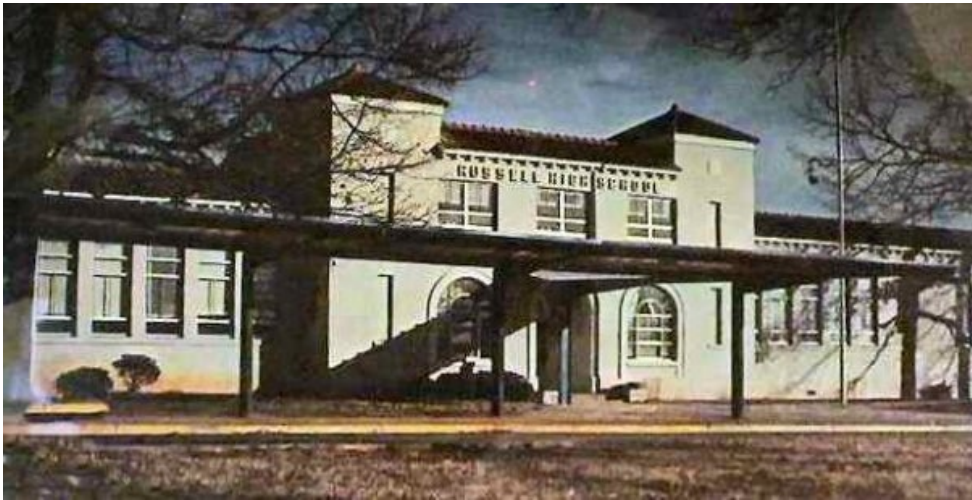


**Reminiscences and Highlights of the
History of the Russell High School Band:
60 years of Excellence and Service**

Volume III: 1973-1988



by

William Enrico Fry, D.M.A.

(2022)
(revised 1923)

Dedication

“Education, like faith, is a ladder reaching from darkness to light from earth to heaven. Each one possesses a ladder, varying in size and strength according to the innate aspirations and the varied experiences on the individual builders.”¹

A final farewell salute to Russell High School and a welcome to the new Tri-Cities High School occurred in a special ceremony on June 8, 1988. Part of the ceremony included a musical selection by the Russell band, thus ending the 60-year tradition of ensembles that went by the name Russell High School Band. Part of the ceremony included a musical selection by the Russell Band, thus ending the 60-year tradition of ensembles that went by the name Russell High School Band. This story is dedicated to the large number of honorable music students who came through the doors of the Russell High School band room from 1928 through 1988 and who chose to give of themselves by providing music that brought immeasurable value to the lives of many, thereby extending their musical ladders to enormous heights.

In Gratitude

A project of this magnitude would not be possible without the support and assistance from numerous people and organizations. Gratitude is offered to the Teaching Museum South, living Russell High Band Directors, and numerous Russell alumni who provided materials that proved to be very beneficial. Recognition is also extended to Herb Cox for festival results and to Steve Bramlett of the East Point Historical Society (EPHS) who assisted in the early stages of the research. A great amount of gratitude goes to: Charles Strickland, President of the EPHS; Charles Chambers, RHS Class of '45,

¹ Carolyn Walker Nottingham and Evelyn Hannah, “Schools of Thomaston & Upson

Thursday EPHS host, and former Headland Band parent; and, other officers and volunteers of the EPHS, who have been extremely helpful during the latter time frame of this study. Gratitude is also extended to Leslie Chambers Champion, Mr. Chambers' daughter and Headland Band '77, who spent a great deal of time editing this manuscript and making it a better work to read.

A special word of thanks goes to Bill Prescott (1923-2018), Mr. "P," my Russell High Band Director, mentor, and long-time personal friend, for his service and untiring efforts at Russell High. I owe so much to him; he was my second father.

William Enrico Fry
Russell High Band '71

Research Objective

Volume I records the years 1923-1950; Volume II references the years 1950-1973. This document, Volume III, which covers the years 1973-1988, is the final installment of a Russell Band historical trilogy. This particular volume attempts to document the last 15 years of the Russell High School Band's record of excellence and service to Russell High and the City of East Point from 1973 to 1988. As was the case for decades before, the Russell band continued to be featured at football games, patriotic parades, civic events, school concerts, and numerous other special appearances. In addition, the band was an active organization that provided service to Russell High and the community in many capacities, such as holiday celebrations, patriotic appearances, and constant parades. Most importantly, the Russell band had an educational emphasis along with its traditional civic and school role. This additional focus was accomplished primarily by the music festival format administered by the Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA).

Russell High Band Directors

Particularly important in the band history of Russell High were the dedicated and highly qualified band directors who led the band at various points along the 60-year time line. The band director job was not a full-time position until the 1948-1949 school year. Those who served prior to that time usually did double duty teaching in other Russell departments. Numerous directors over the years were members of the Atlanta Symphony while serving at Russell High, and many went on to substantial and influential careers after their Russell days.

1928-1930: Harry P. Carpenter

1930-1941: Roy Drukenmiller (and Science Department)

1941-1942: Hoyt Griffin (and English Department)

1942-1943: Jack Swartz

1943-1946: Charles E. Taylor (and Science Department)

1946-1947: Capt. Warren T. Jackson

1947-1948: Roy Drukenmiller, Jr., a temporary substitute assisted by Cadet Captain Gene Carter; Robert B. Waggoner (mid-year replacement)

1948-1950: Harold W. Alenius

1950-1951: Manly C. Sanders/James Hopperstad/Charles Warren Little

1951-1952: Richard Hansberry

1952-1955: James M. Hopperstad

1955-1959: Frank V. Lentini

1959-60 Jim Lloyd; Roy Drukenmiller (Guest Conductor); Dan Hough (mid-year replacement)

1960-1963: John David Wiggins

1963-1967: William O. Latson

1967-1973: William Prescott

1973-1976: Larry Freund

1976-1979: Larry Sims

1979-1981: David Lee

1981-1984: Jim Littlefield

1984-1985: Frank Banton

1985-1988: Samuel Jay Hutcherson, Jr.

Band Director Biographical Sketches:

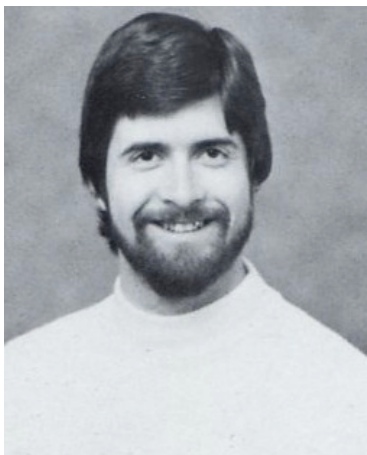
Vol. III (1973 – 1988)

Larry Freund: 1973-1976



Larry Freund earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees in music from the University of Georgia and began his teaching career at Appling County. After his three years at Russell, Freund worked as a band director at Brantley County High School for nine years. Mr. Freund subsequently worked at Bacon County Middle School and was selected to be the band director at Bacon County High School for the 2012-13 academic year.

Larry Sims: 1976-1979



Larry Sims came to Russell from the Cobb County (GA) School System. After three years, he left Russell for a teaching position in Gwinnett County (GA) School, where he also conducted the Gainesville Symphony Orchestra from 1986-2004. During his career, Sims had additional conducting experiences with the Sheppard School of Music at Rice University, the Atlanta Youth Symphony Orchestra, and the Florida State University Orchestra. He also made a brief guest appearance with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.

David Lee: 1979-1981



David Lee earned a bachelor's of music education degree from Florida State University in December 1978. Prior to enrolling at FSU, Lee was selected to the 1975 Georgia High School All-State Band and was a drum major and graduate of the Sugar Bear Band under renowned director Mr. Bob Barnett at Central High School in Macon, Georgia. During his high school years, Lee also was a member of the famed Sugar Bear Jazz Band. At a time when few schools attempted jazz bands, the Central High School Jazz Program was noted for its high quality and uniqueness. In his high school years, Lee studied flute and later traveled to Atlanta regularly to study with the Atlanta Symphony's Warren Little, who, coincidentally, was band director at Russell High from 1950-1951 (see Volume II).

After FSU, Lee completed the school term for a band director in the southern Mississippi area. Lee arrived at Russell High in the fall of 1979 and was noteworthy for infusing jazz into a program where jazz instruction had dwindled over a number of years.

In 1981, Lee pursued a career goal of earning a master's degree in flute performance and went to the Boston Conservatory after two years at Russell High. Lee performed briefly as a free-lance professional performer after receiving his master of music, but decided to pursue a career in financial planning with his family's business in Memphis. Currently residing in Memphis, Lee stays active musically by playing volunteer work on flute/saxophone for Memphis area benefits.

James Littlefield: 1981-1984



James Littlefield's academic background included both his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Georgia and a T-6 specialist degree from Georgia State University. Before coming to Russell High, Littlefield worked as an assistant band director for three years at Lafayette High School in Walker County, Georgia. After serving at Russell, Littlefield taught band in the South Fulton County elementary schools until his retirement from Fulton County in 2009 after a total of 31 years teaching music.

Under his direction his bands consistently received superior and excellent ratings in the district large group performance evaluations. He has served as treasurer and festival chairman for the GMEA 5th District and peer mentor for new band teachers in Fulton County. While at the University of Georgia, Littlefield was band captain and

graduate assistant for the Georgia Redcoat Band. He is a member of the Georgia Music Educators Association, Professional Association of Georgia Educators, and the Pi Kappa Lambda national honorary music society.

Littlefield was a sales associate for Jackson's Music Store (Douglasville, Georgia) and currently performs with the Douglas County Christian Community Orchestra and Central Baptist Church Orchestra.

Frank Banton: 1984-1985



Mr. Frank Banton is from the Memphis area. He attended the University of Tennessee as a tuba major. Banton is known primarily for his military career with the U.S. Air Force and Georgia National Guard Bands.

After Russell High, he was a special education teacher at Northeast Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic (GNETS). He has performed as a member of the tuba section of the Cobb New Horizons Band and resided in Smyrna, Georgia with his wife, Margaret, a freelance and military musician and clinician in the Atlanta area for over 25 years.

Samuel J. Hutcherson, Jr.: 1985-1988

Jay Hutcherson has the unique distinction of being Russell High School's last band director and Tri-Cities High School's first band director. He earned his bachelor's of music education degree at the University of Georgia, where he studied under Albert



Ligotti, a former member of the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Hutcherson also acquired a master's of business administration in 2006.

Hutcherson's first experience with the Russell Band occurred during the 1984-85 school year when Frank Banton was occasionally called away from Russell High because of National Guard duty. Hutcherson served as the substitute band director during those times and was retained as the full-time band director when Banton left Russell in 1985. Hutcherson went on to teach music for thirty-seven years, twenty-five with Fulton County Schools, where he taught high school, middle school and elementary school bands during his career. In 2006, Mr. Hutcherson founded and directed the first ever Fulton County Elementary Honor band. The audition-only band consisted of around seventy-five students from twenty-seven elementary schools each year. The Honor Band performed at the GMEA 5th District Performance Evaluation and received superior ratings for several years. In the band's final year, it placed 1st runner up as the nation's best 5th grade band. In 2007 Mr. Hutcherson also founded the Vivace! Summer Middle School Band Camp, which has between 65 and 90 campers each year.

Mr. Hutcherson currently teaches after school band at Holy Redeemer Catholic School and is the owner of The Music Hutch Studio.

Fulton County Schools Music Supervisors

The Fulton County School System was fortunate to have two distinguished and dedicated Music Supervisors leading the County music programs. Much of the success of

the County's music programs can be attributed to both Don Robinson and Joe Kirschner, the latter of whom was a frequent drop-in visitor and occasional guest conductor at Russell High.



Don Robinson earned a bachelor of arts degree at the University of North Carolina in 1947, began teaching in the Fulton County, Atlanta, Georgia schools as an instrumental and choral conductor, and later served as an instructor at the University of Michigan School of Music where he earned a master's degree in music. While in Michigan, he taught in the elementary and junior high programs in the Ann Arbor Public Schools, and later was an elementary and classroom music teacher in the United States Air Force Dependent Schools in Wiesbaden, Germany.

In 1958, Robinson returned to Fulton County Schools in Atlanta as Director of Music Education, where he served with distinction until his retirement in 1980. There he successfully increased the number of music teachers and the emphasis on the performance of new music, and employed a string quartet in residence to perform and teach.

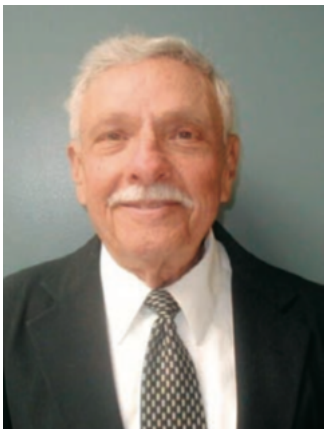
A talented conductor, Robinson served as Music Director of the Atlanta Boy Choir, the Atlanta Jewish Center Chorus, the Chorale of Atlanta, and the Central Presbyterian Church, and conducted groups at National, Division, and State MENC conferences, and All-State Choruses in eight states. Additionally, he published numerous articles in the *Georgia Music News*, *Music Educators Journal*, and the *ISME Newsletter*. In 1970, he served on the National Planning Committee on the White House Conference on Children, and also served as chairman of the MENC Committee on International

Relations, chairman of the MENC Bicentennial Committee, President and Executive Director of the Georgia Music Educators Association, President of the Southern Division of MENC, and was a nominee for MENC President in 1975. As a 46-year member of ISME, he served as Chairman on the Commission of Schools and Teacher Education, and was a Life Member of the American Choral Directors Association.

