic and military security of the nation.”⁹⁹ Here again, Maddox echoed local white sentiment and widespread regional politics, for southern segregationists often cried socialism or communism in response to the federal government’s efforts to establish racial equality.¹⁰⁰

Lester Maddox continued to pander to his audience by slandering the U.S. Supreme Court’s recent decision to outlaw prayer in public school classrooms. John Hancock Academy does not have Christian in its name, but it might as well have. Since its founding, JHA has had strong connections to local Methodist and Baptist churches. The first headmaster, James W. Brantley, was a minister. Susan Pound, an early alumna and current teacher at John Hancock, said that her parents told her they were transferring her to John Hancock Academy because her Sunday school teacher would be there.¹⁰¹ The parents and alumni of John Hancock were earnest in their commitment to religious education. Many parents, then and now, deeply believe in the value of a Christian education and thank God for keeping the school open. Nonetheless, religious private schools remain more segregated than their secular counterparts. This is particularly true in the South where many religious schools were founded with the intention of maintaining segregation.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ “Gov. L Maddox Made Address,” *Sparta Ishmaelite*.

¹⁰⁰ George Lewis, *The White South and the Red Menace: Segregationists, Anticommunism, and Massive Resistance, 1945-1965* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 160-165.

¹⁰¹ Susan Pound, interview with author, Oct. 7, 2014.

¹⁰² Sean F. Reardon and John T. Yun, “Private School Racial Enrollments and Segregation,” (The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University, June 26, 2002) 5, http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/private-school-racial-enrollments-and-segregation/Private_Schools.pdf.

In so many ways, Lester Maddox confirmed the righteousness of John Hancock Academy's cause to his audience. He praised the school's "noble purpose," derided the federal government's integration efforts as socialist, and emphasized the value of a Christian education. In condoning private segregation, Maddox echoed mainstream politics in Georgia. Here, in Sparta, Georgia, was Maddox's segregationist dream realized, and all on the private dime.

By 1969, black citizens of Hancock were fed up with one-way, token desegregation. It had been four years since Edwards transferred to Sparta High School, but there were still only 70 black students attending the predominantly white school. Meanwhile, Hancock Central Elementary and High School remained entirely black. Furthermore, Hancock Central's building and busses were overcrowded, with 2,200 students crammed into a building designed for 1,400 students. In contrast, Sparta High School housed only 370 students, 300 of them white, 70 of them black. On September 5, John McCown led 200 black students on a peaceful march from the all-black Hancock Central School to the predominantly white Sparta High School.¹⁰³ McCown was a controversial figure in Hancock County. He arrived in Sparta in 1966 and quickly rose to political prominence as executive director of the Georgia Council on Human Relations and, after the election of 1968, Hancock County Commissioner. McCown successfully brought millions of investment dollars into the county through the Ford Foundation and the United States Office of Economic Opportunity. Many black residents admired his leadership, passion, and dedication to black political and economic advancement. Many white

¹⁰³ "Sparta Negroes Boycotting Court-Shielded Schools," *Atlanta Journal*, 1969.

residents, on the other hand, were terrified of his aggressive black power rhetoric, and they considered him to be a dangerous interloper who stirred up trouble among an otherwise reasonable black populace.¹⁰⁴ When the students arrived at Hancock Central High School, they asked to be enrolled at Sparta High School under the county's freedom-of-choice plan. Superintendent Red Andrews refused, and instead closed all of Hancock County's schools. Sparta police responded to the protest by arresting John McCown for parading without a permit.¹⁰⁵

After the protests, the Hancock County School Board asked for a court order prohibiting further demonstrations. A judge in Milledgeville granted the request, and white Hancock County Sheriff J. P. "Slim" Walton delivered restraining orders to the three black leaders of the march, including John McCown, Edith Ingram, the county ordinary, and George Lott, the head official of the Urban League. However, when schools reopened on September 9, black students refused to back down. Nearly every black student in the county boycotted still-segregated education in Hancock County. Hancock Central's 2,000 students either did not show up for

¹⁰⁴ Racial tension in the county did reach extremely high levels under McCown's leadership, even leading to an arms race between black and white citizens that did not end until Governor Jimmy Carter personally intervened. Author and white Hancock County native John Rozier blamed McCown for destroying good race relations in the area and "ripping apart" the "social fabric" of Hancock County. In reality, black residents started organizing to challenge white supremacy before McCown arrived, though his leadership certainly contributed to the rise of black political dominance in the county. However, white residents' suspicions were correct that McCown engaged in questionable business practices. In 1976 McCown was called to trial for the misappropriation of over 250,000 dollars. McCown never made it to his court date, as he died one week before the trial when his private plane mysteriously crashed. Hanks, *The Struggle*, 87-94. Rozier, *Black Boss*. Stephen G. N. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 220-225.

¹⁰⁵ "Sparta Negroes Boycotting Court-Shielded Schools," *Atlanta Journal*, 1969.

school, or left by mid morning. The second black school, Southwest Elementary, was similarly deserted.¹⁰⁶

That same day, the *Macon Telegraph* ran a picture of a Ku Klux Klan rally in Hancock County. An anonymous photographer took the shots under the cover of darkness. He could not risk using a flash bulb, so the only light illuminating the Klansmen was the fiery ember of a burning cross. The photographer estimated that some 200 Klansmen attended the rally. They all wore white robes, but none were hooded. It seems that these Klansmen had nothing to fear from showing their faces in Hancock County. County law enforcement officials denied that the rally ever occurred, despite the fact that additional sources corroborated the photographer's story.¹⁰⁷ Roosevelt Warren, a black resident of Sparta, remembers seeing burned crosses in the county.¹⁰⁸ Even Buck Patterson, one of John Hancock Academy's founders and Mayor of Sparta during the 1969 protests, later admitted in a private interview that the Klan offered to come. He claims to have turned down the offer.¹⁰⁹

The boycott continued for a week until the school board finally met in an emergency meeting. The board agreed to transfer ninety-two black students and two black teachers from Hancock Central to Sparta High immediately, and they would transfer an equal number of students and teachers in December. The board also agreed to equalize black and white teacher salaries, and they promised to write

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Charles Pounders, "The Hancock School Crisis," *The People's Voice* Vol. II, No. 4, Sept. 30, 1969.

¹⁰⁸ Roosevelt Warren, interview by John Rozier, Sept. 7, 1978. John Rozier papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

¹⁰⁹ Buck Patterson, interview by John Rozier, Sept. 6, 1978. John Rozier papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

a proposal that would alleviate the overcrowding of black busses. However, the school board would not transfer any white students or teachers to Hancock Central or Southwest Elementary. Those schools would remain entirely black.¹¹⁰

The addition of 184 black students left a slight white majority at Sparta High School in a school system that was 80 percent black. Nonetheless, when black students protested, white parents transferred their children to John Hancock Academy in record numbers. The pace of white flight accelerated even further in the fall of 1970 when black students staged their longest boycott to date. In July 1970, the United States Court for the Northern District of Georgia accepted a new desegregation plan from the Hancock County Board of Education. The plan would keep every one of the county's 250 white students at the Sparta High School Center alongside 260 black students, leaving all other schools completely segregated. The court-approved plan did require the board to reassign fifteen white teachers to all-black schools in the county. However, Superintendent Andrews said that all of the teachers "refuse to accept assignment to either of the all-Negro schools."¹¹¹ McCown explained that black people in the county were upset because the plan did not create a unitary system, and because the school board did not consult the black community about the new integration plan, a claim that the sole black member of the board of education, Robert Ingram, confirmed. On August 22, black students announced their plan to boycott the schools. Teachers voted to join their efforts on September 3, and

¹¹⁰ Charles Pounders, "The Hancock School Crisis," *The People's Voice* Vol. II, No. 4, Sept. 30, 1969.

