Introductory Note

This thesis builds on the work of Jacqueline Dowd Hall’s extensively researched book, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching*. Hall’s book examines Ames’ methods of founding and running the ASWPL and argues that Ames made a significant contribution towards the decline of lynching during the 1930s and 40s across the American South. Hall’s belief that Ames’ complex personal relationships, particularly with her sister, Lulu Hardy, deserve more attention in understanding Ames’ career informed my decision to focus on Ames’ private life, rather than on her public persona.

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I: Acceptance and Defiance of Southern Womanhood

“I am a strange mixture of emancipation and old-fashionedness”

Lulu Daniel Ames, letter to her mother, 17 June 1940 (Correspondence, JDA Papers)

The American South of the early twentieth century faced numerous social and economic problems tied to race. In an effort to understand and address some of these ills, from sharecropping to lynching, William Alexander founded the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC) around 1920, creating a permanent organization from individuals who had united during the particularly violent period after World War I. It was immediately obvious that lynching would require attention, as more than 70 African Americans had been lynched in the year following World War I (Revolt 63).

The CIC was a group of moderates, not extremists. To address the problem of lynching, the CIC needed a way to convince Southerners to take action within their existing culture. Having collected statistics and released reports on lynching, the CIC had the data to prove that southern lynchings disproportionately targeted African Americans and that the crime was seldom a reaction to rape. The CIC needed a leader who intimately understood the people living in places most likely to experience mob violence, but who was distant enough to encourage change. The leader of the campaign against lynching would also need sufficient organizational expertise and energy to reach the entire geographic South.

The individual who took up the challenge, Jessie Daniel Ames (1883-1972), embraced the elements of southern womanhood that gave her respectability and allowed her to appeal to other southern women on equal footing. However, she utterly rejected the
accompanying code of chivalry that presented lynching as a defense of white females. Her personal life was no less conflicted. Ames had to balance her roles as mother and breadwinner, espousing some traditional values of motherhood but rejecting the idea that women could not be self-supporting.

Jessie Daniel Ames left her native Texas in 1929, aged 46, to take the position of Director of Women's Work for the Atlanta based CIC, which had already attracted such researchers and activists as Arthur Raper, Howard Odum, and Robet Moton. Within a year, she had established the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL) in order to focus women's efforts within the organization and capitalize on the many white women already active in various clubs and societies across the South.

She brought with her to the new family home in Decatur, Georgia, her daughters Mary and Lulu, aged 16 and 14 respectively. Her son, Frederick, then aged 22, was already attending Harvard and would begin his medical practice during the time Ames was working for the CIC. Particularly for Mary and Lulu, the decade their mother spent running the ASWPL marked their coming of age, as both girls graduated from college and began their chosen careers in medicine and publishing. Ames’ career undoubtedly influenced her children, especially because she was a single mother and travelled often. Despite founding the ASWPL, which operated mainly within the bounds of appropriate behavior for southern white women, Ames did not impose upon her children the same strictures many respectable southern women felt were crucial to their duties as mothers.
Lillian Smith, a southern liberal best known for her novel on interracial romance, *Strange Fruit*, and born around the same time as Ames' children, wrote extensively about her perceptions of the ASWPL in her 1949 autobiography, *Killers of the Dream*.

Smith admires the ASWPL’s accomplishment in expanding gender roles and criticizing segregation, and she asserts that their ability to work within the confines of southern womanhood allowed them to be successful. She writes that “they worked with great bravery but so unobtrusively that even today many Southerners know little about them. But they aroused the conscience of the South and the whole country about lynching; they tore a big piece of this evil out of southern tradition, leaving a hole which no sane man in Dixie now dares stuff up with public defenses” (L. Smith 147). However, she assumes that the women of the South, even as they began to leave their pedestals, were as a group too steeped in the patriarchal ideal of femininity to really change.