Robinson was honored with the Distinguished Service Award from the University of Georgia Department of Music in 1981, where he did additional graduate work, and was chosen to address the South Korean Music Educators Association in 1989. He was awarded an Honorary Life Membership in ISME in 1998, and became an Honorary Board Member of the Choral Guild of Atlanta in 2002. In retirement, Don remained an active participant and supporter of local music groups, including the Atlanta Music Club, the Atlanta Opera, and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Robinson passed away in 2014.

[Written by, and attributed to, Frank Crockett]

Joseph Kirschner was originally from Chicago, IL., where he attended and performed with the John Marshall High School Orchestra under the direction of Ralph Lewis, Clifford Lillya, and Merle Isaac. He attended Northwestern University in Evanston, IL, where he received both his bachelor and masters degrees in Music Education. He later received his specialist in Music Education Certificate from the University of Georgia.



After serving as band and orchestra director in the school systems of Bledsoe County, Tennessee and teaching at Roosevelt High School in Atlanta, Georgia, Mr. Kirschner was appointed to the music administration staff of the Fulton

County Schools in Georgia, where he remained until his retirement as Coordinator of Music Education. During this time he also served tenures as a violinist with the Chattanooga and Atlanta Symphony Orchestras. For a ten-year period, Mr. Kirschner was a conductor and director of the Atlanta Community Symphony Orchestra.

He also served as a member of the national board of directors of the American String Teachers Association. He served as a conductor of all-state bands and orchestras and as director/adjudicator at regional festivals, contests, and auditions throughout the southeastern and central United States. He was especially proud to have served as a district band/orchestra director/festival adjudicator in every district of the state of Georgia.

He served as a workshop presenter for the College Board and conducted many specialized workshops and clinic events in brass and string instrument pedagogy and instrumental music education for students and teachers for school systems, universities, and professional music education associations, including the Festival Adjudication Workshop of the Georgia Music Educators Association. In 1999, Mr. Kirschner chaired the organizing and development committee for the certificates of appreciation and outstanding service, presented by the Georgia Chapter and the National Board of Directors of the American String Teachers Association.

Mr. Kirschner was a past president of the Georgia Music Educators Association and the Georgia (Zeta) Chapter of Phi Beta Mu, a honorary bandmasters' fraternity. He was the recipient of many awards and distinctions, including the *Distinguished Alumnus - the School of Music of the University of Georgia Award*, the Distinguished Career Award of the Georgia Music Educators Association, and certificates of appreciation and

outstanding service, presented by the Georgia Chapter and the National Board of Directors of the American String Teachers Association.

Mr. Kirschner passed away on June 27, 2013, after a long battle with cancer.

Volume III: Russell Band History by Year

Academic Year: 1973-1974

Principal: Jesse Shadix

Band Director: Larry Freund

Orchestra Director: Joyce Relyea

Band Officers: Dexter Harris, Drum Major; Ricky Fritts, Assistant Drum Major; Clyde Reeves, Band President; David Loggins, Vice President; Vicki Cannon, Secretary; Pam Carroll, Treasurer & Majorette Captain; Rebecca Kilpatrick, Student Conductor; Wanda Gowen, Flag Corps Captain.

Band Seniors (or Seniors with significant prior Band experience): Janet Allison, Mike Alred, Janet Arnold, Vicki Cannon, Pam Carroll, Curtis Chester, Sally Focht, Ken Johnson, Rebecca Kilpatrick, David Loggins, Terisa Marinos, Nancy Miller, Randy McCarty, Patti Prestage, Clyde Reeves, Pat Sprayberry, Mary Davis, Kay Hand, Denise Hendricks, Vicki Ledet, Fran Logan, Teresa Merriweather, and Angie Talley.

Majorettes: Pam Carroll, Captain; Vicki Cannon, Sally Focht, Patty Pierce, Patti Raiford; and Michelle Zarzaca.

Russell H.S. Highlights of Note:

- Mr. James Abrams was appointed as the new head football coach.
- Mr. Larry Freund succeeded Mr. "P" as the new band director.
- Russell High celebrated a Golden (50-year) anniversary.

Russell Band appearances likely for the following football season schedule:

Ridgeview, Gordon, Morrow, Woodward, Troup, Lakeshore, Henry Co. Cherokee, Fayette Co., Headland.

The school year began with a new football coach and band director: Coach James Abrams, previously a Russell assistant coach, was named the new head coach; the new band director was Larry Freund, succeeding Mr. Prescott who left for the University of

Arizona to work on a doctorate. Mr. Freund, a University of Georgia graduate, came to Russell from Appling County.



Prior to Freund's first days of work with the band, the Russell Majorette Corps attended a week-long *Heart of Dixie* Twirling Camp at Auburn University. The pre-season marching band workouts kicked off in earnest with 75 members attending a successful band camp at Camp Glisson in Dahlonega,

GA.² An arrangement of the then-popular song, *We're an American Band*, by the rock band Grand Funk Railroad became the band's theme song that year. A new Flag Corps



was added to the marching band and included Nancy Bennett, Denise Gossett, Wanda Gowen, Susan McDaniel, Susan Newton, Jan Odum, and Vicki Teale.

The band performed an important role during homecoming week, providing music at a pep rally, homecoming parade, and homecoming half-time show. Brenda Ingram, the reigning queen from the previous year, crowned Lea Tatum as the new Miss

²Dorie Green, ed., "Russell's Marching Wildcats Shine at Band Camp," *Southside Sun*, 6 September 1973, 4A.

RHS. East Point's Veteran's Day Parade was held on November 10. The event was organized and sponsored by the East Point American Legion Post No. 51.

The 1973-74 edition of the Russell band continued with a number of fund-raisers that were successful in years past. The Russell Band Booster Association, led by Elise and Gene Reeves, was active and organized fund-raisers that included the annual Band Fun Carnival and Barbecue in October, along with a Fish Fry all day on Saturday, November 30 at the Jefferson Park Recreation Center. The boosters also held another Fun Carnival and Yard Sale in April. A number of car washes occurred at the Amoco Gas Station on the corner of Cleveland Drive and Sylvan Road. Regular paper sales were held during the year, along with sales of World's Famous Chocolate Bars (sold for 50 cents, netting the band 25 cents a bar) and Krispy Kreme Doughnuts (sold for 75 cents a box, yielding a 35 cent profit.) Also, a citrus fruit sale occurred in February. The boosters also organized a Flea Market & Baked Goods sale in the Russell band room on March 30.



Recap: GMEA 5th District Band Festival
Russell /South Fulton Concert Band

1974 Director: Lawrence R. Freund Rating: II
 LEVEL B
 Rebecca Kilpatrick, Student Conductor Rating: I

The annual end-of-year Awards Banquet was held at the Ramada Inn. Special guests included Mr. and Mrs. Jesse W. Shadix, Dr. and Mrs. Joseph M. Kirschner, assistant director of music education in Fulton County Schools, and Wesley Boyd, pianist. Award winners included: David Loggins, “Outstanding Senior in Band”; Joe Lee, “Outstanding Boy in Band”; Vicki Cannon, “Outstanding Girl in Band” and “Outstanding Officer in Band.” Rebecca Kilpatrick won “Most Improved,” and Kerry Stevenson was selected as the “Best Musician in Band.” Those recognized for All-State selection earlier in the year included Vicki Cannon (chorus), Kerry Stevenson (band), Missy Hardegree (orchestra) and Nancy Conner (orchestra).

Graduation for approximately 175 Russell seniors was held at the Atlanta Municipal Auditorium on May 18, 1974. Class music included *I Believe* (Hawley Ades). Ms. Eleanor Burgess directed the music; senior John Davis provided the piano accompaniment. Sally Focht, an active band member for five years, won the Atlanta Journal Cup as the best All-Around Senior.

Academic Year: 1974-1975

Principal: Jesse Shadix

Band Director: Larry Freund

Orchestra Director: Joyce Relyea

Band Officers: Michelle Zarzaca, Student Conductor, Librarian, and Majorette Captain;

Jeff Hulsey, President; Pete Smith, 1st Vice President; C.B. Hackworth, 2nd Vice President; Kerry Stevenson, Secretary; Patty Pierce, Treasurer; and Ricky Harris, Manager.

Majorettes: Michelle Zarzaca, Captain; Patty Pierce, Co-Captain; Jan Webb; Angel Lamb; Pam Skelton; Kimberly Rye; Chanda Johnson, Mascot.

Band Seniors (or Seniors with significant prior Band experience): Linda Blackmer; C. B. Hackworth; Karel Gamblin; Jeff Hulsey; Del Hunter; Kerry Stevenson; Kerry Norton; Kathy Thompson; Sabrina Price; Gwen Ivey; and Michelle Zarzaca.

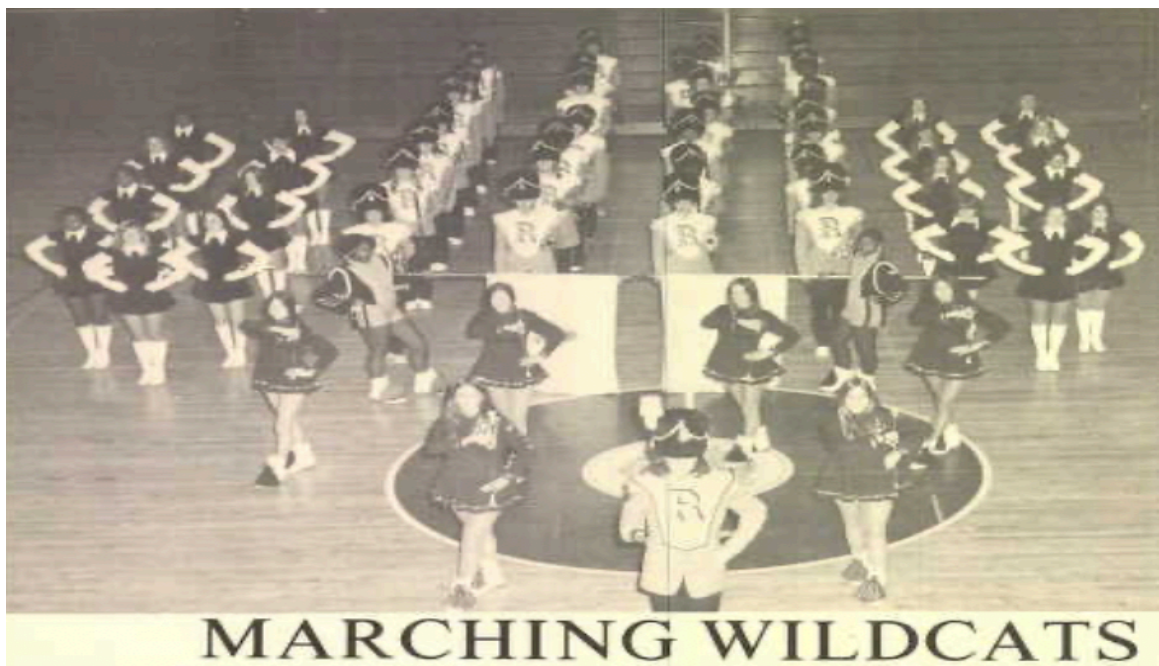
Russell H.S. Highlights of Note:

- Russell's Boy's Track, under Coach Bo Wolfe, won 1st in the Fulton Invitational.
- Russell's Boy's Track won 2nd in State Class A.

Russell Band appearances likely for the following football season schedule:

Lakeshore, Briarwood, Westwood, M.D. Collins, Campbell – Fairburn, College Park, Headland.

The Russell Marching Band was comprised of about 35 instrumentalists and about 15 auxiliary corps members. In band director Freund's second year, the band continued to play an active role during marching season, performing in football games, pep rallies, parades and the new Fulton County Marching Exhibition.



The marching band festival/competition movement began late 1960s and early 1970s. By 1974 marching band festivals were important events for most high school band programs. Since no equivalent of a standardized GMEA concert band festival format existed for marching bands, select high school band programs, such as the Douglas County Band, organized separate Georgia High School Association-approved festivals as major fund-raisers and band showcases. Many directors utilized marching band festival ratings as a barometer of the success of their programs and as a motivational tool for students.

Larger school systems around the state that contained multiple high schools initiated their respective county band marching exhibitions, both as a positive public relations effort, but more importantly as a “practice run-through,” complete with adjudicator comments, for the purpose of improving performances for the up-coming marching festivals/contests. In mid-October, the Russell High Marching Band performed in exhibition performance at Fulton County’s First Annual Marching Band Festival.



Homecoming week was highlighted by a parade down Main Street led by the Russell band. In an on-field halftime ceremony, the band provided music as a backdrop to the crowning of Theresa Maxwell.

