

THE HEART OF SOUTH ROME

7:00

PARK II on audio

[Background: Children playing at Hardy Avenue Park. The park is now named Parks Hoke Park to honor Fletcher Parks and Raymond Hoke. The concession stand named for Roy Hackett was lost to park renovation a few years ago.]

ROY HACKETT:

Oh the park. The park was the center, the center of South Rome.

REVEREND CAREY INGRAM

In the heart of South Rome, we had a recreation department. Mr. Sam Burrell was the director, and it was more or less for the African-American community.

HACKETT:

We had baseball games, softball games. And had a swimming pool. And you had activities under the tree, under the big oak tree. We had games, and did macramé and made pot holders, and we drew and colored.

JUDY INGRAM

I remember when I got my first job. It was down at the park on Hardy Avenue. We had the summer program going, and I was one of the aides to work at that park, at that playground, helping youngsters in the summertime, when school was out, to do arts and crafts and sports, and it was just such a fun time.

C. INGRAM:

It was there that I learned to swim at this wonderful swimming pool, wonderful place to kind of hang out because it was a positive place. We had all kind of softball programs, and then you could get out there and pitch horseshoes, whatever, you know, the mind could kind of come up to do to have fun.

TRANSITION TO BASEBALL.

[Samuel Burrell clarified that the recreation department organized the adult softball teams and the children's leagues. J.L. Vaughn and Roy Hackett explained that semi-pro baseball teams also existed in the area in different periods.]

BISHOP ALEX ALLEN, JR.:

Well, they played ball. Teams from everywhere all around the close area.

CLARA CLARK RAGLAND:

It was teams came to Rome, like Dirttown, Rockmart, Cedartown and they would play ball. And the ladies played first, and then the men played.

ALLEN:

There was an old guy named Skeet Zinnerman. He was really into ballgames real good.

RAGLAND: My uncle Skeet, which is Charlie Zinnerman, him and Raymond Hoke had a ladies team. So that was my mama Rosa Clark, my sister Val, and my sister Evelyn. They played on his softball team. And the men had a baseball team and a softball team. And that was my brother Ralph Clark and my daddy Voyt Clark. Columbus Harris, Otto Hamilton, Otis Young.

J.L. VAUGHN, JR.:

I mean, you had to be there to really, to really appreciate the people who would come out. They were in trees. All of Hardy Avenue was lined up because of the team in South Rome.

RAGLAND:

And the umpire was Mr. Roy Hackett, he was the umpire for the team.

HACKETT:

My daddy was the chief umpire, I guess you would say. He was quite animated. If you were out, everyone in the park knew you were out. I can remember he'd say, "owww, you oughta swung at it! You outta there!"

DANIEL BROWN: We had little league games. . .

HACKETT: The particular team I played on was called the Dodgers. Other teams were like the Crows, and the Jets from North Rome, and you had the Eagles from Lindale. . . . We won the championship several times.

LAVADA DILLARD:

It was the talk of South Rome. It was the life of South Rome, that ball field down there.

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PASTOR FANNIE LOU JACKSON

They put a swimming pool there, and my two oldest children was lifeguards at that swimming pool.

HACKETT: The swimming pool was enjoyed by people from North Rome, South Rome, East Rome, West Rome, because at this time that was only place that the blacks had a place to swim. Mr. Burrell oversaw the swimming pool.

SAMUEL T. BURRELL, SR.

[FADE IN] And during the summer of '51, they saw fit to open this swimming pool. [A wading pool existed prior to this.] They started work on the swimming pool sometime in '51, and they completed it in June of '52. Of course, the Red Cross came over there early in the spring of '52, and we trained a cadre of workers, swimmers, along with myself.

RAGLAND:

My grandmother, when they opened that pool, my grandmother, Julia Zinnerman, she was the first one to swim in that pool. And during that time, she was about 79.

ALVIN JACKSON, SR.

In the afternoon, if we could afford it, we would go to the swimming pool. Sometimes I think the cost was maybe five to ten to fifteen cents to get in. If you didn't have it, sometimes he'd [Mr. Burrell] pay it for you. You were never turned away.

RAGLAND:

It was just a bunch of us over here, used to have a good time swimming. . . Eleanor Munford, Ellen Beard, Marilyn Jones, the Whatley family, those girls, my sister Barbara Ann, the Stenson girls, Martha Stenson and Ruby Stenson, the Hackett girls. . .

A. JACKSON

Basically, a group of guys, like I say, we would get together because we'd always travel in groups. It wasn't wise at that time to travel by yourself, so maybe you'd get five, ten, fifteen guys. We'd walk over to the pool, through Anchor Rome, and the pool was open, I would say in the summer from about one or two o'clock until late evening.

BROWN:

We would all climb the fence after hours to go swimming.

F.L. JACKSON

They'd leave home in the mornings after breakfast, the pool opened – I think it opened about nine or ten o'clock. They come home for lunch, eat a sandwich and go back and stay until six o'clock in the evening. And as I said, my two oldest boys was the first lifeguards. All of my children can swim. But me. Me and their daddy never did learn.

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RAGLAND

Well everybody started dying out, and had gotten too old, them that were still living. They were too old to play ball, so. . .

ALLEN

I don't know, I don't think they still have that going on now, but they used to.

RAGLAND

And then the pool closed, so it seemed like just everything sort of vanished.

BURRELL

So I operated the swimming pool there about, I guess, maybe eighteen or twenty years. I was the only manager. They closed it after I believe the summer of '72. Integration had come. The kids could go to other pools, other city pools, and attendance fell off drastically there, so they just decided to close it.