After concluding her praise of the ASWPL, crediting their members with spreading “a green-growing cover crop on the South’s worn out spiritual soil” (L. Smith 149), she writes, “It would be pleasant to stop the story of the women here, but there is a more tragic page” (L. Smith 149). She infers that the same moral sensibility that led to a female anti-lynching group also produced mothers who were unbearably harsh towards their children. Although here Smith branches out into talking about southern women generally, rather than those of the ASWPL, she indicates that the idea of women as quiet moral guardians of the South, which led to such positive outcomes when harnessed by the ASWPL, could be disastrous at home.

Smith claims that women who accepted the duties of sacred womanhood also accepted that “they must keep their children pure and innocent, they must ‘make’ them
good” (151). She describes such fanatical devotion to purity as completely harmful to the child, claiming that “these women, forced by their culture and their heartbreak, did a thorough job of closing the path to mature genitality for many of their sons and daughters…. They did a through job of dishonoring curiosity” (L. Smith 153). Smith’s portrayal of the southern women in her mother’s generation characterizes them as uncomprehending. Although the women who chose to join the ASWPL may have become dimly aware of the injustices their position as white women caused black men, they were still generally unable to see the injustices that the same ideal inflicted in their own homes.

However, Ames’ relationship with her children reveals a different personality from the rigid, unyielding maternal figure Smith assumed was typical of AWSPL members. In her correspondence with Lulu, Frederick, and Mary, Ames writes openly about sex, money, race, and Lulu's struggle with polio. While she does occasionally refer to her duties as a mother, she is far more concerned about raising her children to be intelligent and independent, rather than dutiful and subdued.

Ames also granted her children remarkable independence while she was travelling for the CIC. She routinely left home to attend speaking engagements and investigate lynchings in the towns where they had occurred. In a 29 March 1930 letter to Ames¹, Lulu writes that she and Mary are surviving her absence quite well despite some changes in their diet. She informs her mother “...by the way, you'd be interested in our past breakfasts – lemon pie, one morning, potato salad, cold meat balls and bran muffins and

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all personal correspondence discussed in this paper is from the Jessie Daniel
today eggs – I think.” Creative breakfast choices aside, both daughters soon proved their ability to get along without a parent's constant presence.

By 1934, Mary had even taken over some responsibility for Lulu's polio treatments. In June of that year, Mary and Lulu traveled to the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, where Lulu received attention from George Washington Carver to increase movement in her legs. In addition to highlighting the remarkable trust and esteem Ames placed in Tuskegee, family correspondence also reveals Ames’ emerging trust in her daughters. Mary and Lulu wrote to their mother regularly over the course of Lulu's therapy, and Mary's letters provide great detail about Lulu's condition. On 5 June 1934, she writes:

I think I have told you all except the most exciting news. Lulu can work her toes sideways as well as down now. The toes on her left foot. She says she was never able to do that before. She can spread them, too, in just the slightest bit. We were all so excited. Dr. Carver says that’s what he expects after six months. I took her leg measurements in several places and we’re going to compare them in about two weeks. The color of both is the same and that is a very healthy pink. The blood vessels are becoming quite apparent on her left leg. It does look awfully hopeful. I am watching very closely so that I might be able to keep it up when we aren’t down here.

Lulu's letters provide less information on her physical condition than Mary's, focusing instead on matters of clothes and spending money, which as always was running low. She does, however, mention in an 8 June 1934 letter that "Mary thinks that Dr. Carver should have a full ten days to try his skill on the legs. I think that a week's full
treatment is some test of the man's mettle but Mary says no, ten days is better; apparently, to Mary, ten days signifies a witching period of time. And, since always might has made right, to put it in the most frolicsome terms, I am of the mind that we'll be here until Wednesday." Mary's confident decision making and attentiveness to her sister may very well have been important forerunners to her later career as a physician, but they also demonstrate Ames' commitment to raising intelligent, independent children.

Ames' determination that her children be able to take care of themselves likely stemmed from how deeply she had hated her own dependence on her family after her husband's early death in 1914. Her relationship with her husband, Roger Post Ames, had been stormy, especially because of tension with Roger’s family and the long separations caused by his career as an army doctor and medical researcher. She spent much of her marriage and early widowhood living with her sister, Lulu Daniel Hardy, a relationship involving cycles of fierce competition and cooperation. Ames seems to have developed her sense of self-worth and independence only after establishing a home for her family in Georgetown, Texas.