Recap: GMEA 5th District Band Festival
 Russell /South Fulton Concert Band

1975 Friday, February 21, 11:00 a.m. at Frederick Douglass HS
 Director: Lawrence R. Freund Rating: II
 LEVEL B
 Program: *Burst of Flame*Bowles
 Royal ArmadaErickson
 Czech SuiteWhear

The initial popularity of bike racing in East Point in the early 1960s was first mentioned in Volume II (see pages 116 and 127). By the 1970s the continued interest in bicycle racing in the area ultimately resulted in what is now known as the **Dick Lane Velodrome**, named after Russell's own Dick Lane, who was the moving force behind the facility. The Dick Lane Velodrome was constructed in 1974 after a local East Point group visited a similar such track utilized for the 1972 Munich Olympics. The Dick Lane Velodrome is a 1/5 of a mile and 36° banked concrete track, set in the Sumner Park area of East Point. At the time, this new state-of-the-art Olympic competition track was considered one of the best in the country. The Russell band provided musical entertainment for the dedication of the Dick Lane Velodrome on March 23, 1975. Dignitaries in attendance included East Point Mayor Bruce Bannister, Councilman Olen Gunnin, and Recreation Director Dick Lane.



The Russell Drama Department presented the play *Guys and Dolls* in the school auditorium on May 9-10. Pit Orchestra members included: David Stribling, Joe Lee, Jeff Hulsey, Michele Zarzaca, Laura Tyson, Veronica Lewis, Deborah Freund, Martha Renfroe, Brian Stell, Leonard Jeter, Andre Fambro, and Kerry Stevenson.

In many parts of America, the up-coming 1976 Bicentennial Celebration started early. East Point's first major Bicentennial event was a *Spirit of '76* weekend held on May 15-16, 1975. The highpoint of the weekend involved a parade held on Saturday the 16th. In addition to the Russell band, other participating bands included those of Headland, Briarwood, and the Ft. McPherson Army Band. The parade began at Lawrence Street, moved up East Point Street, along Legion Way, before returning through Main Street to Lawrence Street.

Graduation was held on May 24 at the Atlanta Municipal Auditorium. Senior speakers included Sue Annette Teague and Melissa Walker. Kerry Stevenson won a music scholarship to the University of South Carolina to study flute and piano. Earlier in

the year, Kerry, along with Jeff Hulsey, percussion, earned the high honor of Georgia All-State selection.

Academic Year: 1975-1976

Principal: Jesse Shadix

Band Director: Lawrence F. Freund

Orchestra Director: Lawrence F. Freund

Band Officers: Kerry Norton, Drum Major; Darlene Eason, Assistant Drum Major; Patty Pierce, Majorette Captain; and Mark Brown, President.

Band Seniors (or Seniors with significant prior Band experience):

Pam Shelton, Patty Pierce, Betsy Williams, Patsy Terry, Veronica Lewis, Darlene Eason, Mark Brown.

Majorettes: Angel Lamb; Jane Newland; Patty Pierce, Captain; Kim Rye, Pam Shelton, Co-Captain; and Jan Webb.

Russell H.S. Highlights of Note:

- Girls' Basketball were Region 5A South Champions.
- The 1976 Boys Track Team earned 4th in State A.
- Roy Hall was selected as the new Head Football Coach, replacing Coach Abrams, who left to take an assistant principal position at Palmetto High School.
- Mrs. Wilson Hahn, Russell's vocational ed coordinator, named "Teacher of the Year" for Fulton County Schools.

Russell Band appearances likely for the following football season schedule:

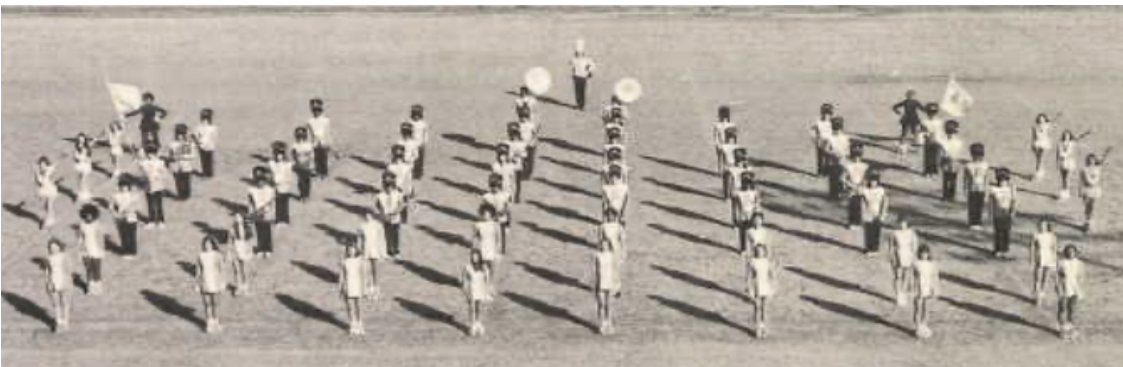
Ridgeview, Riverwood, M.D. Collins, Lakeshore, Briarwood, Cedar Grove, Westwood, College Park, Stockbridge, Headland.



The football pre-season began with a one-week majorette corps workout at the *Heart of Dixie* Twirling Camp at Auburn University. A picture of the majorettes appeared in the September 11, 1975, issue of the *Southside Sun*.

The annual High School Marching Band Festival was held at Fairburn Stadium in Fairburn on Saturday, October 11 beginning at 7:00 p.m. 15 Fulton County High School bands presented a marching show exhibition and received a military style inspection. In addition to Russell High, Southside Fulton bands that participated included: Briarwood High (Bert Kempe), Campbell High (David Trued), Collins High (James Sims), College Park High (Harold Scott), Hapeville High (Jay Wucher), Headland High (Ken Durham), Lakeshore High (Mike Gerace), Palmetto High (Carl Bedwell), and Westwood High (Bill Prescott).

After a week of spirit contests and dress-up days, homecoming week was highlighted with the band's performance at a pep rally, parade, and on-field homecoming



show. The senior contestants and her court were featured in a caravan of convertibles that circled the Russell stadium track. Patricia Owens was selected as the 1975-76 Homecoming Queen.

Both the band and orchestra received superior ratings at the 1976 GMEA Festival.³

³Dorie Green, ed., "RHS Band, Orchestra Mark Accomplishments at Year End," *Southside Sun*, July 1, 1976, p. 3B.

Recap: GMEA 5th District Band Festival
Russell/South Fulton Concert Band

1976 Saturday, March 13 11:00 a.m. at Frederick Douglass H.S.
 Director: Lawrence R. Freund Rating I
 Program: *Foundation March*.....R. Goldman
 LEVEL B *Chorale Prelude on "Sleepers Wake"*.....J. S. Bach
Dedicatory OvertureClifton Williams

After two rounds of competitive music auditions, three members of the orchestra earned All-State honors. Missy Hardegree (violin), Cynthia Davis (violin), and Wanda Jacobs (cello) represented Russell High with the best of others around the state.

The band made a May trip to Camden Co. Schools (S.C.) where they played before a large number of appreciative students at Woodbine Elementary School. Later that night the band performed a joint concert with the Camden County High School Concert Band.



The annual Band & Orchestra Awards Banquet was held at the Admiral Benbow Inn on May 17. Band President Mark Brown presented the student officers for the upcoming year: Andre Fambro, President; Laura Tyson, Vice President; Joe Lee, secretary; Paulette Owens, treasurer; Carla Young, historian; and Leta Reeves, manager.

Mr. Freund presented the following awards: Mark Brown, Outstanding Senior; Andre Fambro, Best Musician; Leonard Jeter, Outstanding Boy; Patsy Terry, Outstanding Girl; Carla Young, Most Improved Musician; and Missy Hardegree, Outstanding Orchestra Member; and, Veronica Lewis, Outstanding Officer. Earlier in the year, Veronica also earned the distinction of being designated Russell's STAR Student, naming Ms. Valentine Hayes as her STAR Teacher.

Academic Year: 1976-1977

Principal: Jesse Shaddix

Band Director: Larry Sims

Orchestra Director: Larry Sims

Band Officers: Kerry Norton, Drum Major; Carla Young, Captain and Historian; Andre Fambro, President; Laura Tyson, Vice President; Joe Lee, Secretary, Paulette Owens, Treasurer; Leta Reeves, Manager; Sandy Carroll; Susan McDaniel; Debbie Blackmer; Angel Lamb; Belinda Scruggs.

Band Seniors (or Seniors with significant prior Band experience):

Melvin Daniels, Andre Fambro, Kerry Norton, Tony Marshburn, Joe Lee, Tommie Skipper, Valerie Thrash; Laura Tyson, Sandy Sewell, Linda Arnold; Kathy Greene, Cheryl Jackson, Debbie Blackmer, Angel Lamb, Susan McDaniel, Angie Reynolds, Becky Elmore.

Majorettes: Angel Lamb, Captain; Jana Newland, Solo Twirler; Doreta Smith; Debbie Patton.

Russell H.S. Highlights of Note:

- Females were permitted to enroll in JROTC for the first time.
- Steve DeLong, a former assistant coach at Druid Hills H.S., took over the head coaching position at Russell.
- Wrestling took 2nd in Area, Class A.
- Girls' Basketball earned Runners-Up in Region 5-A.

Russell Band appearances likely for the following football season schedule:

Riverwood, M.D. Collins, Westwood, Headland, Briarwood, Campbell-Fairburn, Stockbridge, Palmetto, College Park, Walker.

Prior to the start of marching season in August, all of America celebrated the country's Bicentennial on the 4th of July, 1976, weekend. The Atlanta Bicentennial Commission organized events that allowed Atlantans to watch the WSB 'Salute to America' Parade, listen to bands in Central City Park, and attend a patriotic program in the Atlanta Civic Center.

East Point's Bicentennial Committee organized a weekend celebration titled 'America's Birthday Party,' which included a street party on July 3 in the area of Washington Street between Main Street and East Point Street. Events included patriotic music, special speakers, bands, local dignitaries, and an evening barbecue. On Sunday, July 4th, East Point citizens were invited to attend a sunrise service at the Russell High football stadium.



In August, Larry Sims took over as the new Russell High band director. He previously held a band position in Cobb County (GA). The marching band numbered at around fifty. In addition to the fall marching activities, Mr. Sims led the Symphonic Band to a Superior (1) rating at GMEA 5th District Band Festival and organized the Spring Band and Orchestra Trip to Carowinds (NC).



The Russell band played its traditional role of providing music during homecoming week. The band and auxiliaries provided the visual and musical background to the crowning of Miss Gale Payne as the new Miss RHS Homecoming Queen. The Science

Club won first place in the homecoming float competition.

The South Fulton County Honor Chorus and Orchestra performed in concert at M. D. Collins H.S. on Tuesday, April 5. The festival orchestra, under the direction of Mr. Sims, was comprised in part by several Russell students, including Joe Lee, trumpet; Tommie Skipper, horn; Ronald Buckner, tuba; and Blake Hulsey, percussion. All of the top string chairs were held by Russell string orchestra members: Robin Owens, Phyllis Perkins, and Rose Morgan, first violin; Beth Gray, Sybil Ross, and Paul Griffin, second Violin; Tanya Taylor, viola; Lamonica Thrash, cello; and David Poole, bass.

In April, East Point initiated a "Pride in East Point" City Clean-up Day, an event highlighted with a parade through the downtown business district. The goal was to develop community awareness and enhance civic pride. Numerous civic and citizen organizations participated in this first time community spring event.

The end-of-year Band Awards Banquet sponsored by the Band Boosters was held at Morrison's. After an invocation by band student Carol Teal, the awards recognitions went to Joe Lee and Valerie Thrash for Outstanding Seniors, and to Alan Johnson for

Most Improved.⁴ All-State recognitions earned earlier in the year included: Missy Hardegree, violin; Wanda Jacobs, cello; and Cynthia Davis, violin.

The senior class held graduation at the Atlanta Municipal Auditorium on May 27 at 4:00 p.m. Class speakers included Brenda Tenney and Renee Crews. The senior class song was *You'll Never Walk Alone*. The Russell band performed *Pomp and Circumstance* for the processional and *Grand March from Aida* as the recessional.

Academic Year: 1977-1978

Principal: Jesse Shaddix

Band Director: Larry E. Sims

Orchestra Director: Larry E. Sims

Band Officers: Carla Young, Drum Major; Keith McCoy, Assistant Drum Major; Doreta Smith, Majorette Captain; Lawanda Davis; Allan Johnson, Belinda Scruggs; Doug Loggins; Debbie Patton; Leta Reeves.

Band Seniors (or Seniors with significant prior Band experience): Debbie Sterns; Christine Howell; Laura Cox; Ronald Buckner; Darlene Platt, Paulette Owens; Doug Loggins, Olga Watts

Majorettes: Jana Newland; Debbie Patton; Doreta Smith, Captain.

Russell H.S. Highlights of Note: Elvis Presley died in Graceland, Memphis, TN on August 16.

Russell Band appearances likely for the following football season schedule: Riverwood, M.D. Collins, Westwood, Headland, Briarwood, Campbell-Fairburn, Palmetto, Stockbridge, College Park.

⁴ _____. "Russell High Band Has Honors Banquet," *Southside Sun*, June 23 1977, p. 9A.

Russell High and the world were shocked to hear of the death of Elvis Presley, the King of Rock and Roll. Pre-season camps for Russell's football team, band, drill team



and cheerleaders had barely begun when the sad news was broadcast. Presley was considered by many to one of the most significant musical icons of the 20th century.

The Russell band was one of 16 bands originally scheduled to perform in the 4th annual Fulton County Marching Festival at Garwood Stadium in Fairburn on October 8. The event was rescheduled to October 22 because of rain. Adjudicators for the event were: Ann Alford, Cherokee County H.S.; Cecil Wilder, Jonesboro H.S.; and Eugene Wyles, Worth County H.S. Fulton County School Superintendent E. E. Baker awarded participation trophies.