¹¹¹ Bob Rohrer, "Hearing Set on Hancock School Suit," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 10, 1970.

demonstrations continued for twenty-nine days until a federal three-judge panel in Atlanta ordered the district to resume operations.¹¹²

By the time classes resumed on September 21, white families had fled from the district en masse. JHA opened in August 1970 with 225 white students. But by the end of that same school year, its enrollment had surged to 311 students.¹¹³ Susan Haywood transferred to JHA in 1971, and she remembers when they started bussing black students into Sparta High. “They [black students] would push you over and anyway all our parents were just horrified of them.”¹¹⁴ JHA alumna Linda Boyer agreed, “people felt like it was unsafe for their children to be in the public education.”¹¹⁵ Superintendent Red Andrews lamented that, “In eight years we went from total segregation to total integration to total segregation.” However, Andrews himself participated in white flight. He sent his children to John Hancock while he was still the superintendent of schools.¹¹⁶

The vast majority of the white teachers left the public school system as well. By the mid-1970s, there was only one white part-time teacher in the Hancock County public school system. That teacher was Wilma Marsh. Marsh could not afford to leave the public schools because she needed retirement, a benefit not offered by

¹¹² “Negros Plan Protest At Sparta,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, Aug. 21, 1970. “Hancock Blacks Consider Boycotts,” *The Atlanta Journal*, Aug. 22, 1970. Mike Bowler, “Marchers Keep Going In Sparta,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 28, 1970. “Negro Teachers Vote To Stay Out at Sparta,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, Sept. 3, 1970. Bob Rohrer, “3 Judges Order End of Hancock School Boycott,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 19, 1970.

¹¹³ John Hancock Academy Yearbook, 1971.

¹¹⁴ Susan Haywood, interview by author, Oct. 7, 2014.

¹¹⁵ Linda Boyer, interview by author, Sept. 23, 2014.

¹¹⁶ Red Andrews, interview by John Rozier, Oct. 31, 1978. John Rozier papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

John Hancock Academy. In 1969, she was sent to teach at a school in Devereux, a small black community in the county. Marsh cried when she heard the news that she had to transfer to a black school. She dreaded it for weeks, but once she arrived, she was surprised to find that black parents were respectful, the students made great strides, and the principal was wonderful. According to Marsh, "I spent eight years out there and they were some of the best years I spent in school."¹¹⁷ Unfortunately, most white teachers in Hancock County never gave integration a chance.

John Hancock Academy needed a new building to house the tremendous influx of students from 1970 to 1971, so school officials went to their now significantly larger pool of white patrons to ask for donations. Former Mayor of Sparta, Dr. George F. Green, donated land to John Hancock Academy for the new school building in 1970.¹¹⁸ However, paying for a new building remained a momentous task. John Dickens, the headmaster, "begged and thanked" to get the new school off the ground. Parents responded to his pleas and gave substantial gifts to make a down payment on the \$350,000 building.¹¹⁹ Parents also volunteered their time hosting fish fries, bake sales, and dinners to raise funds for the school. The class of 1971 was the first to graduate in the new aluminum and steel framed structure. The roof that leaks on the children today is the same one that was built in 1971. John Hancock Academy still struggles to provide facilities that are equal to

¹¹⁷ Wilma Marsh, interview by John Rozier, Oct. 4, 1978. John Rozier papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

¹¹⁸ "Dedication," in John Hancock Academy Yearbook, 1972, "Hancock County, Ga. – New Challenges in a Mostly Black Area," *The Afro-American*, May 6, 1969, 18.

¹¹⁹ John Dickens, interview by John Rozier, Oct. 3, 1978. John Rozier papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

public school accommodations. Yet, it does not lack for students in this black majority county.

The speed with which John Hancock Academy got up and running was astounding. The school charter was approved on June 27, 1966, and classes began on August 29, just two months later. Yet, in this, John Hancock Academy was typical of the segregation academy movement. White parents across the South worked furiously to create private schools in record time to avoid impending court-ordered desegregation. Organizations such as the White Citizens' Council and the South Carolina Independent School Association provided crucial advice to local white communities. The approval of state governments also made this rapid growth possible, and John Hancock Academy is a fitting example of how private and public backing helped maintain segregated southern schooling long after *Brown*.

The new millennium brought big changes to John Hancock Academy, as the school finally accepted its first black students. This was a tremendous step for a school with such a prejudiced past. It is particularly noteworthy that the school's administration made a concerted effort to welcome the new black students. One black parent recalled that when she toured the school in 2010, there were no black families attending JHA, but the headmaster, Coach Peck, accepted her children on the spot. That same year, Coach Peck instituted a black history program for the first time in the school's history. One year later, a new headmaster, Steve James, went one step further to make minority students feel welcome by taking down the giant Rebel flag hanging in the school gymnasium.¹²⁰ However, John Hancock Academy

¹²⁰ Kiki Gresham and Brittney Gresham, interview by author, April 16, 2015.

has not given up all its ties to Sparta's Confederate past. When John Hancock Academy's black students don their cheerleader or football uniforms, they are still represented by the Rebel mascot, and white students wave them on with the Confederate battle flag. The old planter mascot symbolizes a time of perceived prosperity to the white citizens of Hancock, and a time when they had total control over local government. The plethora of Confederate paraphernalia that covers John Hancock Academy shows a longing for bygone days when its white patrons had total political hegemony. To black citizens, the Confederate Rebel represents just the opposite. It symbolizes all the oppression and brutality that slavery entailed. Yet, while the school now accepts students from diverse backgrounds, all students, white and black, are made to wear the red and grey.

CHAPTER 3

LAKEVIEW ACADEMY

Lakeview Academy came into existence as many other Southern segregation academies did, through a strange mix of fear and devotion, prejudice and love. The mothers and fathers of Lakewood wanted what every parent wants, to give their children the very best. The problem lies in how those parents defined good and bad in education. The founder of Lakewood, Robert Tether, told a student interviewer in 1990 that Lakeview's relationship to integration was "inherent" but "indirect." He did not object to classes of mixed race, per se, but he nonetheless held a belief that public schools were integrated "at the cost of public education."¹²¹ Within that statement lies a fundamental and disturbing assumption: that an education that includes black children will never be as good as an education at a purely white institution.

Lakeview Academy is located in Gainesville, GA, and like many southern whites, its patrons disdained the sweeping social changes brought to them by the 1960s. That fact is evident throughout their school records in telling little clues. It is in the job description for Lakeview's Charter Membership Committee, which recommended that a woman head all committees dealing with secretarial work, event invitations, and decorating, even as women were simultaneously and explicitly told they were unfit for interactions that dealt with "business

¹²¹ Robert Tether, interview by Camper Mundy, Feb. 9, 1990, transcript. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy. Gainesville, Georgia.

documents.”¹²² It is in Tether’s 1970 recruitment speech, which cited the fact that “the Supreme Court outlawed prayer” as a reason for the decline of public schools. It is in the sense of urgency that underlies Tether’s correspondences with his advertising consultant Gordon Sawyer, who advised him not to “take shortcuts” and rush the school’s creation because of “emotional involvement.” Sawyer would also advise Tether to downplay the school’s “race appeal” when marketing it.¹²³ In the 1960s, Gainesville’s white, conservative parents were confronted by a new age: one of mounting feminism, secularism, and racial integration. Faced with a society so different from their youth, they fled. They retreated with their children into an insular world filled with people much like themselves. In doing so, they isolated their children from the diverse world they would grow up to inhabit.

