

South Carolina State College Historic District (Orangeburg Movement, Orangeburg Massacre)



Hodge Hall, South Carolina State College (photograph courtesy of South Carolina Department of Archives & History)

Students at this African American college organized sit-ins that contributed to the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. Four years later, they led protests resulting in "The Orangeburg Massacre," which pointed out that passage of the Act was not the end of the struggle. Today the "South Carolina State College Historic District" is the core of the historic campus at South Carolina State University. The district consists of ten brick Classical Revival style academic buildings constructed between 1917 and 1969, which housed classrooms, laboratories, the library, offices, and the law school. The district also includes a 1920s landscaped square with a 1969 monument erected and dedicated to the memory of three students who lost their lives in the Orangeburg Massacre of February 8, 1968.

Orangeburg, South Carolina, was one of 40 cities that experienced student protests in March 1960. After several weeks of unsuccessful protests at city lunch counters, South Carolina State's Charles McDew led 1,000 marchers downtown. Police, firemen, and state troopers intercepted the students, firing tear gas and full-pressure water hoses into the crowd. Police arrested nearly 400 students. Like the Birmingham Campaign a few months earlier, Orangeburg's mass movement focused on desegregating public facilities.

On July 31, 1963, a South Carolina State student launched the movement by refusing to leave a local restaurant. Three weeks later, movement leaders demanded that City Council desegregate public accommodations, comply with court-ordered school desegregation, and expand job opportunities for African Americans. Mass demonstrations, which by now included children, continued until the passage of the Civil Rights Act on June 2, 1964.

On February 8, 1968, two days after police and students clashed in a race riot at a segregated bowling alley, violence broke out again, this time on the campus of South Carolina State. Students set grassfires and tried to burn down a vacant house. A highway patrolman was hit in the face by a bannister from the house, and a number of patrolmen suddenly fired into a crowd of students, killing three and injuring 27. Statues of the students who died--Samuel E. Hammond, Jr. (age 18), Henry E. Smith (age 19), and high school student Delano H. Middleton (age 17, shot seven times)--were later erected on campus. In the first federal trial of police officers for using excessive force at a campus protest, all nine defendants were acquitted.