A school accreditation committee evaluated Russell in the spring of 1978. The music assessment included the following:

“Introductory Statement:

The music program at Russell High School includes a variety of music courses that are designed to meet the individual musical needs of the students. The music staff is composed of a choral music teacher and an instrumental music teacher teaching the following music courses:

Beginning Guitar, Advanced Guitar, General Music, Intermediate Mixed Chorus, Advanced Mixed Chorus, Advanced Orchestra, and Advanced Band.

Commendations:

1. The enthusiasm, knowledge of subject matter, teaching ability, and good rapport with the students are outstanding attributes of the music faculty. These factors, combined with the excellent attitudes of the students taking the music courses, help to provide a healthy atmosphere for the learning process.
2. The equipment provided in the music department is excellent and the physical plant is very good in that it has been designed to meet the acoustical, space, and storage requirements necessary for a quality music department.
3. The music faculty is active in professional music education organizations and takes full advantage of the evaluative programs sponsored by the Georgia Music Educator’s Association.
4. The administration of Russell High School has been very helpful in the planning of and the active support of a quality music program in the school.”⁵

The second annual “Pride in East Point” City Pride Clean-up day and parade occurred on April 29, 1978. The theme for the year was “Improving the quality of life in



⁵ England, Clifford N. Report of the Visiting Committee on the Evaluation of Russell High School for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, February 7, 8 & 9, 1978: p. 25. Typed Report in Box Z-4; located in Teaching Museum South.

East Point.” The parade circled around the downtown East Point business district on East Point Street and Main Street and contained numerous marching bands, floats, vehicular units, clowns, horses, and city dignitaries.

Graduation was held on May 28 at the Atlanta Municipal Auditorium. Class speakers included Brenda Tenney and Renee Crews. The senior class song was *The Impossible Dream*. The Russell band performed *Pomp and Circumstance* for the processional and played *March and Procession of Bacchus* as a feature selection later in the program. The band performed *Grand March from Aida* as the recessional.

Academic Year: 1978-1979

Principal: Jesse Shaddix

Band Director: Larry E. Sims

Orchestra Director: Larry E. Sims

Band Officers (Staff): Carla Young, Drum Major; Doreta Smith, Majorette Captain; Renea Simon, Rifle Captain, Alan Johnson; Debbie Patton, Bill Lee; Belinda Scruggs; Carol Teal, Color Guard Sgt.; Lawanda Davis; Cindy Cannon and Lisa Evans, Flag Corps Co-Captains.

Majorettes: Doreta Smith, Captain.

Russell H.S. Highlights of Note:

- Wayne Robinson was named the new Russell football coach.
- The Girl’s Basketball Team won the Fulton County Christmas Tournament.
- The band debuts new uniforms.
- Ms. Eleanor Burgess, a fixture as head of the Choral Department for over 25 years, retired from her position and was replaced by Mr. Barry Griffen.

Band Seniors (or Seniors with significant prior Band experience): Alan Johnson; Debbie Patton; Lawanda Davis; Carla Young; Belinda Scruggs; Gaye Culpepper, Doreta Smith.

Russell Band appearances likely for the following football season schedule:

College Park, @ Westwood, Palmetto, Stockbridge, Campbell – Fairburn, Headland, Briarwood, Lovett, Crestwood, North Springs.

The 1978-79 Marching Band was comprised of the following: 20 winds, 4 percussion, 4 majorettes, 5 rifles, and 15 flag corps members.



The band obtained new uniforms for the start of the new season. According to the '79 *Pointer*, the band also exhibited a new 'Corps Style' marching concept, an approach that brought praise to the band at the 1978 Fulton County Marching Band Exhibition.

The 5th annual event was held at North Springs High School on October 7.⁶ The Russell High Band was one of about 16 bands to perform. Other groups included: Briarwood High, Campbell High, College Park High, Collins High, Crestwood High, Feldwood High, Hapeville High, Headland High, Milton High, North Springs High, Palmetto High,



Ridgeview High, Riverwood High, Roswell High, and Westwood High. The Cedar Shoals High School Band from Athens, Georgia performed in exhibition. Adjudicators for the event were: Gene Wyles, Worth County H.S.; Robert Pierce, Cartersville H.S.; and Ron Evans, Johnson High School (Gainesville, Georgia).

⁶ ed. "South Fulton Bands to March in Festival," *Southside and Fayette Sun*, 28 September 1978, p. 6A.

Homecoming week was highlighted with a parade on Friday, October 13 led by the Russell band that proceeded through the downtown East Point business district. The unlucky date was not kind to Russell, for rain dampened the festivities that night. Olga Watts won the title of Miss RHS, while the senior class won first place for their float named “Mutiny on the BHS.”

The orchestra as listed in the *Pointer* yearbook included: Robin Owens, Sybil Ross, Linda Shaddix, Danny Poole, Greg Graham, and Lamonia Thrash.

The Concert Band earned an Excellent Rating (II) at the GMEA 5th District Band Festival held at M.D. Collins High School on the weekend of February 23-24.⁷ The Russell Orchestra also performed as part of the district festival.

Russell Concert Band at GMEA Band Festival (1979?)

Director: Larry Sims

Program: *Pasodoble La Companera*Charles Wiley

LEVEL *Siegfried's Funeral Music*Wagner/Whear

2nd American Folk RhapsodyClaire Grundman



The 3rd annual “Pride in East Point” Day covered two Saturdays and coincided with the national “Keep America Beautiful Day” on May 5. John Pruitt, a newscaster

⁷ ed. “South Fulton’s Bands Excel,” *Southside and Fayette Sun*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (March 22, 1979): p. 1 B.

with WXIA-TV “11 Alive News,” served as grand marshal for the parade. The parade route started south on East Point Street and turned left on Washington before turning north on Main Street. Awards given for the parade included: Headland High and Walter F. George High Schools as best bands; and the Russell ROTC Drill Team for best, non-band, marching unit.

Approximately 130 seniors held graduation exercises at the Atlanta Municipal Auditorium on June 2, 1979. The Russell band performed *Superman Suite* (Williams/Lowden) as part of the program. The class song was *We’ve Only Just Begun* (Roger Nichols). Mr. Sims directed the band processional and recessional, while Mrs. Mary Lynn Holman conducted the class graduation music.

Academic Year: 1979-1980

Principal: Jesse Shaddix

Band Director: David Lee

Orchestra Director: Alice Cabbage

Band Officers: Carol Teal, Drum Major; Connie Traylor, Rifle Captain; Ginny Hubbard, Russellettes Captain.

Band Seniors (or Seniors with significant prior Band experience):

Majorettes:

Russell H.S. Highlights of Note:

- The old white wooden Gym, established in 1934, was torn down.
- The 1980 Girls Basketball Team won the Region 5-AA Championship.
- Ms. Janet Kinard, Russell math teacher for the previous five years, was selected “Teacher of the Year” for Fulton County Schools

Russell Band appearances likely for the following football season schedule:

College Park, Westwood, Palmetto, Campbell – Fairburn, Stockbridge, Headland, Briarwood, Lovett, Crestwood, North Springs.



In the summer, just prior to the beginning of the new school term, a familiar structure on the Russell campus was removed. The original white wooden gym, built in 1934, was torn down. It was a familiar site indeed, for it was situated in

between the football field and the Russell music building, two areas where band members spent a great deal of time. This rather large structure was replaced by another gym across campus in 1955, but the old gym languished as a storage facility for decades. Over time the gym became unsightly with graffiti from various senior classes.

In 1974, a large group of Russell students, comprised mostly of band members, engaged in a service project to repaint the old gym (see Volume II, p. 207). Writing in the *Southside Neighbor*, Carol Gentry, a staff reporter, detailed a student volunteer effort to repaint the old gym that had been defaced. Using a large quantity of paint and brushes donated by local businesses, the students spent an entire Saturday restoring the gym exterior. What had once appeared as an old, white gym was eventually transformed into a green and gold façade with a large wildcat face outline. By 1979, however, the old gym had long outlived its purpose and was demolished, making room for a new track and concession stand.

Mr. David Lee, the new Russell High band director, graduated from FSU and came to Russell after serving ½ of a school term for a band director in the southern Mississippi area. Lee arrived at Russell High in the fall of 1979 and was noteworthy for infusing jazz into a program where jazz instruction had dwindled over a number of years.



The 6th annual Fulton County Band Festival was held at Garwood Stadium in Fairburn on 6 October. The Russell Band appeared along with 16 other Fulton bands.

The Osborne High School Band from Cobb County, Mark Caldwell, director, made a guest appearance in exhibition. Adjudicators were Phyllis Dancz and Gary Teske of the University of Georgia, and Terry Segars from Marietta High School.

As usual, the Russell band participated in Homecoming Week festivities that featured the crowning of Kathy Folds as Homecoming Queen.

The annual GMEA 5th District Band Festival was held at Frederick Douglas High School in Atlanta. Russell performed at 9:30 a.m. on Friday, February 29.

The 1980 "Pride in East Point" Parade held in early May was the grand finale of East Point's observance of "Keep America Beautiful Week." Parade awards included the



Carol Teal, Drum Major

Riverside Military Academy Band as "Best School Band" and the Russell High ROTC Drill Team as "Best (non-band) Marching Entry."

The Fulton County Jazz Festival was held at Ridgeview High School on Thursday, May 15. The Russell Jazz Band performed at 6:00 p.m. and was followed by six other jazz bands. The University of

Georgia Jazz Band, under the direction of Roger Dancz, performed an exhibition at 9:00 P.M.

Graduation was held on Tuesday, June 3 at Russell High School.

Academic Year: 1980-1981

Principal: Jesse Shaddix

Band Director: David Lee

Orchestra Director: Alice Cabbage

Band Officers: Greg Clemons, Drum Major; Connie Traylor, Rifle Captain; Ginny Hubbard, Russellettes Captain.

Band Seniors (or Seniors with significant prior Band experience):

Majorettes:

Russell H.S. Highlights of Note:

- The 8th grade class returned to Russell High as a result of the closure of South Fulton Junior High.
- John Grindle was elected as the Fulton County School Superintendent. Mr. Grindle, a 30-year veteran of the Fulton County Schools, began his career as a teacher at Russell in 1950.
- The Russell ROTC earned a “Blue Star” as a result of an undefeated rifle team, drill team, color guard and the hard work of the entire Battalion.

Russell Band appearances likely for the following football season schedule:

College Park, Westwood, Palmetto, Campbell, Stockbridge, Headland, Briarwood, Lovett, Crestwood, North Springs.

In May, the Fulton County Board of Education closed three schools including South Fulton and Eva Thomas Junior Highs. The fall merger of 227 students from South



Fulton Junior High, Russell High's sole feeder, created a 8th through 12th grade population at Russell of 957 students.

Russell performed at the 7th annual Fulton County Marching Festival held at North Springs High School on October 4 at North Springs High School.⁸ The annual South Fulton County All-Star Choral and Orchestra Concerts were held at M.D. Collins High School on October 21. Students from all the South Fulton Schools comprised this All-Star Chorus and Orchestra.



The Russell band performed in the Homecoming parade and for the on-field festivities, which led to the selection of Nancy Arnold as Homecoming Queen.

In the spring, two Russell Orchestra students earned membership in the GMEA All-State Orchestra: Perry Westmoreland, violin, High School All-State; and Sam Lee, violin, Junior High All-State.

The 1981 “Pride in East Point” was held on May 2 as part of the “Keep America Beautiful” observance. The Clean Community System sponsored the parade. Hal Suit, veteran news commentator for WXIA-TV 11 Alive, served as Grand Marshall. Parade awards included the following: Lakeshore High School Band - “Best Band;” and Riverside Military Academy Color Guard – “Best Marching Unit” (non-band).

Graduation occurred on Tuesday, June 8, on the Russell Football Field.

⁸ Hill, Lane, ed. “Fulton Schools to Participate in Festival,” *Southside/Fayette Sun*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (September 25, 1980): 4E.

Academic Year: 1981-1982

Principal: Jesse Shaddix

Band Director: Jim Littlefield

Orchestra Director: Alice Cabbage

Band Officers: Greg Clemons, Drum Major; and Danita Young, Drum Major

Band Seniors (or Seniors with significant prior Band experience):

Majorettes:

Russell H.S. Highlights of Note:

- Rick Smith was named as the new head football coach
- The Varsity football team played in two playoff games
- ROTC awarded “Honor unit with Distinction”

Russell Band appearances likely for the following football season schedule:

Westwood; Henry County; Campbell-Fairburn; Feldwood; Lakeshore; Headland; Harris County; Briarwood; Henry County, Jackson.

Russell’s three previous band directors served only three years at Russell before moving on to other careers. At the conclusion of Mr. Lee’s 3-year tenure the past June,



Mr. James Littlefield took over at Russell High, moving from Walker County, Georgia, where he worked as an assistant band director for three years at Lafayette High School.

The 8th annual Fulton County Marching Festival was held at Garfield Stadium on the campus of Campbell-Fairburn. Mr. John Grindle, Fulton County Superintendent of Schools, distributed participation trophies.

Homecoming Spirit Week was very active with events that included a Ribbon Day, Spirit Chains, 50s Day, and a pep rally. A highlight of the week involved the traditional parade featuring the band and numerous floats. Patricia Owens was selected as the 1981-82 Homecoming Queen.