At any rate, Ames encouraged self-reliance and cautious romantic relationships, especially for her daughters. She eventually gained relative financial security for herself, first by running the local telephone company with her mother and later with her career as an activist, and her successes seemed to strengthen her resolve to shield her children from the misery of an unhappy marriage and complete financial dependence. In a 29 June 1934 letter to Mary written for her 21st birthday, Ames praises Mary’s qualities of leadership and initiative but cautions her against impulsivity. She seems to consider her analysis of
Mary’s character crucially important to Mary’s maturity, and she concludes her letter by stating what disastrous consequences she had faced without any similar guidance, writing

You must know that because there was no one to help me see myself and my faults and my vices and virtues. So I went into a marriage for which I was no more adapted that [sic] you would have been at fourteen year of age. I muffed that. A realization that I had muffed it and that unless I took stock and trained myself I would muff my motherhood and all my life, has helped me to a certain stability which is not at all mine by nature. And it is hard and it will continue to be hard until I am dead for it is always a fight to control your own self.

In an earlier letter to Mary, written 11 September 1930 when Mary was 17, Ames does not make such explicit references to her own experiences. However, she does caution Mary regarding her boyfriend, Nelson, after he had stood her up. The letter covers many complexities of relationships between men and women, with the first half of the letter speaking in broad terms and the second half addressing Mary’s particular situation. Ames urges Mary to consider that men often think of women as subordinates, and she warns her that a man might “try to make you lay your terms aside for his. And for you my dear, there can be no happiness in friendships which mean a subversion of principle.” Although Ames does not mention her own romantic past, she clearly wants her daughter to stand firmer in her interactions with men than she did.

Ames even discusses sexual desire, warning Mary that “A woman may be and in my day usually was a very passive agent in conceiving a child….Repoulatiin [sic] the world would be very slow indeed if the male of the species had to wait as long as the

2 For the full text of the letter, see Appendix II.
female before he could perform his function again. It is rather hard on women. It produces the age old fight between monogamous woman and polygamous man.” Sex here is hypothetical; Ames gives no indication that she expects Mary is about to have sex. However, Ames does acknowledge that sexual attitudes are already influencing Mary’s dating behavior, and she wants Mary to be aware that her boyfriend may very well hold her to a higher standard of sexual purity than he will hold himself.

Ames also points out some of the inherent injustice of a world that places so much value on female chastity: “A woman may have committed any crime, theft, murder, lying and if she be virtuous which is another word for chaste, a man will forgive her on the basis of her human weaknesses of womanhood. But if she be ever so fine in every other way and be not chaste, she is a bad and wicked woman.” In these two lines Ames confirms that she understands the restrictions placed on southern white women and recognizes their unfairness.

Ames offers no description of her own sexual experiences in her letter to Mary; however, her niece, Laura Hardy Crites, states in “Two Sisters,” her addition to the family history, “Lulu [Jessie’s sister, Lulu Hardy] heard her sister's account of the ruthless inconsideration of her sensitivity and her body that occurred on her wedding night. She felt as if she had been assaulted, not loved. This first sexual experience was a shock that colored all her subsequent sexual life.” Crites also adds a note at the end of her piece: “On wedding night Roger insisted on making love three times. Jessie was definitely frigid” (JDA Papers). Ames remained vague about her sexual relationship with Roger, stating only that “I was mean to him in private, saying things about him to himself that were intended as a release for my own pent up misery but which must have appeared
to him as deliberately intended to destroy his self-respect, his self-confidence. Our sexual relations were similar in effect but on another level of emotion” (biographical material, JDA Papers). Clearly Ames had negative experiences with sex, and, if family lore is true, she may have drawn on personal experience to caution her daughters against male expectations. Certainly she would not have wanted them to feel mistreated sexually, and she seems to view an unhappy sexual relationship as a consequence of an unhappy emotional and intellectual relationship.