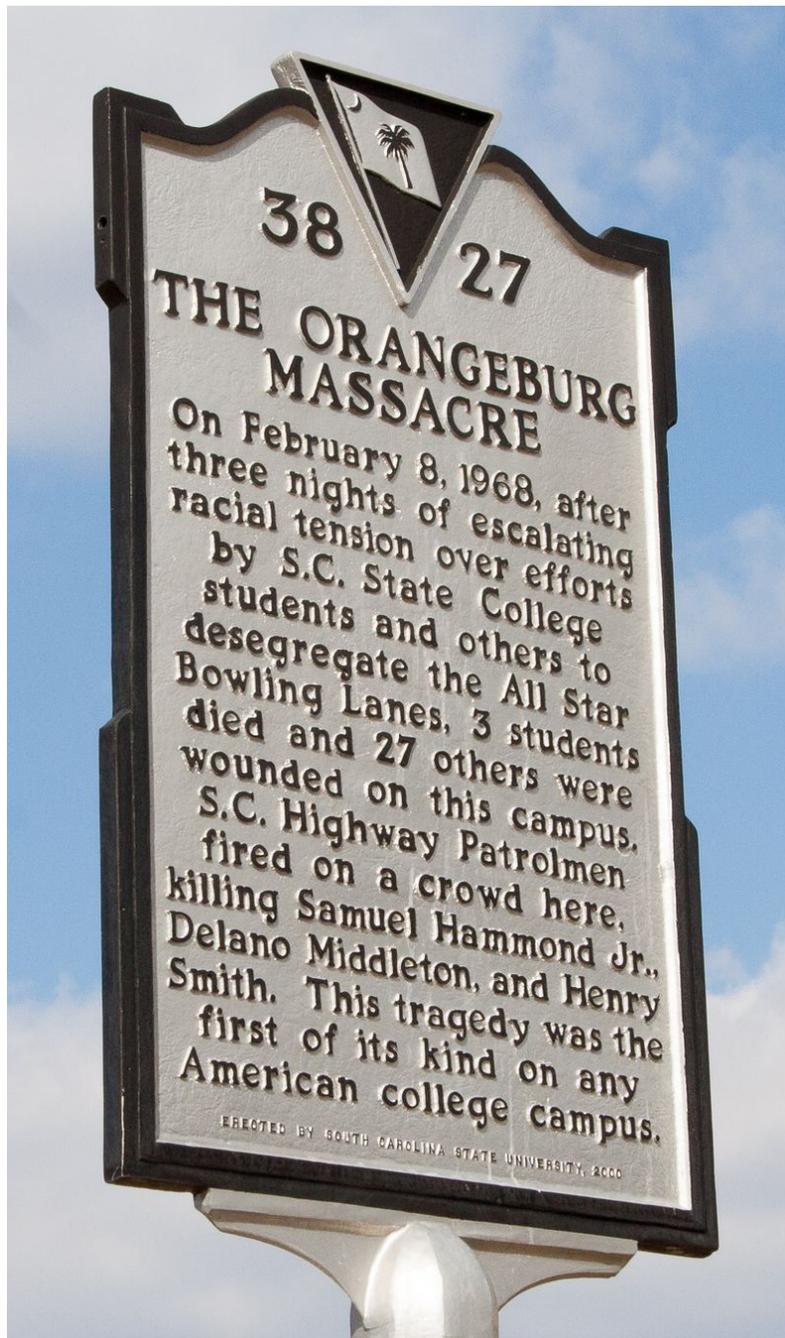
Delano H. Middleton



Henry E. Smith



Samuel E. Hammond



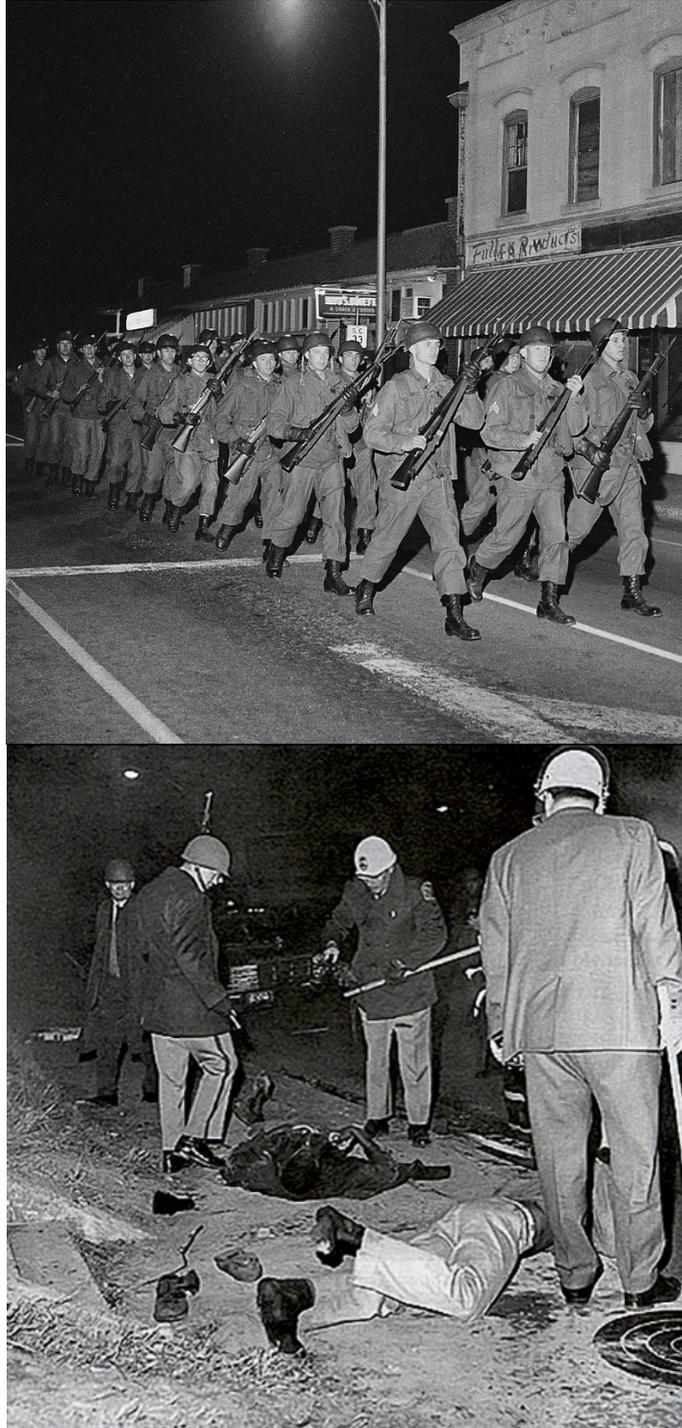


Photo: Frank Beacham