GMEA 5th District Band Festival Recap:

1982 February 25 at Benjamin E. Mays H.S., Atlanta, GA

Director: Jim Littlefield

Program: *Torch of Liberty*.....Karl King/arr. Swearingen
Two Derbyshire Volunteer Marches.....Haydn/Madden
Rhythm of the Winds.....Frank Erickson

East Point's "Keep America Beautiful" Festival was organized to take place over four consecutive Saturdays. The main event, the "Pride in East Point" Parade was held on May 1 with Monica Kaufman, WSB-TV Action News Anchor, as parade marshal.

Parade recognitions went to the Lakeshore High School Band for the "Best Band Award" and to the Ft. McPherson FORSCOM Band for best "Marching Unit."

The Russell band and ROTC Department cancelled their scheduled appearance at



East Point's 'Keep America Beautiful Festival' parade out of respect for the tragic death of Jeff Wilson Mimbs in a rifle

accident in the Russell ROTC rifle range just a few days before the parade. According to *The Atlanta Constitution*, reaction included: “ ‘I think it is right (to cancel),’ ninth-grader Doris Sutton said. ‘That’s what they should have done. Most people are still really upset to be able to enjoy themselves anyway.’ ”⁹

Russell presented the musical, “You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown,” May 14-15. Under the direction of Drama Teacher Greg Poulos, the two-day production featured a cast of 60. Perry Westmoreland was cast as ‘Linus;’ Cynthia Miller portrayed Peppermint Patty. Mr. Littlefield assisted by playing percussion; Ms. Alice Cabbage, Russell Orchestra teacher, performed on string bass.

Russell graduated 104 seniors at the Russell Football field on June 10 at 8:00 p.m. Victoria Jean Balsam was the class valedictorian.

Academic Year: 1982-1983

Principal: Jesse Shaddix

Band Director: Jim Littlefield

Orchestra Director: Alice Cabbage

Band Officers: Danita Young, Drum Major; Tonya Frazier & Laurie Lowe, Flag Co-Captains; and Connie Traylor & Cheryl Bivins, Rifle Co-Captains.

Band Seniors (or Seniors with significant prior Band experience):

Majorettes: Traci Patton; Dalanda Strickland.

Russell H.S. Highlights of Note:

- The Football Team had a 8-2 regular season and lost in the playoff game to Lovett. Reginald Rutland signed with Georgia Tech.
- ROTC awarded “Honor unit with Distinction” for exceptional performance in all areas of the Junior ROTC Program.
- Russell High won the Clean School Award

⁹ Cathy Schoppenhorst and Beverly Barnes, “Rifles Put Off Limits For Fulton ROTC,” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 1, 1982, p. 1, City/State section.

Russell Band appearances likely for the following football season schedule:

Sylvan; @ Palmetto; @ North Springs; College Park; Woodland; @ Campbell – Fairburn; @ Westwood, Lakeshore, Feldwood; Cedar Grove.

The school year began with several new South Fulton schools created by consolidation: Headland High School merged with Briarwood to establish the new Woodland High School that was housed at the existing Briarwood facility; the old Headland facility was renamed Paul D. West Middle and contained middle school students originally scheduled for either Headland or Briarwood.

Marching Band members listed in the 1982-83 *Pointer* included: D. Young, L. Hall, D. High, C. Winkles, W. Wisdom, W. Harry, A. Coody, Y. Dennis, V. Hastings, R. Hamby, D. Sutton, W. Malone, D. King, S. Whitfield, E. Ervin, L. Gunnels, Y.



McDowell, T. Flagg, R. Perry, J. Ingram, S. Walker, R. Brinkley, J. Vernon, R. Danes, W. Starr, R. Smith, A. Hutchins, R. Reeves, J. Sherman, and D. Osborne.

The Russell Marching Band was the first group to perform at the evening session of the Fulton County 9th Annual Marching Festival held at North Springs High School on

October 2, 1982. Mr. Don Hough, Russell band director in 1960 and then-South Fulton



elementary band director, assisted with video recording of the event. John Grindle, Fulton County school superintendent, distributed trophies to the participating bands.

Homecoming Week activities were organized by the Student Council and involved numerous special spirit day activities, such as: 1) hall decorations; 2) spirit chains; 3) dress up day; 4) gold/white/black day; 5) Blue Jeans Day; and, 6) 50s day. The band was featured as the as the lead off group in a parade through the downtown East Point business district. The senior class won the float competition. The band and ROTC, along with other participants, comprised the half-time homecoming activities that climaxed with the crowning of Tonja Frazier as the new Homecoming Queen. The game was highlighted with a thrilling come-from-behind 15-14 win over Lakeshore. A dance capped the exciting evening.

The annual North and South County High School Honor Bands performed in concert at the College Park H.S. Auditorium on January 28. Each band contained about 95 players. David Hedges, Don McCook, Peter Zervakos, and Russell's Jim Littlefield conducted the South Honor Band, organized by Chairman Jay Wucher.

The GMEA 5th District Festival was held at North Springs High School on March 3 through 5 with Mr. Herbert Cox, band director at North Springs, as festival chairman. Adjudicators for the event included Dr. John Butler of Clemson University,

Mr. Frank Greer of Tennessee State College, Dr. William Robison of Berry College,
and Mr. Guyton McLendon.

GMEA 5th District Band Festival Recap:
Russell High School Concert Band

1983 Thursday, March 3, 7:30 pm at North Springs H.S.
Director: Jim Littlefield Rating
Program: *Stargate 2000*..... Osterling
LEVEL III *Suite in Minor Mode*.....Kabalevsky
Denbridge Way.....Swearingen

In 1976, WSB TV inaugurated the WSB Metro Honor Band, a non-performing group that was intended for recognition purposes only. Based on band director recommendations and student accomplishments, about 75 band students were selected annually for recognition at a lavish luncheon in a downtown Atlanta Hotel. Russell's Alan Coody won the honor of being selected to the 1983 WSB Metro Honor Band.

The Russell band participated in the "Pride in East Point Parade" on May 14. Mr. Johnny Beckman, popular weatherman on 11 Alive – TV, served as Parade Marshall. Military band parade participants included the Ft. McPherson FORSCOM Band and the 530th Air Force Band from Dobbins Air Base in Marietta. In addition to Russell, high school bands included Woodland, Lakeshore, and Riverside Military Academy. Lakeshore H. S. won the "Best Band" Award; Russell High's Terri Burdette was crowned 'Miss East Point Clean and Beautiful.'

Russell's graduation occurred on the Russell Football Field on June 3 at 8:00 p.m.

Academic Year: 1983-1984

Principal: Jesse Shaddix

Band Director: James Littlefield

Orchestra Director: Alice Cabbage

Band Officers: Danita Young, Drum Major; Alan Coody, Assistant Drum Major; Dalerie Turner & Angela Ivey, Flag Captains; Latanya Hairston and Shemel Chandler, Rifle Team Captains; Tonya Frazier and Laurie Lowe, Russellettes Captains.

Band Seniors (or Seniors with significant prior Band experience): Brad Crawford; Partina Flagg; Lisa Hall; Vernather Hastings; Dena King; Klifford Smith; Dalerie Turner; Danita Young.

Majorettes: Traci Patton

Russell H.S. Highlights of Note:

- Benny Dukes was selected as the new head football coach.
- The ROTC Department earned a 98.25 in the 1983 Fulton County Inspection.
- ROTC awarded “Honor unit with Distinction” for exceptional performance in all areas of the Junior ROTC Program.
- The Russell Rifle Team won the Third Place Team Championship Match Course Trophy in Chattanooga, TN.
- Russell High won the Clean School Award for the second year in a row.

Russell Band appearances likely for the following football season schedule:

Sylvan; Palmetto; North Springs; College Park; @ Woodland; Campbell – Fairburn; Westwood; @ Lakeshore; @ Feldwood; @ Cedar Grove.



Marching Band members listed in the 1983-84 *Pointer* included: Cheryl White, Doris Sutton, Ruby Corley, Tina McGuire, Tammy Walker, Maya Lindsey, Danita Young, Vernather Hastings, Patrina Flagg, Raychelle Handy, Wahlea Malone, Wynnie Wisdom, Irving Churchman, Yvette Dennis, Lisa Hall, Celenna Winkles, Cherise Mitchell, Erica Ervin, Lashun White, Teresa Willis, Burrelle Brown, Mark Allen, Jason Hawkins, Billy Pagan, Brian Crile, Pat Russo, Romeo Brinkley, Jamie Vernon, Richard Gaydos, Roger Danes, Darrell Osborne, David Harrison, Ricky Andrews, Jimmy Sherman, Ed Corley, Lee Dunn, Rodney Sumlin, and Denarris Hawkins.

The Student Council organized a busy Spirit Week that began with Picture Day on a Monday, Ribbon and Badge day on Tuesday, and a 50's Day on Wednesday. Activities at end of the week involved Dress Up Day on Thursday and several highlights on Friday: Spirit Hall, Gold & White Day, Spirit Chain, and the Homecoming Parade that featured the band, ROTC, and numerous other groups. Friday evening ended well with a football victory over Westwood and a successful post-game dance. Vera Guild was selected as the homecoming queen.



The 10th annual High School Marching Band Festival was held at Garwood Stadium on the campus of Campbell – Fairburn on October 1. Delores McGhee, President, Fulton County Board of Education, presented the participation trophies.

The Ft. McPherson FORSCOM Band performed two concerts in the newly renovated East Point City Auditorium on February 7-8. Russell students, including members of the ROTC, served as ushers for the programs. The

concerts were the first events held in the auditorium since 1977, when the facility was closed as being a fire hazard.

The 6th annual installment of the East Point “Keep America Beautiful Festival” occurred on Saturday, May 12, 1984. The highlight of the festival, the “Pride in East Point” parade, began at 12:30 p.m. with local personality, Ludlow Porch, as Parade Marshall. In addition to the Russell Band, other band participants included: Lakeshore, Feldwood, Hapeville, and Riverside Academy and two military bands in the parade that began and ended at Main and Lawrence Streets. A total of 160 units took part in the parade that featured civic groups, businesses, church groups and schools.

Toward the end of the school year, it was announced that Sam Lee, a junior in the Russell Orchestra, was selected as a scholarship winner to attend the prestigious Brevard summer Music Festival held at Brevard, North Carolina. Earlier in the year he earned selection to Georgia’s High School Orchestra for the fifth time in as many years. Russell’s graduation was held in the renovated East Point Auditorium on June 9.

Academic Year: 1984-1985

Principal: Jesse Shaddix

Band Director: Frank Banton

Band Officers:

Orchestra Director: Alice Cabbage

Band Seniors (or Seniors with significant prior Band experience): Michelle Chapman; Yvette Dennis; Erica Ervin; Jalanda McDowell; Sam Lee (Orchestra) Jimmy Sherman; Wahlea Malone; Stephen Williams.

Majorette: Melissa Turner; Traci Patton.

Russell H.S. Highlights of Note:

- The 1985 Girls Basketball Team were Region 5-AA Champions

- ROTC awarded “Honor unit with Distinction”

Russell Band appearances likely for the following football season schedule:

Palmetto; Sylvan; @ Haralson County; Campbell-Fairburn; @ College Park; Cedar Grove; @ Collins; Lakeshore; @ Woodland; @ Feldwood.

In Fulton County, the school year began under the direction of Lawson Sayer, interim Fulton County Schools Superintendent, who was appointed upon the resignation of John Grindle earlier in the summer. The year also began with a new band director, Mr. Frank Banton, who was known for his military career with the U.S. Air Force and Georgia National Guard Bands.



During the course of football season, the Russell band performed at all the football games and also participated in the annual Fulton County Marching Festival.

The Georgia Board of Education established a pilot program to address their concern that too much in-school time was being spent in non-instructional activities such as pep rallies. A number of schools instituted the voluntary program, Russell High being one of them. At the time, Principal Shaddix sought to boost basic skills test scores and eliminated pep rallies for the year as part of the program. His decision was not popular with the student body and even drew some protests from parents.¹⁰

As a result, Wildcat Homecoming Week contained no pep rally; but, the occasion ended well with a homecoming parade, the crowning of Latanya Gunnells as homecoming queen, an exciting football 14-7 football win over Cedar Grove, and a homecoming dance.

¹⁰ Lancaster, John. “Rule Stifles School Spirit,” *Atlanta Constitution*, September 30, 1984: p. 1C.

Russell's orchestra performed a Christmas concert at the East Point City Auditorium at 8:00 p.m. on December 1.



The band performed in the 7th annual East Point "Keep America Beautiful Festival" Parade on Saturday, May 11. Mr. Guy Sharpe, the popular WXIA-Alive weatherman, served as Grand Marshal. In previous years, the starting and ending points occurred at Main Street and Lawrence. MARTA rail construction altered the parade route by one mile and necessitated the following route change: begin at Church Street to East Point Street, to a right on Washington Road, then a right on Church Street, and left on Dorsey before concluding at the old Church Street School. Parade winners included: Woodland High School for Best Band, and Jere Wells School as Best (non-band) Marching Unit.

Senior violinist Sam Lee, a five-year member of the Russell Orchestra, earned membership in the GMEA Georgia All-State Orchestra for his sixth consecutive time. He was also a member of the prestigious Atlanta Youth Symphony. On the basis of his high academic record and SAT score, he was named Russell's Star Student. He selected Ms. Christy Weinheimer as his Star Teacher.

Academic Year: 1985-1986

Principal: Jesse Shaddix (retired ½ way through the school year)

Band Director: Samuel J. Hutcherson, Jr.