While Smith assumed that women of the ASWPL were a product of their environment, likely unable to see beyond themselves to the full implications that the ideal southern woman placed on their lives, Ames offers an alternative. She seems to have deliberately chosen to work within the confines of southern respectability, and she expects her daughters to keep up a certain degree of decorum as well. She warns Mary that chastity is often overvalued, but she will not claim it is worthless. However, she still seems to hope that in their private lives, her daughters will find romantic partners who will view them as equals.

Conversations about sex in the Ames correspondence did not always focus on hypocrisy and warnings; sex could also take a far lighter tone. In a 14 June 1930 letter to Lulu, Ames reviews a movie, Sex Madness, that she had attended in Washington, D.C. She had traveled to the city on business for the CIC, although she presumably enjoyed such cultural excursions on her own time. She evidently enjoyed the prospect of a lurid movie, writing that "It was advertised as the frankest exposure of putrid stuff and only adults admitted. So I thought that this was the time to get it in the raw. I had never seen such and the advertisement promised a lot." The movie, however, turned out to be
majorly disappointing, with only "three scenes where the men struggled to overcome her wild resistance" and hardly any of the promised lewd content. Ames concludes that she "came away feeling that the worst thing about bad movies, are the advertising." She at once describes the experience as a joke for Lulu's entertainment and also acknowledges her own curiosity about subjects that, until recently, had been considered taboo.

Ames' attitudes regarding sex show one of the starkest differences between her beliefs and Lillian Smith's characterization of an ASWPL member. According to Smith, because of their admirable and effective methods of organizing change without flagrant disregard for contemporary ideas about proper conduct, ASWPL women tended to enforce rigid standards of decorum and censorship in their homes. Ames' letter to Lulu clearly indicates her approval of curiosity regarding sex, and some of her correspondence with Frederick implies that she may not have placed tremendous value on marriage before sex, as so many of her contemporaries likely did.

Regarding his marriage to Hope Carl, Frederick writes to his mother on 20 June 1933 that "Hope arrived Friday afternoon, and we were married Saturday morning by a Methodist minister in Cambridge [sic] — thereby satisfying Grandmother, and, partially Hope's Methodist minister father." On 19 July 1933, Frederick also writes that "Hope's brother Noble and his wife dropped in on us from Galveston — Unexpectedly. I guess he wanted to see the marriage license." While Frederick's letters never directly address whether Ames would have approved of Hope’s coming to live with him in Boston without a marriage license, they do imply that they married to satisfy Hope's family, and that he did not feel that Ames had directed similar pressure on him. At any rate, the Carls seem not have trusted Ames to adequately enforce their standards on her son.
Frederick states his opinions even more frankly in a 25 October 1933 letter to Ames in which he appears to be answering a question from her regarding an acquaintance whose in-laws questioned the legality of her marriage if she had not been a virgin at the time. He writes:

Now as to Jennie Davis. It has been many years since I last set eyes on her and I cannot say with authority just what her hymeneal status was at the time of marriage. I admire the gall, if not the delicacy and trust, of her in-laws in their demands, however. And you say she herself knew of their demands, and then married that clunk?! I shudder with the thought of what Hope would have done to me had I proposed such a clause to our own marriage contract.

However, to settle the matter between ourselves I’ll quote from one of my more learned tomes: “concealed antenuptial unchastity, unless pregnancy result and exist at marriage, is almost without exception insufficient grounds for annulment. The rule here on public grounds is caveat emptor. Pregnancy of the wife at the time of marriage, unknown to the husband, is a divorce cause in Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin. In Iowa if the husband have an illegitimate child or children then living, the existence of whom was unknown to the wife at the time the marriage took place, he has no ground for divorce, even if the wife’s pregnancy by another man at the time of the marriage can be proved.

Perhaps Mrs. Davis might have made a few counter-demands. The feeling of the medical profession at large is that the only sure and infallible way to tell
whether a girl is unchaste is by personal experience with the girl, and not by hearsay. In the words of Kipling ‘you never can tell till you’ve tried ‘em.” That disposes of Jennie nee Davis.