Lakeview Academy was chartered in 1968 as a reaction to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare’s new scrutiny of Gainesville and Hall County’s token desegregation plan. The explicitly segregationist politics of massive resistance had come to an end by the early 1960s. White politicians had failed to fully protect segregation from federal intervention; so white southerners began creating private institutions to escape public spaces that were now occupied by both white and black citizens. The 1960s founders of these neighborhoods, pools, golf courses, and schools did not classify their new institutions as white-only as they had in the 1950s. Instead, they claimed that their private, white institutions were simply a testament to the superiority of free enterprise, and declared that they had earned a

¹²² Lakeview Academy, Charter Membership Committee Job Descriptions. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy. Gainesville, Georgia.

¹²³ Gordon Sawyer to Robert Tether, Nov. 27, 1968. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy. Gainesville, Georgia.

place in them through their hard work in the American meritocracy. Founders and patrons then relied on admittance criteria other than race as well as high economic barriers, to keep these new spaces white.

Lakeview Academy is an example of how middle and upper class white families used private enterprise to escape public school desegregation. The founders used coded rhetoric in all of their formal advertising. Yet, the white community had a tacit understanding that the main function of the school was the preservation of segregation. Lakeview expanded rapidly with this model in the beginning, but as the 1970s wore on and the integration crisis lessened, parents increasingly turned back to the more affordable option of public schooling. The Supreme Court ruling in *Runyon v. McCrary* exacerbated this trend in 1976 when it declared discriminatory admission practices in private schools illegal. Faced with potential legal action and an enrollment crisis, Lakeview was forced to accept a token number of minority students, end its religious affiliation, and expand its academic programs to attract students from a broader range of local families. However, while the school is no longer strictly segregated, it still functions as a bastion for white flight. Today, the extensive admission standards and the high cost of tuition keep the student body at Lakeview overwhelmingly white.

The founding of Lakeview Academy is part of a large-scale, typical white response to *Brown v. Board*. When the Supreme Court first overturned the *Plessy v. Ferguson* verdict, Gainesville's white educators tried to circumvent the new ruling by belatedly proving that they could meet the standards set by *Plessy*. As part of this plan, the Gainesville School Board enacted a "spend-rather-than-blend strategy" in

which they attempted to fix the overcrowding and subpar conditions of the only secondary African American school in the county, Fair Street High School.¹²⁴ The school board approved a plan to construct a new building for Fair Street in 1955, though it was not completed until the fall of 1957 because the county opted to begin construction on a new school for white citizens first. Once it was completed, four underfunded primary schools for African Americans closed and the students were relocated to Fair Street. The added enrollment neutralized the additional space and left the new building just as overcrowded as the last, forcing the school to turn the gym, stage, shop, and home economics rooms into temporary classrooms.¹²⁵ During the 1959-1960 school year, Fair Street Elementary was 122 students over capacity and enrollment was expected to rise. Rather than consider desegregating the school system, the Gainesville city commissioners and the Gainesville School Board elected to build a second African American high school. The new school, christened E. E. Butler High School, opened in August 1962, eight years after the original *Brown* decision.¹²⁶

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 brought momentous change to the United States. Yet, in many ways, Gainesville's white elite was just as inclined to ignore it as they had the *Brown* ruling. In December 1964, the Gainesville School Board went ahead with a new plan to expand E. E. Butler High School, even after they discussed closing a white school due to low enrollment.¹²⁷ However, the authority of the U.S.

¹²⁴ Winfred E. Pitts, *A Victory of Sorts: Desegregation in a Southern Community* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America Inc., 2003), 110.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 112-114.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 125-131.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 133-134.

Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) began to grow after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the agency soon stepped up its efforts to enforce school desegregation in Georgia. In 1965, HEW demanded that the Gainesville and Hall County school boards submit their desegregation plans to the agency. As a result, a few token African American students were admitted to previously all white institutions in Gainesville.

The desegregation process was intensified further in 1968 due to the decision in *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*. By 1968, the Supreme Court had lost patience with freedom-of-choice programs that were designed to minimize and delay desegregation by putting the burden of school transfers onto students. Many school districts made the transfer process exceedingly difficult for black students, and the vast majority of white families refused to transfer their children at all. The *Green* decision declared that freedom-of-choice plans that did not eliminate identifiably white and black schools were unacceptable, making black and white student ratios a new criterion for determining if school districts were in compliance with *Brown*.¹²⁸

When the *Green* decision was handed down in 1968, Hall County had achieved only token, one-way desegregation of its public schools. There were still no black students at Miller Park School and there were no white students at Fair Street School, and desegregation numbers were extremely low in other black schools as well.¹²⁹ HEW finally lost patience with the Gainesville School Board in the summer

¹²⁸ *Green Et. Al. v. County School Board of New Kent County Et. Al.* 391, U.S. 430 (1968), No. 695.

¹²⁹ Pitts, *A Victory of Sorts*, 156.

of 1969, and the agency informed the county that Washington had initiated enforcement proceedings against the board for violating Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Fearful of court costs, lost federal funds, and an extreme desegregation plan, the school board finally relented and passed a more comprehensive integration plan set for the 1969-1970 school year.¹³⁰

It is in this context of white resistance to desegregation that Lakeview Academy was formed. Many white parents shared the sentiments of the white school board members and became frantic at the news of full-scale desegregation in their city. That group included a local surgeon named Robert Tether and his wife Lou. The Tethers had been talking about starting a private school since 1967. Now, with HEW putting more pressure on local school officials to desegregate county schools, their desire became more urgent. The Tethers, along with other Gainesville parents, attended a meeting on public school integration led by the Georgia Department of Education and HEW officials at Georgia Tech in early 1968.¹³¹ Shortly thereafter, the Tethers hosted a meeting to discuss establishing a private school. During their second meeting on May 23, 1968, they announced that they were going forward with their plan, and that the target start date for the school was September 1969. That meeting took place just three days after the Gainesville Board of Education announced their decision to adopt a plan that would completely integrate the city schools in September 1969. When a reporter from *The Daily Times*

¹³⁰ Ibid, 153-173.

¹³¹ Members of the Lakeview History Project Class of 1990, "Education Without Compromise: Lakeview Academy. A History of the First Two Decades," 1990. Robert Tether, speech notes. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy. Gainesville, Georgia.

asked about the connection between the private school's opening and the board of education's integration plan, one of the leaders of the new school project, Frank Wiegand, responded, "Our decision to try for September, 1969, has nothing to do with the decision by the board of education," as the target date had been set before the Gainesville Board of Education met on Monday.¹³² However, HEW had been in talks with the Gainesville Board of Education for months by this time, and local citizens were well aware that the school board was under pressure to come up with a more comprehensive integration plan.