Orchestra Director: Alice Cabbage

Band Officers: Jamie Vernon, Drum Major; and Richard Gaydos, Band Captain; Stephanie Williams, Russellette Captain.

Band Seniors (or Seniors with significant prior Band experience): Lee Dunn; Richard Gaydos; Rachelle Handy; Mary Hamby; Randy Merritt; Traci Patton; Jamie Vernon; La Shun White, Cellena Winkles.

Majorettes:

Russell H.S. Highlights of Note:

- The Russell Girls Basketball team won the 5-AA championship.
- The Russell Rifle Team earned a trophy at the Atlanta Invitational Tournament with a team score of 984.

Russell Band appearances likely for the following football season schedule:

Palmetto, @ Sylvan, Haralson county, @ Campbell – Fairburn, College Park, @ Cedar Grove, M.D. Collins, @ Lakeshore, Woodland, Feldwood.

At the beginning of the 1985-1986 school year, Dr. James Fox was selected as the new Fulton County School superintendent, succeeding Lawson Sayer, who served as interim superintendent the previous year. New on the scene also was Samuel J.

Hutcherson, who succeeded Banton as the new Russell High band director. Hutcherson's first experience with the Russell Band occurred during the previous school year when Banton was occasionally called away from Russell High because of National Guard duty.

Hutcherson served as the substitute band director during those times and was retained as



the full-time band director when Banton left Russell after one year in June 1985.

The 1985-1986 *Pointer* listed the following band members: Yolanda Bowens, Raychelle Handy, Sanya Smith, Tammy Thomaston, Verchica

Moody, Celenna Winkles, Penny Ledford; Trina Joyner, Jennifer Cook; Kim Bingham; Regina Anthony, Tracy Gibbons, Jamie Vernon; Richard Gaydos, Pat Russo; Bobby Chappell; Gerald Coats; Sedric Barnett, Carlos Thornton; Ronald Greene; Bill Wilson; Clarence Walker; Anthony Kemp; Reginald Bentley, Richie Howard, Derrick Coleman.

Spirit Week concluded with the crowning of Michelle Hood as the Russell High Homecoming Queen.

The 1986 Pride in East Point Parade was held at 12:30 p.m. on May 10 and featured Ken Cook, WAGA meteorologist, as Parade Marshall. The parade organized and started at Main and Lawrence Streets and proceeded down Main to Church Street, to East Point Street, and over to Washington Road. The groups disbanded at the old Church



Street School off Dorsey. The FORSCOM Army Band led a group of bands that included Russell, Woodland, Woodward Academy, and Lakeshore. Woodland won for ‘Best Band;’ Marion Smith was recognized as the ‘Best (non-band) Marching Unit.’ The Russell ROTC won the “Grand Award” and the Russell ROTC Drill Team won “Best School Entry.”

Graduation was held in the East Point City Auditorium on June 6 at 8:00 p.m. Valedictorian Jeff Sims presented the Welcome Greeting, while Ann Lavendar and James Vernon served as student speakers. Drum Major Jamie Vernon was named the Russell High STAR Student. He named Ms. Libby Stephens as STAR Teacher. The graduates sang *The Greatest Love of All* as their class song. The Russell band performed *Ceremonial March* by Morissey for the recessional.

Jamie Vernon and Traci Patton, dedicated members of the marching band for five years, were both named as “Best All-Round” of the Class of ’86.

Academic Year: 1986-1987

Principal: Henry J. Porter

Band Director: Samuel J. Hutcherson, Jr.

Orchestra Director: Alice Cabbage

Band Officers:

Band Seniors (or Seniors with significant prior Band experience): Tina McGurie.

Majorettes:

Russell H.S. Highlights of Note:

- MARTA opened the East Point Rapid Rail Line on August 16, 1986.
- Boys Basketball: Champions at Fayette County Christmas Tournament.
- Russell’s FBLA organization was busy at the end of the school year with county competitions at Riverwood High School, region events at Westwood High School, and the State FBLA conference in Atlanta May 1-3.
- Another successful year for the Russell JROTC Rifle Team.

Russell Band appearances likely for the following football season schedule: Decatur, @ Lovett, @ Cross Keys, Cedar Grove, Woodland, M.D. Collins, @ Lakeshore, @ Campbell, College Park, @ Feldwood.

The Russell Band’s participation in the 13th annual South Fulton Marching Band Festival occurred on October 11, 1986 at Garwood Field (Fairburn).

Spirit Week included Ribbon Day, Tacky Day, and 50’s Day. Homecoming evening saw Sharlene Graham crowned as Russell’s new Homecoming Queen.

Recap: GMEA 5th District Band Festival
Russell Concert Band

1987 February 26

Director: Samuel J. Hutcherson, Jr.

Program: *Bells Across the Gridiron*.....Walters

LEVEL III *Soliloquy*.....Pollack

Kensington OvertureWhear

Beginning on April 25, the annual “Pride in East Point” celebration was held over three weekends as part of the “Keep America Beautiful” festivities. For the first time in over 10 years, the event was transformed into a country fair instead of a parade. The South Metro Community Band performed a 2:00 p.m. concert as part of the event on May 9.

Toward the end of the year, Andrea Cantrell was selected as Russell’s STAR Student; she selected Ms. Jackie Wilson, Choral Director, as STAR Teacher. The Junior/Senior Prom was held on May 16.

Academic Year: 1987-1988

Principal: Henry J. Porter

Band Director: Samuel J. Hutcherson, Jr.

Orchestra Director: Alice Cabbage

Band Officers:

Band Seniors (or Seniors with significant prior Band experience):

Majorettes:

Russell H.S. Highlights of Note:

- Boys Basketball team won the 5-AA sub-region championship and appeared at the State Playoffs.

Russell Band appearances likely for the following football season schedule:

Decatur; Lovett

According to the 1987-88 Russell Annual, the following students were band members: C. Odom; M. Traylor; L. Adams; P. Davis; T. Dunlap; J. Odom; K. Eubanks; K. Rozier; C. Jones; P. Robertson; W. Wilson; D. Linnekohl; W. Jackson; S. Tolbert; H. Jackson; S. Barnett; R. Greene; C. Ogburn; G. Ellerby; K. Willis; D. Foster; G. Fields;

A. Kemp; C. Bradford; J. Curry; R. Howard.



While dwindling enrollment during the 1980s had a huge negative impact on Russell High School, the Russell band continued to function, performing at school events and participating in both the South Fulton County Marching Exhibition, GMEA 5th District Concert Band Festivals, and other community and school events until the closure of the school.

Oddly enough, the sadness at the beginning of the Russell's final year was juxtaposed against the City of East Point Centennial, which was a cause for a big celebration in August. A highlight of the weeklong festivities included a large outdoor concert staged on the Russell football field that featured three-time Grammy Award winner country singer Ronnie Milsap and Tammie Wynette, famous for the hit song, *Stand By Your Man*. The Centennial Parade occurred on August 15 at a point prior to the beginning of the new school term; however, the Russell band was able to prepare in advance and participated in the parade. The parade began at 10:00 A.M. at Washington and Main Street and proceeded north to Ware Avenue. The parade turned south to East

Point Street before returning to Washington Avenue. Wynette served as the grand marshal for the parade that featured over 80 entries.

The last of many traditional homecoming parades occurred at the end of homecoming week, which saw the crowning of Kala Anderson as Russell's final Homecoming Queen.

Information concerning the lead up to Russell High's last football game appeared in a pullout section of the *Atlanta Journal's*, "The Football Report." The article detailed activities of the final game week, which included cheerleaders and the Russell Band's performance at the final pep rally.¹¹

The annual Pride in East Point - Keep America Beautiful Parade occurred on April 30. Joe Washington, sportscaster for Channel 11 TV, served as the Parade Marshall. Ft. McPherson's FORSCOM Band was first among a group of bands that included: Woodward Academy, College Park, Hapeville, Woodland, Palmetto, and Russell. The South Metro Community Band and the Paul D. West Jazz Band also performed.

Even though consolidation was imminent, regular end-of-year school activities such as the prom, math/science class trip, and the senior class trip, went on as usual. One of the last performances by the Russell band occurred as part of the 1988 graduation ceremony; the band performed a number of musical selections prior to the presentation of colors at the start of the graduation program.

A final farewell salute to Russell High School and a welcome to the new Tri-Cities High School occurred in a special ceremony on June 8, 1988. The Russell band

¹¹ Ed., "Russell High School goes out with style, smiles and cheers," *The Atlanta Journal*, November 14, 1987, pullout section.

was a part of the ceremony, performing prelude music prior to the beginning of the program and the Presentation of the Colors. The ceremony also featured a selection by the Russell Chorus conducted by H. Jacquelyn Wilson.

The main portion of the program was turned over to a variety of speakers who spoke of their personal relationships with Russell High. These guests included:

- 1) Ora Jean Gunnin, Russell Class of '42, Fulton County Board of Member Education, President of the Russell Alumni Association;
- 2) Dick Lane, Russell Class of '44, Georgia State Representative;
- 3) Ray Fagan, Russell Class of '49, Mayor Pro-Tem, City of East Point;
- 4) C. B. Hackworth, Russell Class of '75, Writer;
- 5) Hal Shields, Former Principal (1968-69);
- 6) Julie Winkles Russell Class of '88, Student Body President; and,
- 7) Jay Leathers, Senior Class President.

The program finished with a singing of the Russell High *Alma Mater* and a concluding musical selection by the chorus and band, thus ending the 60-year tradition of ensembles that went by the name Russell High School Band.

The consolidation of Russell, Hapeville, Woodland and College Park high schools created a new school named Tri-Cities High, which was built on the Russell High School site. Woodland (the old Headland High and Briarwood High pairing in the fall of 1982) became a middle school, while Hapeville High was converted to an elementary school. The construction of the new Tri-Cities High School began on the Russell football stadium site, thereby allowing several buildings in front of the school to be utilized during the two-year transition. Until Russell High was totally demolished and Tri-Cities High built, the new Tri-Cities H.S. 9th and 10th graders were housed at the "Russell Campus," while the 11th and 12th graders met at the old College Park High campus. For two years, the 9-10 band and the 11-12 band rehearsed daily on their respective campuses; the 9-10 band, however, was bussed from Russell to join the 11-12 band at the College Park campus for

after school marching band practice, concerts, and GMEA 5th District events. The new Tri-Cities facility opened in August 1990.

CODA

Contemplating the destruction of Russell High to make way for a new Tri-Cities High, C. B. Hackworth, former band member and class of '75 graduate, reminisced:

“For more than three generations, Russell High has been a cocoon in which the children of East Point metamorphosized, celebrating and suffering the agony and joy of awakening bodies and minds. Memories and emotion are layered on the crumbly stucco walls with each thickness of paint.”¹²

Twelve years after Russell High became a series of pleasant memories, Mike Fair, a former Russell student who left for Oklahoma during his tenth grade year and who was a member of the class of '61, remembered fondly,

“When Russell was torn down, the ‘politically correct’ Fulton County School Board chose not to retain the name. Russell had been named after a Confederate officer. To the thousands and thousands of students and to the hundreds and hundreds of faculty and administrators, Russell was never about politics.

Legacy of the Russell High School Band

During the 60-year history of the Russell High School Band, the ensemble enjoyed a good relationship with, and provided positive public relations for, Russell High School and the East Point community. In short, the band was a focal point of school and community pride. Beginning with its establishment in 1928, the band was integral to the success of the ROTC program, where it performed a functional role for military ceremonies and civic celebrations, such as weekly “Pass-and-Review” intra-school inspections and end-of-year ROTC competitions with other area high schools. By the

¹² C. B. Hackworth, “They’re tearing DOWN Russell High, *Creative Loafing*, 21 November 1987, p. 11A.

1950s, the Russell band reduced its ROTC role and created a new mission and outreach to become an important part of social, ceremonial, and athletic events. Basically, the band went into business of entertaining crowds as a pep band, parade band, and football halftime show band, where they performed at home games and many away games. During an average school year, the band was also called upon regularly to provide entertainment at in-school ceremonies, musical interludes for weekly Russell High student chapel assemblies and monthly evening PTA programs, along with numerous annual evening concerts. Additionally, the Russell band participated in downtown East Point and Atlanta parades on average about ten times per year. Taken as a whole, the sheer amount of these annual appearances is astounding and far outnumbers those of contemporary high school bands.

Beginning with the late 1960s through the early 1970s, the time period known as the Bill Prescott Years, the Russell Band started a tradition of: 1) pre-season Band Camps held at off-campus locations; 2) marching Festival/Competition participation; 3) superior ratings earned at the annual GMEA Festival; 4) producing numerous college Music Scholarship winners; and, 5) invitations to major out-of-state band trips:

- 1968 South Georgia/North Florida
- 1969 New Orleans Mardi Gras Parade
- 1970 Bahamas Tour
- 1971 Hollywood (FL) Band Shell
- 1972 Disney World (Orlando)
- 1973 St. Augustine Easter Parade

It is important to note that throughout its history, the Russell band and music department were part of a larger musical community. In particular, the 1940s, 1950s, and

1960s in East Point and surrounding areas were rich in musical experiences, with clubs, organizations and studios, such as:

East Point Music Club; East Point Music Club Chorus (Miss Mary Neal Shannon, Director); Hapeville Music Club; College Park Music Club; East Point Junior Music Study Club; College Park Junior Music Study Club; Mathilde Cox School of Dancing; Colonial Hills Dramatic Club; Miss William A. Simpson Studio; C.C. Snow piano studio; Miss Manora Conley, teacher of expression and dancing; Cox College School of Music (for Music, Art, and Dance).