Again, Frederick's letter does not directly address Ames' opinion of the Davis family's demands, and since Ames' original question about the matter does not appear in any of her surviving correspondence, it is impossible to infer exactly what she thought. However, her question seems to have been mainly about the legal implications of sex before marriage for a woman whose spouse insisted on virginity, rather than the morality of such a choice. Certainly Frederick considered such demands utterly repulsive, and he feels perfectly at ease expressing his opinions to his mother. Ames likely sympathized with the double standard imposed on their friend Jennie, but even if not, her correspondence with all three children indicates at the very least that she considered sex, including premarital sex, a topic appropriate for conversation, curiosity, and opinion.

Despite Ames’ frankness with her children and her determination that her son and daughters learn to support themselves and make their own decisions, she still believed that certain roles belonged to men and to women. At one point she even urged her daughter-in-law, Hope, to stop working so that Frederick could assume his full responsibility as head of his family. To Hope she wrote, “No one wants to work for what they do not desire. If they should do it then pressure must be brought to bear on them to make them have to work or see their loved ones suffer” (21 February 1939). Hope had been working as a teacher throughout the marriage, even living in Houston on her own so she could teach while Frederick finished his residency in Boston.
Although the couple was still in debt from Frederick’s opening his practice, Ames evidently felt that after nearly six years of marriage, it was time for Hope to give up her job and have a baby. Ames tells Frederick, “A man should be able to support his wife. It is the outward evidence not only of his professional success but of his manhood…You have been in the habit of seeing women of your family work and become the sole breadwinners of your family and of you…it has been bad for your social code that this is so” (22 February 1939). Her instructions imply that women should work only if necessary, and that Hope’s duty to her husband is to force him into self-sufficiency rather than to supplement his income.

Her letters seem hypocritical considering her own apparent rejection of domestic life in favor of independence. However, her letter to Frederick includes another important paragraph. She writes, “You have chosen a profession which entails a certain respect for the social conventions of which you are unmindful. If you had decided to follow another line of work for your livelihood, you would have another code of social conventions to observe which in many ways with your temperament would be easier on you. But you did not.” In this context, her letter makes more sense. Ames feels that, just as she had to adopt certain mores as a respectable white southern lady for her career, Frederick cannot expect success if he does not yield to certain societal expectations for doctors. Hope and Frederick disagree with Ames, as Hope indicates in a polite but firm reply. She says “I think bringing a baby in to complicate matters would be like marrying a drunk to reform him” (2 March 1939). Hope continued to work, and the couple did not have their first child until 1943, when Hope was 34.
Although Ames, her mother, and her sister all supported themselves after their husbands died, Ames viewed their self-sufficiency as necessary rather than ideal. They also chose careers where their sex was relatively acceptable, rather than pioneering. Laura Daniel ran a company she had inherited from her husband, Ames joined a long tradition of female reformers, and Lulu Hardy went into teaching. Although her public life and demanding career seem to indicate a rejection of domesticity, Jacqueline Hall noted when revisiting her work on Ames that “She had three children to raise; she could hardly avoid domesticity” (“Second Thoughts” 152). Ames also consistently valued her feminine role as nurturer, viewing her mother’s decision to ask Ames to care for her at the end of her life, rather than another relative, as an opportunity “to prove that she could blend the competence and control on which she staked her career with the ability to nurture, to take care” (“Second Thoughts” 153). Although Ames certainly devoted herself to her work, she also embraced more traditional female roles within her family.

Ames’ instructions to Hope and Frederick still seem incongruous given Mary’s circumstances at the time, attending her final year of medical school and hoping to marry her fellow medical student J.G. Bodenhower, whom the family called Bodie. Mary writes, “Bodie is being eaten by something that I can very well understand. His internship is not as good as mine by a long shot because despite the fact that his grades are much better than mine he didn’t have the connections that I had – or rather Frederick had – to get him a good place” (12 May 1940). Mary is not entirely fair with herself here: medical internships could be extremely hard for women to get in 1940, as many hospitals either capped the number of female graduates they would accept or simply refused to take them. On 5 November 1939 Mary wrote that “My latest [application for an internship] is Hurley
Hospital in Flint, Michigan. Texas can place two men there and the two who had applied didn't want it so the dean sent in my name with a boy's. The only thing is that they don't know whether they will take a girl from Texas though they do take girls and have quarters for them.” To a degree not quite experienced by the older women in her family, Mary’s career put her in direct competition with men. She also chose to pursue a career at the same time as she looked for a romantic partner; her grandmother, mother and aunt began to work only after their husbands died.