During that same meeting, the school organizers created investigative committees to spearhead different aspects of the school's development. The men who led these committees were all upper and middle class residents of Hall County. The diverse connections and skills each of these men brought to the new school endeavor were crucial to getting the school off the ground. Frank Wiegand Jr. and Dr. Tether, both prominent upper class men in the community, used their social network to co-chair a steering committee. Local attorneys Elliot Dunn and Bob Reed provided the school with free legal advice on the legal committee. Sam Dunlap and Frank Norton, a local real estate and insurance developer, were likewise able to use their real estate knowledge and connections to the school's benefit as joint managers of the real estate committee. Finally, local businessmen Thomas Sheffield, Ed Waller, and George Thomas led the finance committee.¹³³

¹³² "Parents of 175 Interest in Private School Project," *The Daily Times*, May 26, 1968.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

Dr. Tether and twelve others filed for a charter just a few short months after these investigative committees were formed, and Superior Court Judge A. R. Kenyon awarded the charter on August 21, 1968.¹³⁴ Shortly thereafter, Dr. Tether hired Sawyer Advertising to develop a plan to market the school. Gordon Sawyer, the president of the advertising firm, provided valuable advice to Dr. Tether. Sawyer was aware that white flight was a touchy subject by 1968. HEW, empowered by recent Supreme Court rulings, was prosecuting school boards across the country for violating the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In February of that year, the Kerner Commission released the Kerner Report, and headlines across the country repeated its signature declaration: “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.”¹³⁵ It was no longer socially or, more importantly, legally acceptable in this political climate for new private schools to openly declare their dedication to segregation. Sawyer notified Tether of this, pointing out, “Schools founded purely to maintain segregation...have generally failed unless their emphasis quickly changed to quality education.”¹³⁶ He was likely referencing the segregation academies just an hour’s drive away in Atlanta, all of which quickly collapsed when the private tuition waivers promised by the Georgia Legislature dried up in 1963. However, as Sawyer noted, the private schools in Atlanta that were not founded explicitly to preserve segregation were doing exceedingly well. They experienced

¹³⁴ A. Richard Kenyon, Judge of the Superior Court, Hall County, Georgia, letter approving the incorporation of Gainesville Independent School, Inc., Aug. 21, 1968. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy. Gainesville, Georgia.

¹³⁵ United States, National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *The Kerner Report: The 1968 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, 1.

¹³⁶ Gordon Sawyer to Robert Tether, Nov. 27, 1968, Descriptive Brochure. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy. Gainesville, Georgia.

booming enrollments thanks to the *Brown* ruling, and desegregation in the schools ranged from minimal to nonexistent.¹³⁷ Sawyer thus came up with a list of selling points that were unrelated to race, knowing that white parents who heard about the new school would nonetheless understand the implicit promise of an all-white student body.

The main marketing technique Sawyer suggested was two-fold: first, emphasize growing educational expectations, and second, accuse the public schools of failing to live up to those expectations. The sample descriptive brochure Sawyer wrote observed, “education is becoming more and more important” because “a changing society requires more and more education, and is placing a higher premium on a good college education.” The brochure then goes on to criticize the public school system for its large class sizes, unwieldy bureaucracy, inadequate funding (Sawyer blamed “questionable” Great Society programs for taking money and manpower away from the schools), and its handling of school desegregation. According to Sawyer, “No matter what gains may or may not have been made through the school integration program, the fact is that the way it has been handled severely damaged the educational opportunities for all children.”¹³⁸ Private school founders working in the late 1960s often made these kinds of critiques, and the disparaging, albeit likely sanitized, remark about integration would have sent a clear message to prospective parents, white and black alike.

¹³⁷ Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 169-179.

¹³⁸ Gordon Sawyer to Robert Tether, Nov. 27, 1968.

Sawyer criticized teacher integration in particular. According to Sawyer, “The merging of schools has left teachers uncertain of their status. Teachers must be selected on the basis of color and not ability.” This was likely a reference to HEW’s recent insistence that Hall County integrate faculty as well as students. Many white southerners were convinced that white teachers were superior to black ones, and that black educators only retained positions in desegregated schools because of the racial quotas set by HEW. In reality, black teachers almost always got the short end of the stick when it came to racial hiring, as black teachers were fired, demoted, and shifted into meaningless administrative positions to remove them from the classroom all across the South. Such was the case in Hall County, and from 1966 to 1971, the percentage of African American teachers in Gainesville fell from 37.8 percent to 18.6 percent.¹³⁹

Sawyer himself commented on one prominent black educator that left that county system during the integration process: “And some Negro teachers of superior ability may get knocked out. It is felt the loss of Ulyses [Ulysses] Byas was a heavy blow to local education.”¹⁴⁰ Sawyer’s own sense of loss is suspect, as he did not even bother to spell Byas’s name correctly. Ulysses Byas was a widely respected black principal at the all-black Fair Street High School. Black high school principals, like the teachers they led, fared poorly when desegregation finally swept across the South. White school boards remained unwilling to put white children under the leadership of black professionals, even when those black professionals had more experience or education. Byas had a sterling reputation in the community, a

¹³⁹ Pitts, *A Victory of Sorts*, 165.

¹⁴⁰ Gordon Sawyer to Robert Tether, Nov. 27, 1968.

master's degree in educational administration, ten years of experience at Fair Street High School, and a position as president elect of the all-black Georgia Association of Educators. However, he too lost his position despite the fact that his white competitor had no experience as a principal in Gainesville. The white superintendent offered him a job as an assistant superintendent as an alternative, but Byas refused to give up his identity as a teacher for a position of meaningless authority. He quit his job that week.

One year later, Byas came back to Gainesville as the Secretary of the Georgia Teachers and Education Association (GTEA), and informed the people of Gainesville that GTEA had filed a lawsuit against the school system for unfairly dismissing black personnel.¹⁴¹ The GTEA lost their suit against the Gainesville City District in June 1969. U.S. District Judge Albert J. Henderson declared that although, "the Gainesville City School District has had a history of racial discrimination," he still believed that, "the only reason for the overall deduction in the teaching staff of the Gainesville City System for the school year 1969-1970 was the loss of black students from the Gainesville City System to the Hall County System."¹⁴² As for the new private school, there would be no allegations of black teacher mistreatment, because every faculty member hired the following year was white.¹⁴³

After Sawyer outlined the pitfalls of public education that necessitated a private school, he identified the types of families that the private school should

¹⁴¹ Vanessa Siddle Walker with Ulysses Byas, *Hello Professor: A Black Principal and Professional Leadership in the Segregated South* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 231-234.

¹⁴² Pitts, *A Victory of Sorts*, 164.

¹⁴³ Photograph, "The Original Lakeview Lions." Lakeview Academy, Gainesville, Georgia.

target as potential patrons. When it came to choosing families, it was all about money. Sawyer told Tether that they needed to identify at least 500 prospective families in order to garner enough interest to make the school financially viable. According to Sawyer, “judgment should be based, in so far as possible, on actual economic data and not on surface impressions,” and, “anyone who can afford payments of \$100 a month to the education of their children is a good prospect for this school.” Sawyer also recommended that special attention be given to local professionals, such as leaders in the business community or teachers. The new private school’s targeting strategy reveals a common trend within white resistance to the Civil Rights Movement. While many white southerners wanted to maintain a segregated world, only upper class whites could afford it by paying to take refuge from desegregation in their own privatized white havens.

After reviewing all of the fundraising and marketing work to be done, Sawyer advised Tether, “I have come to the conclusion that there are no short cuts to success in your school venture ... despite the emotional involvement all of us can develop when we talk about schools and our children.”¹⁴⁴ Indeed, it turned out there were no shortcuts when it came to funding. In May 1969, Dr. Tether announced that the school was being postponed because they had yet to garner enough funds to secure a loan to build a school. According to Tether, the committee needed at least 100 supporters to buy a share of the school’s stock at \$2,500 per person in order to finance the school, but so far they had only secured about 75 backers. The backers they had secured so far told a local reporter that they supported a private school

¹⁴⁴ Gordon Sawyer to Robert Tether, Nov. 27, 1968.

because the Gainesville public schools were “overcrowded,” and that they were dissatisfied with the Gainesville Board of Education’s school desegregation plan adopted the previous May.¹⁴⁵ However, the independent school’s board of trustee members were still unwilling to leave their children in the public schools for even a year longer with integration looming. The board of trustees thus decided to open up a temporary school for the 1969-1970 school year as they worked to complete the necessary marketing, construction, and hiring to open a new school by 1970.