Similar to the Russell band, this sampling of music groups shared common values, such as elevating and transmitting culture, fostering democracy, providing self-improvement opportunities, enriching and improving the quality of life, and bestowing musical benefits on communities as a whole, all of which had the cumulative effect of making Russell High and the East Point area a better place to live. None of this would have been possible without the self-sacrifice of generations of Russell High band students.

Giving of themselves, with great sacrifice, to the Russell band and to the school, along with the discipline, respect and concern for others, self-esteem, and pride in the band, will endure as a great lasting legacy of those who wore the Russell High band uniform. In return, students learned life lessons that continue to influence and impact lives even today.

Civic Pride at Russell High School

For practically all of its 60 plus-year history, Russell High School was the pride of the area it represented, whether early on in the Tri-City area, or later in East Point only as other communities developed schools (ironically, the present Tri-Cities High School

again represents much of the total area of the original 1920s Russell High School district). Likewise, the Russell High family was proud of the school and of its community, as evidenced by large amount of student involvement in the school organizations, and by involvement and service of those groups in community affairs.

Community involvement and civic service at Russell High were actually a reflection of the same attitude as the community as a whole. This philosophy was pervasive into the 1980s in page after page of this author's reading of various local newspapers. For example, growing up in East Point, students could see adults being involved in a number of community groups, such as:

Garden Clubs; Pilot's Club; Masons; South Fulton Shrine Club; Elks; East Point Women's Club; College Park Women's Club; VFW; VFW-sponsored March of Dimes Drive; American Legion; Optimist Club; Kiwanis Club; Lions Club; Rotary Club; Tri-Cities Red Cross Campaigns; Inter-City Civitan Club; Service Club of Mary E. LaRoca Grove Supreme Forest Woodman Circle, Phi Delta Kappa fraternity, to name but a few.

In conclusion, two themes are remarkable and appear consistently throughout the years chronicled here. First, the Russell band was deeply committed to service to the school and the East Point/Atlanta communities at large as evidenced by the overwhelming number of public performances. In short, the Russell band was vital to the social and musical fabric of the school.

Secondly, an interpretation emerges from these pages of events inspired by a united love of Russell High and the East Point area not only among the band students, but from the general population as well. This concept is clearly demonstrated by the community's enthusiastic support of duty, civic pride events and service.

Archives

This Volume #III, completed in 2022 and revised in 1923, concludes the series

entitled, *Reminiscences and Highlights of the History of the Russell High School Band: 60 years of Excellence and Service*. Volume I, covering the years 1928-1950, was completed in 2015; Volume II, spanning the years 1950-1973, was completed in 2018. A hard copy of each volume resides in the yearbook bookshelf section of the East Point Historical Society, which also has CD copies that can be obtained by contacting them. Additional volumes are also archived in the Fulton County Schools Teaching Museum – South/Hapeville and can be accessed on site or online by contacting the archival department.

Appendix #1: **Declining Enrollment in South Fulton**

Declining enrollment was the one obvious factor that precipitated the closure of Russell High and other area schools in 1988. Over 30 years after the school closures, it is of historic interest to review the published newspaper accounts from the late 1970s and the early 1980s that provided a historical record of declining student enrollments that ultimately resulted in school closures.

Years of declining enrollment in the South Fulton area led to numerous schools having below minimum numbers of students as required for Georgia QBE funding standards. As early as 1976, a *South Fulton Today* article signaled the possibility of school closures in the Tri-City area:

“Declining enrollment in Tri-Cities schools may result in the closing of some of the smaller elementary schools. Maturing neighborhoods and citizen flight from the borders of Atlanta could mean empty classrooms in East Point, College Park, and Hapeville. Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ed Baker pointed out that one small school, Church Street Elementary in East Point, will close after this school year. Cade Gervais, information officer for the school system, said that in many cases there will be room in nearby schools for students from schools which may be closed.”¹³

In May 1980, the *Atlanta Suburban Reporter* published news concerning Fulton County’s plan to close Beavers and South Fulton High Schools and Quillian Elementary because of declining enrollment.¹⁴ Russell High reabsorbed an 8th grade, a situation that had existed until the merger of Russell High and South Fulton High in the fall of 1970.

¹³ Otwell, Dwight. *Change Causes Absentees in Schools*. South Fulton Today (August 25, 1976): p. 6

¹⁴Terry, Tyrone D. *3 Schools in South Fulton To Be Closed*, *Atlanta Suburban Reporter*, 14 May, 1980, 2-C.

One of the earliest announcements concerning specific proposed closing and consolidation of schools occurred with a October 30, 1985, *Southside Sun* newspaper article indicating proposals by a school Task Force.¹⁵ Within two years, Russell High, as an entity known for over 60 years, would come to an end with its merger with Hapeville, College Park, and Woodland, producing in 1988 what is now known as Tri-Cities High School.

The shrinkage of attendance zones around East Point telegraphed the ultimate closure of Russell High for a number of years. Church Street Elementary School, one of Fulton County's oldest and smallest schools, closed at the conclusion of the 1976-77 school year. Later, in September 1979, the *Southside Sun* published an article detailing the decline of 532 South Fulton students over the year before.¹⁶

Declining enrollment occurred not only at Russell, but also at neighboring high schools such as Hapeville and Headland. For example, in the fall of 1978, the Hapeville Band numbered only 22 instrumentalists and 18 auxiliary members. In April 1980, Dr. Hal Shields, a candidate for Fulton County School Superintendent, spoke of his concern about the low enrollment of Hapeville High School, noting: "The fact is that all schools in the Tri-Cities are losing population."¹⁷ At the start of the 1980-81 school year, Russell High and College Park High absorbed 8th graders due to the closure of both South Fulton and Eva Thomas Junior Highs. By the early 1980s, low school enrollment led to the dissolution of the Hapeville football team. For the fall of 1982, Headland High School

¹⁵ ed. Southside Schools Face Challenges, *Southside Sun*, Vol. 20, No. 35 (October 30, 1986): p. 1.

¹⁶ Ed. "South Fulton Figures Reflect 532 Decline," *Southside Sun*, September 20, 1979, p. 4-A.

¹⁷ Edmundson, Faye, "Superintendent Hopeful Addresses Concern About Schools," *Southside Sun*, April 3, 1980, p. 8A.

was consolidated with Briarwood High School to form Woodland High School on what was formerly the Briarwood High campus. The former Headland High campus was converted to Paul S. West Middle School, in honor of Paul D. West, a former Fulton County School Superintendent and Russell High's principal from 1933 to 1941.

By 1986 a Tri-Cities Task Force had met and made preliminary recommendations concerning the closure of numerous elementary and high schools. The following year the Fulton County School Board approved the closure and merger of Russell, Hapeville, College Park, and Woodland. Ultimately, Russell ceased to exist after the graduation of the class of 1988.

It has been well over 35 years since the founding of Tri-Cities High School and the end of what was previously known as Russell High School. A final farewell salute to Russell High and a welcome to the new Tri-Cities High occurred in a special ceremony on June 8, 1988. Part of the ceremony included a musical selection by the Russell Band, thus ending the 60-year tradition of ensembles that went by the name Russell High School Band.

APPENDIX #2: In Tribute

A detailed list of former Russell band members who carried on the banner of “Excellence and Service” after high school and who went on to famous, distinguished, or prominent lives would be endless and the subject of a completely different research study. While some were influenced by their band directors and actually made careers in music, scores of others worked in public or out of the lime light and utilized lessons learned in the Russell and to be of service and to make their community a better to live. To those who served Russell High and their communities, both during and after their student days, we owe a great debt of gratitude. Also, we should not forget the sacrifices of the band directors, band parents, and school administrators who fostered, encouraged, and supported the efforts of the Russell band throughout it’s proud history.

It would, however, be a great omission if mention is not made of three Russell graduates who reached heights in their chosen fields or who stood out as avid supporters of all things Russell: Ora Jean Porter Gunnin (1925-2017), Olen Gunnin (1923-2016), and Dick Lane (1927-2015).

Ora Jean Porter Gunnin

If any one individual personified Russell High, it was Ora Jean Porter Gunnin. Whether through her service at Russell as a student, long-time volunteer and leader in the Russell PTA, membership on the Fulton County Board of Education, or part of an active husband/wife Russell Booster team with husband Olin Gunnin (see page 69 below), Jean was a vocal cheerleader of all things Russell High. While not technically a former band student, Ora Jean Porter Gunnin supported the band indirectly through her efforts as a

long-time member of the PTA, Boosters, and Fulton County School Board.

Ora Jean was out-going and vivacious and was very active in church and community affairs, and was happiest when she was serving others. In an *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* interview in 1984, she said,

“Happiness is volunteerism. I believe in volunteerism. You can’t pay for everything that get done in this life. You have to bring happiness in whatever way you can.”¹⁸

This philosophy first became evident and was on clear display during her Russell High student days. The following recap of her Russell service was attached to her Russell High senior picture in the 1942 *Pointer* Yearbook: Glee Club ('39), Home Room Officer ('40), Annual Rep ('40), *Wildcat* Staff ('40), Honor Society ('42), Superlative ('42), R.O.T.C. Sponsor ('41), Dramatic Club ('40), Senior Class Secretary ('42), and, Associate Editor of the *Pointer* Yearbook ('42).

Ora Jean reminisced fondly about her student days in a 1960 *Russell Wildcat* newspaper article entitled, “1942 Russell Graduate Recalls Student Days.” She wrote:

If there was one thing an alumnus of Russell could say to the present day students that could give them an insight into what the future will bring, it would hard to put the exact words into meaning to let one know just how much you will cherish the days you are now enjoying. When I think back over the years and remember the many memories that make Russell dear to me, I wish I could tell them all.

The years preceding World War II were a time of change and uncertainty, just as the time now seems to be in an upheaval of what tomorrow will bring—whether it be a trip to the moon or a world conflict such as we have never seen. But the parallel is the same, students are trying to achieve goals to prepare them for life, yet not knowing just what skills they need. Education is not something handed to one on a silver platter, it is the result of hard work and effort on the part of an individual, not just what one is made to do in the classroom. The memory of many classmates leaving school to join the armed services is still sad, even though they were doing a fine duty. But many who did not finish their education then,

¹⁸ Ed. “Movers and Shakers: A Veteran Helper,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, South Fulton Extra, February 16, 1984, p. 5 K.

have since had to work very hard to obtain a higher education and many have expressed the thought, “if only I had known then what I know now, how important school was, but we knew it all, or so we thought!”

When World War II began and American people went through such a trying and unhappy time, education suffered its loss too. But those who tried did obtain the best they could. School spirit was high when I was at Russell and it stood second to none in our estimation. We were always glad to speak highly of Russell. Constructive criticism can be good, but fellows who say we have no school spirit and does nothing can not expect miracles. Even today I can remember many long hours spent to make a *Wildcat* possible, or to make a club progress, or to have some student participate in a community activity that would bring credit to Russell.

Then, as now it was a cooperative effort, the teacher worked with us and we with them. Sports were important and those who participated actively in them, but not to the exclusion of academic work, and those who were not active participants did their share to boost the interest in attendance at sporting events. The alumni of today feel I am sure as I do that what was said of Russell in those years, was being said of us - that we made Russell what it was. Do you think you are doing your share to keep memories of Russell that you will enjoy reminiscing over some day?

After graduating from Russell in 1942, Ora Jean began a career of civic and volunteer service that included membership on the Fulton County School Board. An outline of her many contributions appeared in her obituary (see below). She passed away at the age of 91 on February 13, 2017, at Christian City. Her obituary as published in the *Newnan Times-Herald* on Friday, February 17, 2017, is as follows:

Ora Jean Porter Gunnin was born August 18, 1925 to Arthur Newton Porter, Sr. and Ora Bell Wood Porter in Statham, Georgia. She was the last survivor of seven daughters and two sons of the Porter family and the last aunt of the Gunnin family of 11 children. She was raised in East Point where she lived for over 70 years. Ora Jean was outgoing and vivacious, was active in church and community affairs and was happiest when doing things for others. As a child, she attended East Point Christian Church, and later was a member of Westside Christian Church and an active member of First Christian Church of Tyrone for years.

She was PTA president of Parkland Elementary and Russell High School, was active in Russell Booster Club and organized the last reunion of all classes at Russell High.

