

For Middle and High School Students of History

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History Club Advisor **John Garner** (Temple High School, Georgia) had the honor of meeting **Sarah Collins Rudolph**. The following is an essay on his time spent with Mrs. Rudolph, and has been authorized by her and her husband. The NHC would like to sincerely thank them for allowing us to share this important story. To find out more about Mrs. Rudolph, please visit: <https://www.sarahcollinsrudolph.com>

The Fifth Little Girl

There are moments in history that define or shape a nation. For the residents

of Birmingham, Alabama, September 15, 1963 will forever resonate as one of those moments. For many Americans who watched the television coverage or read about the bombings of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in their daily newspapers, this attack was just another atrocity linked to the ever growing issue of race relations throughout the southern United States in the years that history books label as the Civil Rights Movement. However, for four families in the segregated streets of Birmingham, that day was far from just another event that contributed to the onslaught of violence that the African American community experienced in this struggle. In fact, this was deeply personal and is one that survivors and family members will carry with them for the rest of their lives. It is the memory of this day that has defined the last 50 years for one little girl.

Sitting in the home of one of these family members in Birmingham, you will find yourself surrounded by memories and honors collected over a half-century of reliving the

domestic terrorism that would leave both physical and mental scars that are still fresh today. Hanging on the walls in the living room are pictures of Carole Robertson, Cynthia Wesley, Denise McNair and Addie Mae Collins. Additionally, you will see the pictures of a little girl with bandages over both her eyes while lying in an intensive care unit in an Alabama hospital. A little girl who had survived as a victim of the bombings by three members of the Ku Klux Klan. A little girl who would never again share a laugh with her sister after she was taken from her while innocently getting ready for church. A little girl that has been forgotten to history, but whose story must be told. This little girl is Sarah Collins Rudolph and she is the sister of Addie Mae Collins and is herself a victim.

In hearing the retelling of this horrific event, you can not help but to feel the raw emotions that Mrs. Rudolph struggles with on a daily basis. Sitting at an angle to best facilitate her limited vision after losing an eye in the blast, she speaks of that morning as if it were yesterday as she has done

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time and again, ensuring the memory of her sister and friends is never forgotten. In very specific details, she explains that her and the four little girls were all running late to church that day and had missed their Sunday school class, so they had decided to “freshen up” before the service began. Standing at the mirrors ensuring that each hair was in place and the seams of their dresses were neatly lined, the girls laughed and talked without a care in the world. In fact, the last memory that she has of these four little girls was watching as Addie helped her friend Denise tie a bow on her dress. As she turned back to inspect her reflection, Mrs. Rudolph’s life was changed forever with a blinding blast of debris and light.

Addie Mae Collins will never finish helping her friend get ready for church. Denise’s smile now only exists in the fading artifacts of her family’s picture albums. Carole Robertson and Cynthia Wesley never heard the messages of their preacher that they had walked several blocks that morning to hear. These little girls’ bright futures were extinguished by a senseless act of murder that ultimately served as a catalyst in the subsequent pieces of legislation addressing civil rights in America. However, it is the legacy of hate that took these four little girls, that inspires Mrs. Rudolph to speak today.

Hanging among the pictures and honors on her walls are recognitions from countless universities, civil rights organizations, school groups and others who have been blessed to hear the story of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing from a survivor. A survivor that lost a sister. A survivor that lost friends. A survivor that lost her eyesight, but yet one that provides us with an insight into this tragic moment in history. Mrs. Sarah Collins Rudolph’s story is one of tragedy, courage and survival that should be fully embraced as a part of the fabric of American history. To learn from the past, we must study all aspects of it to be more informed and compassionate today than we were yesterday. ■



The Concord Review would like to receive outstanding history research papers by high school students, on any historical topic, ancient or modern, domestic or foreign.

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Access to the NHC network, which includes chapters in 46 states and over 18,000 members, is a great benefit of joining the NHC. We encourage you to read about other chapters in your state or across the country and explore new opportunities! To explore specific sites click on the **bolded text** to be redirected!



Brown County High School (IN) traveled back in time to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party with tea and other snacks at their school.



CLINTON PRESIDENTIAL CENTER OVAL OFFICE

Caddo Magnet High School (LA) took a field trip to Little Rock, Arkansas to visit the Little Rock 9 National Historic Site, as well as visit the Clinton Presidential Library.



Clarkton School of Discovery (NC) on their first field trip to their State Capitol this spring. They were able to visit the General Assembly to learn about the legislative process --- here they are in front of the Governor's Mansion.



Grace Christian Academy (TX) hearing from Bob Boetticher, who served as the funeral director for the funerals of Presidents Ronald Reagan, Gerald Ford, and George H.W. Bush.



Mount Desert Island High School (ME) at the local Seal Cove Auto Museum for a tour. The students really enjoyed seeing and learning about the histories of some of the ultra-rare cars.



Frankton High School (IN) inducting its newest members into the National History Scholars Society this past March, as well as honoring those graduating seniors.