Dr. A. D. Wright, a local dermatologist and a member of the new corporation’s board of trustees, oversaw the initial organization of the school in 1969. The Gainesville City School Board did all it could to help the new private school get on its feet. This was common across the South, as many white school board members were sympathetic to the segregationist cause. The Gainesville City schools invited the new Gainesville Academy teachers to attend teacher-training programs with their public school counterparts and gave them a list of the standard textbooks taught in public schools.¹⁴⁶ Gainesville Academy opened on September 2, 1969 on the first floor of an old business school downtown. The school was extremely small, with only 26 pupils and two teachers.¹⁴⁷ The founders of the new school claimed that the school’s objectives were, “to foster the development, the improvement and the preservation of home and family life and the advancement of educational opportunities and achievements.”¹⁴⁸ But with students learning from

¹⁴⁵ “Private School Plans Shelved for Study,” *The Daily Times*, Gainesville, Georgia, May 21, 1969.

¹⁴⁶ Education Without Compromise,” 7.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ “New School Opens Doors to 26 Pupils,” *The Daily Times*, Sept. 2, 1969.

public school textbooks, under publicly trained teachers, in a cramped building with no amenities, it seems that the only greater “educational opportunity” the school could truly boast was an all-white student body and staff.

With the 1969 school year assured, the board of trustees went ahead with their plan to build a new private school building with considerable speed. Sawyer Advertising was in charge of soliciting potential candidates to donate money to the school. Interested parents were required to contribute a minimum donation of \$2,000 per family in order to secure a loan to buy land and supplies for a new facility.¹⁴⁹ Gordon Sawyer himself, along with 40 other families, pledged donations of \$2,000 or more to secure a loan of \$235,000 before the school was even built.¹⁵⁰ With money in hand, the board purchased 35 acres of land for \$50,000 from Mr. Waldrep on May 26, 1969 and hired the Hartley-Slay Construction Company to build a new school.¹⁵¹

When the temporary school opened in September 1969 it went by a simple name, Gainesville Academy. However, Sawyer urged Tether to choose a more unique name for the new school quickly and wisely to bolster the institution’s reputation. Robert Tether wanted to name the school Longstreet Academy, after General James Longstreet, second in command to Robert. E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia and a Gainesville resident. In submitting this suggestion, Tether echoed the tradition of other segregation academies that celebrated Confederate history. However, Sawyer

¹⁴⁹ Lakeview Academy Payment Records, 1970. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy.

¹⁵⁰ C. B. Harris of The Gainesville National Bank to Robert Tether, April 14, 1970. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy.

¹⁵¹ Robert Tether, interview by Camper Mundy, Feb. 9, 1990, transcript. “Education Without Compromise,” 11.

told Tether that the name was a bad idea. He said it was confusing, as “it could be an academy located on a street named Long,” and, “Historically, he isn’t of a statue to be widely known and respected.”¹⁵² The board of trustees decided to heed his advice and on January 14, 1970, Tether announced that the board had unanimously approved the less controversial name Lakeview Academy.¹⁵³ Further proof that the name was chosen deliberately for its innocuous nature comes from the fact that there has never been a lake on the school’s property.

Lakeview’s founders and families celebrated the completion of the new school building at a groundbreaking ceremony on May 2, 1970. Over 700 people attended the event.¹⁵⁴ The attendees reveal the vast institutional support the new school received from other schools in the state. Frank Kaley, the President of the Georgia Association of Independent Schools and the Headmaster at Pace Academy, spoke at the event, offering his congratulations to the families present and welcoming Lakeview to the Georgia Association of Independent Schools. Captain William Brewster of Woodward Academy also attended, and he declared to all, “Those of us in private schools stand ready to help you.” Presidents from colleges and universities across the state likewise sent congratulatory messages to the new school, and the president of the University of Georgia was among them.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Gordon Sawyer to Robert Tether, Dec. 2, 1969. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy.

¹⁵³ Robert Tether, Jan. 14, 1970, letter. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy.

¹⁵⁴ The Lakeview Intercom, Aug. 1970. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy.

¹⁵⁵ “Education Without Compromise,” 10.

The families and supporters of Lakeview were extremely proud of their new school building, but not all citizens of Hall County shared their enthusiasm.¹⁵⁶ Throughout the process, Tether had publicly maintained that he was not opposed to integration itself, only the chaos that accompanied it. Other residents in the community were not convinced. A prominent lawyer in Gainesville, William Gignilliat, sent Tether a letter begging him to abandon the private school venture. Gignilliat said that he feared the private school would siphon money, interest, and leadership away from the public schools at a time they desperately needed such qualities.¹⁵⁷ An editorial appeared in the local newspaper that directly accused the Lakeview founders of being racially motivated to create a private school.¹⁵⁸ Revis D. Blakeney, the superintendent of Gainesville city schools from 1960 to 1976, similarly believed that Lakeview Academy was founded to keep whites and blacks in segregated schools.¹⁵⁹

The founders of Lakeview Academy tried to counter that criticism when they took out their next ad in the local newspaper. Lakeview Academy published an ad promoting their open house on August 16 that also gave detailed information about the school's entrance requirements. All applicants were required to undergo aptitude tests and personal interviews, submit school records, and get recommendations from teachers and acquaintances. Lakeview Academy readily admitted that they sought "students who are of above average in intelligence, willing

¹⁵⁶ Woodrow Light, Invitation to Lakeview Academy's Ground-Breaking Ceremony, 1970. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy.

¹⁵⁷ William B. Gignilliat, Jr. to Robert Tether, Feb. 10, 1970. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy.

¹⁵⁸ "Education Without Compromise," 11.

¹⁵⁹ Pitts, *A Victory of Sorts*, 199.

to learn, of good character and conduct, and healthy in their physical, mental and emotional development.” The school’s strict admissions criteria echoed the non-racial qualifiers that public school districts had used to prevent or limit black student transfers to white schools in the early 1960s. White and black parents would have understood that unspoken comparison when they went on to read, “Subject to limitations of space and facilities, officials of the school point out that applicants who are best qualified in the opinion of the headmasters will be admitted without regard to color, race, or religion.” The opening qualifier, “subject to limitations of space and facilities,” indicates the insincerity of the non-discrimination statement, as it meant that at any given time, the headmaster could refuse to admit a black student and claim that it was simply because the school didn’t have room for the student, or that the student had inadequate test scores.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, while the race and number of applications submitted that year is unknown, it is true that every single student admitted to Lakeview Academy that year was white.¹⁶¹

The founders of Lakeview Academy had good reason to believe that their statement of non-discrimination would ensure the legality of the school’s all-white student body. Randolph Thrower was the IRS Commissioner in 1970. An article in the local *Gainesville Times* announced in August 1970 that Thrower planned to allow tax exemptions for any school that made a “good faith” written promise to open their doors to Negro applicants. Senator Walter F. Mondale, a Democrat from

¹⁶⁰ “Lakeview Academy Open House Today Features Sparking New Building,” *The Daily Times*, Aug. 16, 1970.

¹⁶¹ “The Original Lakeview Lions,” Photograph. Lakeview Academy, Gainesville, Georgia.