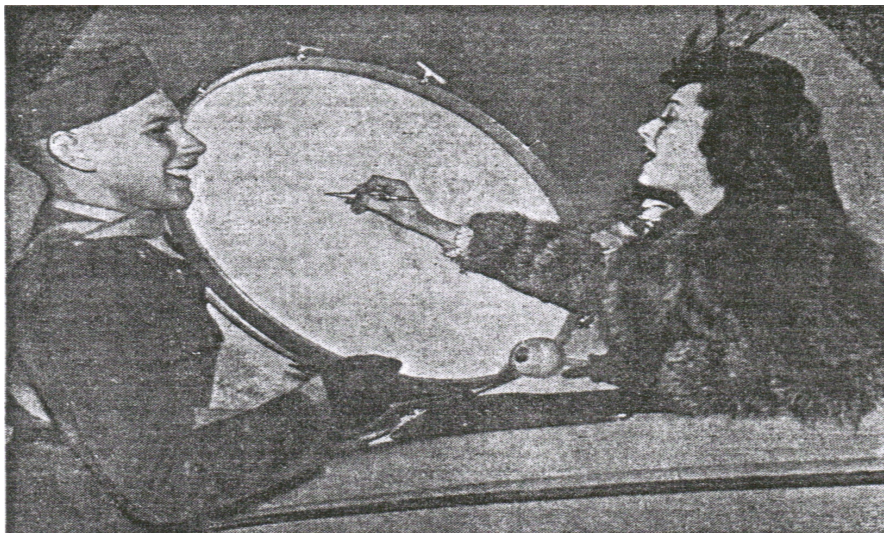
Ora Jean was Mrs. East Point for all her civic contributions to the city. She was co-founder of the East Point Historical Society and worked there with her husband for years. Other activities include: President of East Point Women’s

club, active in Fulton and Fayette County Republican Party and American Legion Women's Auxiliary, state officer of the Republican Women's Club, National officer of Travelers Protective Association (TPA), and service on the Fulton County School Board.

Olen Gunnin

Olen Gunnin was born in East Point on July 27, 1923, the last of twelve children. He attended Central Park Elementary School and entered Russell High in the fall of 1936. A 1940 graduate, his Russell service included band and Red Cross.

Particularly interesting and relevant to this Russell High band history was Olen's four-year membership in the Russell band. He participated his entire career under the baton of Roy Drukenmiller. During Olen's senior year, he played bass drum and was photographed with young *Gone With The Wind* actress Ann Rutherford, who was in Atlanta for the December 1939 premiere of the movie (see below).¹⁹ The iconic picture of Olen and Ann (see below) appeared in the *Atlanta Journal* on December 15, 1939.



¹⁹ Ann Rutherford, the then 19-year-old actress who portrayed Scarlett's little sister, Careen, had arrived for the "GWTW" premiere by train the day before and was present at the Atlanta airport to greet her fellow actors and actresses. While waiting, she autographed a bass drum head held by Russell student Olen Gunnin, a moment memorialized in a famous *Atlanta Journal* photograph (December 15, 1939, p. 30).

Shortly after graduation, Olen served in the military during World War II, as did his four brothers. All five brothers were able to visit home for Christmas 1942, a scene that was recounted in an *Atlanta Constitution* article entitled, “Mrs. Gunnin, Soldier Sons Hold Reunion.”²⁰

Olen went on to practice law in the East Point area for over 50 years. Important also in his life was his 20-year service as an East Point Councilman. Many other areas of his contributions to East Point are listed in his obituary listed below. Olen passed away on March 21, 2016 in Union City, Georgia. Senator Johnny Isakson of Georgia recognized Olen’s outstanding legacy of service. In a letter to Ora Jean, Isakson, reminisced in part, “Olen was a beloved leader who touched many lives in a positive way. He has a beautiful legacy not only in his family, but also in his community.”

Olen’s obituary as it appeared on the web site of Carl J. Mowell & Son Funeral Home, Fayetteville follows:

Claude Olen Gunnin, Sr., 92, of Fayetteville, passed away March 21 2016. He served his country in the US Army during World War II. Olen also served in many civic capacities including the Board for Christian City for 20 years, as East Point City Council for 20 years, as an Elder at East Point Christian, Westside Christian Church and First Christian Church of Tyrone, and was a founding board member of the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia (MEAG). In addition, he was the President of the Travelers Protective Association (TPA), President of the East Point Historical Society, and active in the Fulton County Republican Party and Fayette County Republican Party. Olen was an attorney and a member of the Bar Association for over 50 years.

Olen is survived by his wife of 72 years, Ora Jean Gunnin; daughters Claudia (Preston) Johnson and Becky (Jim) Huff; son Claude Olen Gunnin, Jr.; grandchildren Ashley Gunnin, Scott (Diana) Sanders, Brady Antonio, Emily (Blair) Logan, Melanie Scott, J.P. (Jean) Scott, Logan Huff, and Clif Huff; and 14 great-grandchildren.

²⁰ Ed. “Mrs. Gunnin, Soldier Sons Hold Reunion,” *Atlanta Constitution*, December 26, 1942, p. 3.

Olen and Ora Jean Gunnin

Olen and Ora Jean were an inseparable team who gave a large portion of their lives to the cause of Russell High School. They left significant and important legacies in their individual and unique ways as noted in their biographical sketches above; but, they collaborated on many of their activities, making them perhaps the most influential power couple advocating for the cause of Russell High School (and East Point in general) during Russell's 64-year history. According to their daughter, Claudia, Olen and Ora Jean worked together as a team. They contributed much to Russell High during their respective student days, but their contributions to their alma mater continued for a good part of their 72 years of marriage.

They married in 1943, shortly after Olen returned home after serving in World War II. They raised three children, Claudia, Becky, and Claude Olen, Jr. and were active in PTAs and athletic Booster organizations throughout their children's school days. They were also the principal organizers of numerous Russell High class reunions including the final one in 1988, which drew over 1,000 alums.

Richard "Dick" Lane

Dick Lane (1927-2015) was a 1944 Russell graduate who was known for his athletic accomplishments during his student days; however, few remember his four-year membership as a trombonist in the Russell band. After serving in World War II and graduating from the University of Georgia, Lane went on to serve East Point as Director of Parks & Recreation. He also served East Point as a Georgia State representative for about 25 years.

Many in the Russell High community were saddened at the news of Dick Lane's

death in 2015. His important legacy to Russell High and the community of East Point was recounted in numerous media reports, but Atlanta's CBS 46 summed it best, reporting, "Representative Lane personified the City of East Point." To many, he was a major cheerleader for, and an avid supporter of, the cause of Russell High for many years.

A 1944 graduate of Russell High, Dick Lane made a name for himself early on campus and in the East Point community through his athletic exploits in four sports. Indeed, sports and athletic activity would become a life-long passion and pursuit. Of particular interest to this Russell Band history is the fact that Dick Lane was also a member of the Russell Band during his student years. This band participation is often overlooked, since his accomplishments in sports far overshadowed anything else he did. A review of the Russell High *Pointer* yearbooks from the early 1940s revealed that Lane was a band member, a fact that his daughter did not know.²¹

Lane's senior directory that appeared in the 1944 *Pointer* Yearbook included the following: Football, 3 years; Basketball, 1 year; Track, 2 years; Hi-Y Club, 3 years; Band, 4 years; NCO Club two years; Home Room Vice-President; and, Senior Superlative. Immediately after graduation, Lane joined the U. S. Navy, serving in both the American and Pacific theaters from May 1944 to August 1945. He graduated from the University of Georgia in 1951 and went on to earn degrees from John Marshall Law School in Atlanta

²¹The author's first attempt at a phone interview with Lane in early 2015 was unsuccessful; however, the call did result in a brief conversation with his daughter, who had no knowledge of her father's participation in the Russell band. A follow-up call to Lane was successful. He confirmed his band service, but did acknowledge that sports took up a large portion of his time. He went on to state that he enjoyed playing the trombone and fondly remembered performing under the baton of band director Charles Taylor.

in the mid-1950s.

Lane parlayed his love of sports into a life-long career, serving as superintendent of the East Point Parks & Recreation Department, having first earned the position in 1951. Early in his career he authored "Random Notes on Recreation." As head of the East Point Recreation Department, Lane managed numerous recreation facilities that were utilized and enjoyed by many Russell students. It is significant to note that Lane hired many Russell students for part-time employment at various parts and other recreation venues. This author was a beneficiary of such a job at the Norman Berry pool during the summer of 1970.

While Parks & Recreation superintendent remained his full-time job, he is most remembered for his service as a member of the Fulton County delegation in the Georgia House of Representatives from 1967 to 1993. At various times Lane served as the chairman of the House Committee on State Planning and Community Affairs, House Committees of Rules and Appropriations, and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority Overview. Throughout his service in the House of Representatives, Lane authored more than 160 Bills and 14 Constitutional Amendments. A Georgia General Assembly Resolution appears below.

Dick Lane's name is also synonymous with bicycle racing. Having organized various races in East Point in the 1960s, he single-handedly brought the sport to a professional level with his vision and development of a racing "velodrome" in East Point. The Velodrome, which bears his name, was constructed in 1974 (see page 19 of this volume).

Dick Lane's support of the Russell band was particularly evidenced by his

legislative efforts in fostering Russell Band trips, which usually resulted in governor proclamations and publicity photos (see below).



1968-69 Band Officers with Gov. Lester Maddox prior to New Orleans Mardi Gras trip. Dick Lane, far left.



Bill Prescott and Dick Lane (far left) with Governor Lester Maddox and Russell Band Officers, Mike Daniell, President (seated). Governor Lester Maddox appointed the Russell Band as State of Georgia representatives to the Bahamas Islands in May 1970.



1970-71 Band Officers recognized prior to South Florida trip by Gov. Jimmy Carter (center). Bill Prescott, band director, right; Dick Lane, 2nd from right.



1971-72 Band Officers with Gov. Jimmy Carter (center) prior to Orlando Disney World trip. Dick Lane, second row, just behind Carter's right shoulder.

**ACTS AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE
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DICK LANE BRIDGE; No. 47 (House Resolution No. 400)

A RESOLUTION: Designating the Dick Lane Bridge

WHEREAS, Honorable Dick Lane, of the 55th District of the House of Representatives, is a native son of East Point, Georgia; and

WHEREAS, having won his first election to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1966, at the conclusion of his present term Representative Dick Lane will have ably served the people of East Point and Fulton County for 28 years; and

WHEREAS, upon completion of his current term of office, the gentleman from the 55th will hold the distinction of being the longest serving member of the Fulton County delegation in the House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his many years of service in the General Assembly, Representative Dick Lane served as Recreation Director for the City of East Point, a position in which he was able to spread his love of sports and fitness and exert a positive influence on the health and physical well-being of countless young people; and

WHEREAS, Representative Lane has received well-deserved recognition for his many outstanding athletic accomplishments, including All-State Running Back, Russell High School; former state Karate Champion; and commendations from President John F. Kennedy, and Governors Lester Maddox and Carl Sanders for Outstanding Performance in Recreation; and being chosen to serve as a member of the Georgia State Games Commission; and

WHEREAS, Honorable Dick Lane is also a member of numerous civic organizations to which he devotes his time and energies including the Boy Scouts of America, the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Yaarab Temple, the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, the Free and Accepted Mason, the Loyal Order of Moose, the Georgia Congress of Parent and Teacher Association, the Fulton County Public Safety Training Center Advisory Board, the South Fulton Medical Center Board, the American Association of Retired Persons, and the Jefferson Avenue Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of his many years of tireless and dedicated community and civic service, Honorable Dick Lane has received more than 175 awards from various clubs and organizations, including, the Distinguished Service Award, the Junior Chamber of Commerce; Under the Dome, the Georgia Federation of Women's Clubs; the Albert Wyatt Memorial Award, the Georgia National Head Injury Foundation; National "American of the Year" in 1988 from La Societe Des 40 Hommes et 8 Chevaux; the Georgia Municipal Association's Legislative Service Award for 1989 and 1990; the Association County Commissioners' Legislative Service Award for 1990, 1991, and 1992; the Georgia Parks and Recreation Society's Statewide Legislative Award in 1989; and, on five separate occasions, "Statesman of the Year"; and

WHEREAS, Dick and his lovely wife, the former Betty Clay Jones, are the parents of

Mindy, Laurie, and Rick and the proud grandparents of Kristin Leigh French, Kane French, Kyle Cook, and Kase Cook; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper to recognize and commemorate a lifetime of service, dedication, and commitment by Honorable Dick Lane to the people of East Point, Fulton County, and the State of Georgia.

APPENDIX #3

William Fry, Russell High Band, '71

Dr. William E. Fry, a 1971 graduate of Russell High School, is researching and documenting the 60-year history of the Russell Band. He retired after 36 years of service to music education and wrote the Russell Band History as his first retirement project.

After his graduation at Russell, where he was a band student of Dr. William Prescott, Fry graduated from Columbus State University (GA) in 1975 and received the masters of music education from Georgia State University in 1981. He obtained the doctor of musical arts (D.M.A.) in Instrumental Conducting from the University of North Carolina/Greensboro in 1991 and a leadership certification from Troy State University (AL) in 2000.

Prior to his 2011 retirement from a music position with the Muscogee County School District (Columbus, GA), Fry held band conductor positions at Columbus State University (GA) and Susquehanna University (PA). From 1975 to 1987, Fry was coordinator of all instrumental music activities at Redan High School, Stone Mountain, Georgia, and held an assistant conductor position with the Yaarab (Atlanta) Shrine Band. He has also held part-time music positions at Georgia Military College-Columbus, Columbus Tech College, and most recently at Point University in West Point, Georgia.

Fry has appeared as a feature conductor at the Georgia Music Educators State Convention, Florida State University "Tri-State" Conductors Symposium, CBDNA/NBA Southeastern Regional, and the Carolina Conductors Symposium. He has authored several articles on conducting and is a noted authority on the band music of Don Gillis.

Fry has three grown children and resides with his wife, Anne, in Columbus, Georgia, where he was a part-time member of the saxophone section of the Columbus Cavaliers Jazz Band and has been conductor of the Columbus Community Orchestra for 24 years. He is also a saxophonist with "DNR," an all-medical doctor rock band that performs volunteer benefits throughout the Columbus area.