Henry Clay High School (KY) had 143 members in their Club this year and were able to share some of their History Lab artifacts with a local elementary school as well as dedicated a 30 year time capsule at their school in March.



Humphreys High School (DoD School - South Korea) inducting six new members into the National History Scholars Society. They also traveled to Shon Nah Korean High School in Pyeongteak for a club celebration on May 2.



Moline High School (IL) participated in a wide-range of activities this year, including a flag raising ceremony, creating an outdoor classroom at their school, and fundraising to create an art piece for the outdoor classroom honoring WWII veteran and former Moline teacher, Charles Carpenter. In February, they created Black History month dioramas for an exhibit at their school.



Rainier Jr/Sr. High School (OR) held their 12th annual Rainier Revisited day this past April, for community members to get a look at life in 1853 in their town. Students dressed up in period era attire, presented period era crafts, and even held a hands-on blacksmith demonstration.



Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (NJ) welcomed guest speaker, Charles Oppenheimer, the grandson of J. Robert Oppenheimer, to speak about his grandfather's legacy with the Manhattan Project and debunk some myths that were mentioned in the recent blockbuster movie "Oppenheimer."



West Bladen High School (NC) went on a few field trips this year. The first was to the Cameron Art Museum in Wilmington. There is also a Civil War memorial there, as this is the site of the Battle of Fork's Road. Here they are at the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh.

HISTORY STUDENT OF THE YEAR

This Spring the NHC and George Washington's Mount Vernon again co-sponsored the "History Student of the Year" prize. Each chapter chose a recipient for this award, and s/he received a copy of *The British Are Coming* by Rick Atkinson. This is the 20th year of the partnership between Mount Vernon and the NHC to sponsor this prestigious award. To view recipients please visit this [page](#) on our website.

Mount Vernon is the most popular historic estate in America. The estate, gardens, and farm of Mount Vernon totaled some 8,000 acres in the 18th century. Today, roughly 500 acres have been preserved, and visitors can see 20 structures and 50 acres of gardens as they existed in 1799, as well as the tombs of George and Martha Washington. Mount Vernon welcomes over 1,000,000 visitors each year.



Forsyth Country Day School (NC) Advisor
Ed McBride with History Student of the Year
William Cavanaugh.



The NHC is proud to have the support of over 60 college history departments! We hope that any of our members who are interested in majoring in history in college will visit a college's website listed down below to find out more about the history department and its offerings.



American University	Loyola University Chicago	University of Alabama
Barnard College	Marquette University	University of Alabama Birmingham
Baylor University	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	University of Chicago
Boston College	Mount Holyoke College	University of Colorado
Boston University	New York University	University of Georgia
Brandeis University	North Carolina State University	University of Iowa
Carnegie Mellon University	Northwestern University	University of Illinois
Dartmouth College	Ohio State University	UMass Amherst
Centre College	Princeton University	UMass Lowell
Georgia Tech University	Rhodes College	University of Michigan
Gonzaga University	Rice University	University of Mississippi
Fordham University	Rochester Institute of Technology	University of North Carolina
Franklin & Marshall College	Santa Clara University	University of Pennsylvania
Harvard University	Skidmore College	University of Richmond
James Madison University	Southern Methodist University	University of Rhode Island
Johns Hopkins University	Southwestern University	University of Texas at Austin
Kenyon College	Stanford University	University of Utah
Lewis and Clark College	Stony Brook University	University of Vermont
Louisiana State University	Suffolk University	Vassar College
Loyola Marymount University	Swarthmore College	Wake Forest University
Loyola University Maryland	Texas Christian University	Wellesley College

NATIONAL HISTORY CLUB

The NHC would like to express our gratitude to the following people and organizations who make our important work possible...

John Abele	Parkview High School (GA)
HISTORY®	Penguin Random House
George Washington's Mount Vernon	Smithsonian Institution
The HBE Foundation	Society of Architectural Historians
Alexander Dreyfoos School of the Arts	The Concord Review
American Association for State and Local History	The History List
American Civil War Museum	Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund
American Historical Association	Patrick Allitt (Professor, Emory)
Boyertown Museum of Historic Vehicles	Jim Belcher
Gilder Lehrman Institute	Joan & Rick Gier
HarperCollins Publishing	Elizabeth Jones
History 500	William Jordan (Professor, Princeton)
Laurel Hill Cemetery	John Lane
Museum of Florida History	Howard Loken
National Council for History Education	Lee Pollock
National Vietnam War Museum	Guy Rogers (Professor, Wellesley)
National World War I Museum	Henry Seng
National World War II Museum	Art Snyder
Omohundro Institute of Early American History	Rick Sperry
Organization of American Historians	Lisa Wingate

The National History Club is a 501(c)(3) organization that relies on grants and donations to support efforts. If you are passionate about history and would like to contribute to our mission of promoting history at the secondary level please contact **Robert Nasson** (rnasson@nationalhistoryclub.org).

www.nationalhistoryclub.org