Minnesota, declared that this would open the door to “a vast ‘tax supported’ all-white private school system in the South as a substitute for the formerly segregated public schools.” Southern senators were quick to point out the irony of this statement, as most private schools were concentrated in the North.¹⁶² But sure enough, U.S. Senator Herman Talmadge, U.S. Senator Richard Russell, and Representative Phil Landrum notified Lakeview Academy that the IRS had approved Lakeview’s application for tax-exempt status in October 1970. That approval meant that the school had met the agency’s criteria for non-discriminatory practices despite its all-white student body, and thus assured that any gift to the school would be tax deductible and that Lakeview would be certified as a non-profit institution.¹⁶³

When the school finally opened its doors in the summer of 1970, it offered grades one through nine with tuition ranging from \$675 to \$875 per pupil. Those figures do not include the original \$2,000 donation.¹⁶⁴ Eighty-seven students were enrolled at Lakeview in the beginning of September 1970, and that figure had increased to 104 by the year’s end.¹⁶⁵ By September 1971, the enrollment had increased to 155 students.¹⁶⁶ With growth occurring at such a rapid rate, Lakeview Academy was thriving.

¹⁶² Ed Rogers, “‘Equal Treatment’ School Right Rages,” *The Daily Times*, Aug. 18, 1970.

¹⁶³ “Tax Exempt is Approved for Lakeview,” *The Daily Times*, Oct. 13, 1970.

¹⁶⁴ Lakeview Academy Ad, “Is Your Child’s Education Worth It?” Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy.

¹⁶⁵ Lakeview Academy, Roster of Students, Sept. 8, 1970. Robert Tether Papers. Manuscript, Lakeview Academy. “Lakeview Begins Classes Aug. 30,” *The Daily Times*, Aug. 18, 1971.

¹⁶⁶ “Lakeview Enrollment Increases,” *The Daily Times*, Sept. 1, 1971.

Lakeview Academy continued to expand in its first few years of operation. Total enrollment for the 1973-1974 school year was 219 students. But by 1976, that trend began to reverse. The total enrollment in 1979 fell below 150 students. Particularly troubling for school officials was the fact that most of the falling enrollment was coming from the lower school, which housed the elementary aged children. The lower school had 175 students in 1975, but that number fell to less than 70 by 1979. This indicated that while Lakeview's original families had not abandoned the school, Lakeview was failing to attract new families now that the public school integration crisis had settled.¹⁶⁷

In June 1976 the Supreme Court ruled in *Runyon v. McCreary* that it was illegal for private schools to discriminate against admission applicants on the basis on race, and Lakeview administrators accepted their first African American student the following year.¹⁶⁸ The *Runyon* decision helped slow the rising tide of private school segregation across the South.¹⁶⁹ In areas with large minority populations, white families continued to send their children to private schools with racial motivations in mind. But for counties like Hall, which had a minority population less than ten percent in 1980, new private schools with limited resources were less appealing without an absolute guarantee of whiteness. This was particularly true in Gainesville because the school district was divided into a county system and a city

¹⁶⁷ "Education Without Compromise," 20-23.

¹⁶⁸ *Runyon et ux., DBA Bobbe's School v. McCrary et al.*, 427 U.S. 160 (1976).

¹⁶⁹ Sean F. Reardon and John T. Yun, "Private School Racial Enrollments and Segregation," *The Civil Rights Project* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, June 26, 2002), 21, http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/private-school-racial-enrollments-and-segregation/Private_Schools.pdf (accessed March 18, 2015).

system, with most of the minority population being concentrated in the latter. The Gainesville City System was in charge of all the black schools during the Jim Crow era. HEW ended that system in the late 1960s, but the county system still had a relatively small number of black students. Consequently, white families did not have to pay high sums to avoid integration, they could simply move to county school zones with very high white majorities. Suddenly segregation academies in largely white districts like Lakeview found themselves without their original purpose. Private schools in those districts were left to rely on the appeal they had claimed was theirs from the beginning, superior education, and many were floundering.

Ferrell Singleton was hired to be Lakeview's new headmaster in 1979 when enrollment was at an all-time low. Singleton knew that to fill the school's classrooms Lakeview would have to strengthen its academic programs and attract students from a larger pool of applicants than its original conservative, white, Protestant demographic. The new headmaster quickly embraced a more diverse philosophy and a focus on expansion. He immediately stopped all overtly religious ceremonies promoted by the school, including the weekly service administered by the Rector of Grace Episcopal Church. Turner did so in the hope that a more accepting religious climate would entice new students to come to Lakeview. Furthermore, under Singleton's leadership Lakeview began to send scholarship applications to businesses throughout the community, including those owned by African Americans, to promote the school. Lakeview also began participating in an exchange program, and a select few students from around the world started coming to Lakeview. Singleton also worked to improve the academic rigor of Lakeview. He

established a Special Studies program for students who needed extra academic support as well as Honors and Gifted programs for students who excelled. Singleton also hired outside curriculum consultants and streamlined homework policies. This new openness coupled with academic reforms proved to be a success, and by 1989 Lakeview's total enrollment reached 320 students.¹⁷⁰ Today, Lakeview enrolls 533 students, which includes families from 33 countries.¹⁷¹

But was it enough? According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Hall County is currently 74 percent white, 7 percent African American, 2 percent Asian, and 14 percent some other race.¹⁷² Lakeview Academy's student body fails to fully reflect those demographics. During the 2011-2012 school year, the school's student body had a white, non-Hispanic majority of 86.8 percent. Thus white students are still dramatically overrepresented at the school. The school's minority populace is 4.5 percent Asian, 4.1 percent two or more races, 2.9 percent Hispanic, and only 1.6 percent African American.¹⁷³ Plainly, there is work yet to be done to increase racial diversity in the school.

Lakeview Academy is particularly behind in accepting Hispanic students.

There has been a significant demographic change in Hall County in the last 20 years,

¹⁷⁰ "Education Without Compromise," 25-31.

¹⁷¹ Lakeview Academy, "Academic Profile," 2012-2013, <https://www.lakeviewacademy.com/ftpimages/259/download/Lakeview%20Academy%20Academic%20Profile%202012-13%20for%20web.pdf> (accessed December 8, 2014).

¹⁷² U.S. Census Bureau, "Hancock County, Georgia," <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/13/13141.html> (accessed March 17, 2015).

¹⁷³ PSS Private School Universe Survey data for the 2011-2012 school year, National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&Zip=30502&Miles=10&ID=00299733 (accessed March 18, 2015).

as Mexican immigrants have moved into the county to work in the low-paying poultry industry. In the 1980 census, people of Hispanic origin made up a marginal 0.7 percent of Hall County's population.¹⁷⁴ In the 2010 census, they occupied a full 26 percent of the population, and that number is expected to grow. The income gap between non-Hispanic and Hispanic whites is an important factor in the latter's underrepresentation at Lakeview Academy. Thirty-five percent of Hall County's Hispanic citizens are living below the poverty line. In contrast, only 8 percent of non-Hispanic whites are living below the poverty line.¹⁷⁵ With tuition at Lakeview Academy set at \$15,000 for a single high school student, private school remains an unattainable luxury for many of Hall County's poor Hispanic residents.¹⁷⁶

However, Lakeview Academy's racial disparity is likely not just a side effect of higher incomes among Hall County's white residents. Nationally, at every socioeconomic level, white students are more likely to be in private schools than black or Latino students.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, a study by Julian R. Betts and Robert W. Fairlie at the University of California—San Diego found that immigration is

¹⁷⁴ U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1980 General Population Characteristics: Georgia. Washington: Government Printing Office.

¹⁷⁵ "Selected Socio-Economic Data: Hall County, Georgia, Latino and White, Not Hispanic," from U.S. Census Bureau, *2010-2012 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates*, http://fairplan.u31.infinology.net/ACS/3yr_ACS_Counties_Places/Latino/13_Hall%20County,%20Georgia_ACS_Latino_3yr.pdf (accessed April 18, 2015).

¹⁷⁶ Lakeview Academy, <http://www.lakeviewacademy.com/page/Home> (accessed Jan. 8, 2015).

¹⁷⁷ Sean F. Reardon and John T. Yun, "Private School Racial Enrollments and Segregation" (The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University, June 26, 2002), 5, 22, http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/private-school-racial-enrollments-and-segregation/Private_Schools.pdf.http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/private-school-racial-enrollments-and-segregation/Private_Schools.pdf.

significantly linked to white flight. According to the study, “for every four immigrants who arrive in public high schools, it is estimated that one native student switches to a private school.”¹⁷⁸ In 1989, just before the Hispanic population boom, Lakeview had a total enrollment of 320 students.¹⁷⁹ By 2012, Lakeview Academy’s enrollment had increased to 518 students, but almost all of that growth came from the non-Hispanic white population of Hall County. Only 15 of those 518 students were Hispanic.¹⁸⁰

The records of Lakeview Academy illustrate a complex story of school evolution. Lakeview began as a reactionary impulse to the decision handed down by the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board*, and the school came to represent Gainesville white elite’s desire to maintain the segregationist status quo. Over the years, Lakeview has gradually worked to improve its academic program and move past its initial prejudices, but its evolution was guided more by outside pressures than by inner foresight. It was chartered in 1968 to escape HEW’s battle with the Gainesville and Hall County School Boards over public school desegregation. But from the beginning, Lakeview Academy embraced racially coded language. School officials earned the approval of the IRS by publicly declaring that the school was open to all, yet extensive and subjective admissions criteria ensured that every single student at

¹⁷⁸ Julian R. Betts and Robert W. Fairlie, “Does Immigration induce ‘native flight’ from public schools into private schools?” *Journal of Public Economics* 87 (2003), 987 <http://people.ucsc.edu/~rfairlie/papers/published/jpube%202003%20-%20native%20flight.pdf> (accessed March 18, 2015).

¹⁷⁹ “Education Without Compromise,” 31.

¹⁸⁰ U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&Zip=30502&Miles=10&ID=00299733 (accessed March 18, 2015).

Lakeview Academy was white. Lakeview finally fulfilled its promise to admit minority students when it accepted its first African American student in 1977, but school officials opted to do so only after the Supreme Court chose to take a firm stance on discrimination in private education. Today, the school's racial make-up remains largely homogeneous, both racially and economically, and it will likely stay that way unless Lakeview's administrators experience additional outside pressure to diversify the school's student body.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Every school has high achievers, those students who seem to excel in every aspect: academic, physical, and social. In 2012, one of those students at John Hancock Academy was Brittney Gresham. Brittney was the valedictorian, Miss John Hancock Academy 2012, Homecoming Queen 2010, President of the Beta Club, Senior Class President, and a varsity athlete. Brittney Gresham was also the first African American to ever graduate from John Hancock Academy. This represented a tremendous step in Sparta's history. The local populace celebrated Brittney's accomplishments by naming her Grand Marshal of the local Pine Tree Festival. The Milledgeville chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority awarded her their academic scholarship for the 2012-2013 school year.¹⁸¹ It is particularly significant that Brittney was elected to leadership roles at JHA, as one of the negative side-effects of public school desegregation was minority student exclusion from extracurricular activities.¹⁸² When Kiki Gresham, Brittney's mother, reflected on her experience as a parent at John Hancock, she said, "The way the John Hancock, I call them family, embraced us, I felt at home."¹⁸³ However, just because the students at John Hancock Academy voted Brittney homecoming queen, does not mean that the school has

¹⁸¹ "Black Valedictorian Graduates from JHA," WGXA-TV, May 8, 2012, <http://web.archive.org/web/20120608053803/http://www.newscentralga.com/younews/150677795.html> (accessed March 30, 2015).

¹⁸² Pitts, *A Victory of Sorts*, 177-180.

¹⁸³ Kiki Gresham, interview by author, April 16, 2015.

entirely fixed its race problem. The year that Brittney graduated, the Greshams were still the only black family at John Hancock Academy.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, while John Hancock Academy started accepting African American students in the new millennium, it has never hired a black teacher.¹⁸⁵ Lakeview Academy, likewise, had no black teachers on staff during the 2014-2015 school year.¹⁸⁶ John Hancock and Lakeview Academies' lack of faculty diversity is indicative of wider private school hiring practices. In the 2011-2012 school year, 88 percent of private school teachers in the United States were non-Hispanic whites, 4 percent were non-Hispanic blacks, and 5 percent were Hispanic.¹⁸⁷

In the 1960s, school officials at John Hancock Academy and Lakeview Academy claimed to be opening new private schools to provide superior education.

¹⁸⁴ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "John Hancock Academy," http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/privateschoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&SchoolName=John+Hancock+Academy&State=13&Miles=10&NumOfStudentsRange=more&IncGrade=-1&LoGrade=-1&HiGrade=-1&ID=00297758 (accessed March 22, 2015).

¹⁸⁵ John Hancock Academy Yearbooks, 1967-2013. No accessible data on the racial composition of the faculty at John Hancock Academy or Lakeview Academy exists. I was therefore forced to rely on yearbook photographs to determine if John Hancock Academy had ever employed an African American teacher. Race is a social construct that reflects complex histories and personal identities rather than biological differences. However, I chose to use photographic evidence regardless of the lack of survey data because I believe that faculty diversity, as well as student diversity, is an important measure of a school's relative success at achieving integration. Furthermore, it is likely that if staff at either school used race as a criterion in their hiring process, the color of the interviewees' skin, as much as self-identification, guided their decision.

¹⁸⁶ Lakeview Academy, "Faculty and Staff," <http://www.lakeviewacademy.com/Page/Academics/Faculty--Staff> (accessed March 22, 2015). I did not have access to every Lakeview Academy yearbook, so I cannot say with any certainty that Lakeview Academy has never had an African American teacher.

¹⁸⁷ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Public and Private School Comparison," <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=55> (accessed March 22, 2015).

Both schools still make those claims today, and they are rooted in general public perception that private schools offer a higher caliber of education. The debate on public versus private achievement outcomes is particularly salient today, as state governments across the country have show increasing interest in voucher systems as a way to improve education. Proponents of voucher systems support “market theory,” which is based on neoclassical economic analyses of public education. Market theory advocates argue that, unlike public schools, private schools must perform well academically to attract students, so they face stronger incentives to offer quality education.¹⁸⁸

However, educational studies on public and private school student achievement outcomes do not support this claim. The U.S. Department of Education examined the achievement gap between public and private school reading and math test scores in 2006. Private school students typically have higher average scores than public school students on standardized tests. However, when the Department of Education controlled for student variables of gender, race/ethnicity, disabilities, English language learners, computer in the home, eligibility for free/reduced-price school lunch, participation in Title I, number of books in the home, and number of absences, the private school advantage was largely erased. The study found no statistically significant difference between the average grade 4 reading scores or the average grade 8 mathematics scores of private and public school students. Private

¹⁸⁸ Christopher Lubienski and Sarah Theule Lubienski, “Charter, Private, Public Schools and Academic Achievement: New Evidence from NAEP Mathematics Data,” National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, Teachers College, Columbia University (Jan. 2006), 9-10, http://www.ncspe.org/publications_files/OP111.pdf (accessed March 20, 2015).

schools actually performed worse on grade 4 mathematics scores once student variables were controlled.¹⁸⁹ Private school scores were statistically significantly higher on grade 8 reading. However, as educational scholars Christopher Lubienski and Sarah Theule Lubienski pointed out in their analysis of the new data, mathematics scores are typically better measures of school difference because students learn mathematics primarily in school, whereas reading scores are heavily influenced by income and education levels of parents. Furthermore, the new data showed that Conservative Christian schools, which are the fastest growing sector of private education both in the South and nationally, performed the lowest of any type of private school. In general, studies on private school data collected by the Department of Education indicate tremendous variation between different schools within the private school sector. And in the end, parents usually get what they pay for in terms of educational resources.¹⁹⁰

John Hancock Academy and Lakeview Academy illustrate the differences within the private school sector. Lakeview Academy labels itself a “college preparatory day school.” The school has a college counselor on staff and it boasts that, “Every student enters the upper school with college aspirations and is supported and nurtured by on-going discussions with advisors, teachers,

¹⁸⁹ Henry Braun, Frank Jenkins, and Wendy Grigg, *Comparing Private Schools and Public Schools Using Hierarchical Linear Modeling*, National Assessment of Educational Progress, U.S. Department of Education, July 2006, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/studies/2006461.pdf> (accessed March 30, 2015).

¹⁹⁰Lubienski and Lubienski, “Charter, Private, Public Schools and Academic Achievement.”

counselors, and administrators.”¹⁹¹ With a relatively low minority population in Hall County during the 1980s, Lakeview Academy is an example of market forces at work, as the school had to develop strong academic programs to attract students once the county’s integration crisis was over. The school has grown tremendously in terms of total enrollment, but it has grown less in terms of student diversity. Lakeview Academy now enrolls minority students, but like many other private academies, Lakeview remains overwhelmingly white. The two most underrepresented groups are black and Hispanic children. In 2011, there were only eight black students and fifteen Hispanic students at Lakeview Academy, out of a total enrollment of 510.

John Hancock Academy, on the other hand, does not need superior education to attract students to the school. It has another selling factor: its whiteness. A large-scale study of private school enrollments by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University found that all across the United States, “The strongest predictor of white private school enrollment is the proportion of black students in the area.”¹⁹² This is certainly true in Georgia. White parents in Georgia are much more likely to send their children to private schools if the local public schools have a minority population that is over 50 percent. There are 19 Georgia Counties in which over

¹⁹¹ Lakeview Academy, “College Counseling,” <http://www.lakeviewacademy.com/Page/Academics/College-Counseling> (accessed March 20, 2015).

¹⁹² Sean F. Reardon and John T. Yun, “Private School Racial Enrollments and Segregation” (The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University, June 26, 2002), 46, http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/private-school-racial-enrollments-and-segregation/Private_Schools.pdf.http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/private-school-racial-enrollments-and-segregation/Private_Schools.pdf (accessed March 20, 2015).

one-third of white school children attend private schools, and all of these counties have high minority populations.¹⁹³ These studies indicate that race is a significant motivating factor among white parents who send their children to John Hancock Academy.

Unlike Lakeview Academy, John Hancock Academy does not focus solely on college preparatory work; instead, it claims to serve the educational needs of “both college preparatory and non-college preparatory students.”¹⁹⁴ The curriculum at John Hancock reflects that broader aim. The school offers three types of diplomas, General Studies, College Preparatory, and Honors College Preparatory. As the only private school option in a poor, high-minority district, John Hancock Academy has more blue-collar families than Lakeview Academy. The fact that the school caters to this socioeconomic diversity with non-college preparatory work illustrates the degree to which class affects student tracking and subsequent achievement outcomes within the private school sector.

When you control for student variables like income, private schools do not produce better students. They do, however, produce whiter classrooms. Which means that when the Georgia State Legislature allows parents and corporations to funnel their state income tax dollars towards private education, they are not subsidizing superior education. They are subsidizing highly segregated education. In the 1950s, southern state governments created tuition voucher programs in order

¹⁹³ Georgia Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights, “Desegregation of Public Districts in Georgia,” Dec. 2007, 82-84, <http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/GADESG-FULL.pdf> (accessed March 20, 2015).

¹⁹⁴ John Hancock Academy, “Educational Mission,” <http://johnhancockacademy.com/educational-mission/> (accessed March 20, 2015).

to preserve school segregation. The Supreme Court struck down these measures. Yet now, The Georgia Private School Tax Credit has accomplished what massive resistance politicians could not: publicly funded private school education. The stark segregation these private schools facilitate in places like Sparta and Gainesville illustrates why politicians must take the historical relationship between private schools and white flight into account when they pursue educational reform.

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APPENDIX A
ORAL HISTORY METHODS

All of the people I interviewed for this project were directly connected to one of the schools I studied in some way, such as parents, teachers, board of trustee members, or school officials. Certainly outside perspectives on the school would have been a valuable addition to this study, but it takes time to cultivate a relationship with any given community, and a large sample of outside interviews was simply greater than the scope a master's thesis would allow. The first person I approached at both schools was the headmaster, and I used the connections they provided me with to broaden my network of interviewees. When I approached individuals I told them that I study Georgia private schools that were founded the 1960s, and that I was interested in why they were founded and how these schools evolved over time. I did not outright tell people that their school was founded to preserve segregation. This was a conscious choice. The written records left behind by the schools and the context in which they were founded is enough to discern that both of these schools have a racially divisive past. What I wanted from my interviewees was their own interpretation of that past, to understand how they remember and reconcile the loyalty they feel towards their school and the prejudiced that motivated its creation. My own identity, of course, likely colored how interviewees responded to me, particularly on sensitive topics like race. I am a young white woman raised in St. Petersburg, Florida. Nearly every interviewer

asked me where I'd been born, and upon hearing that I was from a city in Florida, many made an honest effort to describe to me what it was like to grow up in the South. To help me get an white insider perspective on race relations in Hancock County, I also utilized oral histories by John Rozier that are housed in the Emory Special Collections Library. John Rozier was a white man born and raised in Hancock County, and white interviewees sometimes used racial language in front of him that they clearly deemed too controversial for my ears. Nonetheless, comparisons between the two do show that many of Sparta's white residents made an honest effort to help me understand why they felt compelled to abandon the public schools when they became desegregated.

I was met with more resistance when I contacted school officials at Lakeview Academy. In the beginning, the headmaster at Lakeview welcomed me into the school and gave me access to invaluable school documents and the private manuscript collection of the school's founder, Dr. Robert Tether. However, after giving them more details on the racial nature of my research, I was not welcomed back. The e-mails I received from school officials were always pleasant when they answered my inquiries, and I cannot speak with certainty as to why they were unwilling to help me further, but answers, in every sense of the word, were hard to come by. I tried to independently contact several families involved in Lakeview's founding, but cold calls are particularly difficult, and I received very little in the way of responses. Oral histories take a certain amount of trust, and many people are unwilling to talk to a complete stranger about a potentially uncomfortable past. Nonetheless, I believe that Lakeview's history was one worth writing, as the large

collection of foundational documents I had access to and the silence itself told a story about one school community's uneasy relationship with its own racial past.

APPENDIX B

MAP OF GEORGIA COUNTIES