Whatever obstacles medicine posed to her prospects of working or pursuing romantic relationships, Mary never seems to have considered giving it up. Ames certainly would have wanted her daughter to work if the marriage plans fell through, which they did. Mary eventually married Edward C. Raffensperger, M.D., and the two went into practice together, also defying Ames’ identified social customs for successful doctors. Mary would likely have been even less willing than Hope to leave her career in order to salvage her husband’s masculinity. She adored medicine, telling Ames “my true love is becoming more real each day – obstetrics. I do believe I could forget everything past, prestn [sic], and future in the delivery room” (6 March 1939). However, Raffensperger was successful in his own right, eventually becoming a celebrated professor of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania; Ames could hardly accuse him of requiring financial help from Mary. The couple also never had children despite wanting them, leaving Mary free from the conflict between career and motherhood that Ames negotiated.

In her role as mother, Ames appears to have given much consideration to the standards of the 1930s South. She rejected some of the strictness that Lillian Smith assumed was typical of a respectable southern mother, but she also recognized the power
of social conventions and the usefulness of working within them. Although she still adhered to some values that today seem antiquated, she proves that it was possible to understand the nuances and injustices inherent in the image of southern womanhood and to use the image as a tool. She also held private opinions that may have shocked the people who found her organization’s legacy so defined by the ideals and context of its time.
II. Degrees of Southernness

“I had an accent that was definitely not from the deep South.”

Jessie Daniel Ames (Ames Interview 51)

Ames' credibility as a southern reformer depended on public perception of the women in her organization as southerners. The ASWPL adamantly identified itself as an organization of southerners solving a southern problem. In 1939, when the ASWPL appears to have reached the height of its influence, *Survey Graphic* ran an article about the organization that noted “the word ‘southern’ in the association’s name is significant, for the program is a native one, conceived, developed and expanded into a South-wide movement by southern-born women. In a strict sense, the movement is part of the final work of reconstruction, the righting of wrongs growing out of slavery and the Civil War” (Nordyke 683). The article was later reprinted in the *Reader’s Digest*, and, judging from Ames’ professional correspondence of the period, likely attracted more readership and publicity for the organization than any previous reporting. For people unfamiliar with the ASWPL, the article presents it exactly as Ames wanted: an organization of respectable southern women successfully convincing other southerners to prevent lynching.

The article ignores Ames’ origins in Texas, crediting leadership of the ASWPL to “Mrs. Jessie Daniel Ames of Atlanta” (Nordyke 684). Nordyke’s glossing over of her ties to the Southwest appears consistent with Ames’ desire to appear unquestionably southern in her public life. Ames even went so far as to oppose federal anti-lynching legislation, against the wishes of the CIC and NAACP, in part because she felt that the perception of northern intervention would alienate the people she was so desperately trying to reach.
Ames did not want an organization of southern liberals centered in cities; she genuinely wanted to reach the people in rural communities that she saw as facing the greatest threat from potential lynch mobs.

Privately, though, Ames worried that her own claim to a southern identity might not be strong enough to attract the following she desired. Historian Jacqueline Dowd Hall wrote that Ames’ connection to Texas, where she had spent all of her childhood and most of her adult life, “expressed itself as an identification with the South as well as a distance from it” and that “she always saw herself as an outsider who assumed the role of southern lady for the sake of her work and her constituency” (*Revolt* 15). Hall cites letters that Ames wrote to her friend and secretary of the ASWPL, North Carolinian Bertha Newell. Newell certainly seems to have been one of Jessie’s most intimate connections within the ASWPL, as their correspondence tends to include personal details as well as the business of running the organization. However, other material reveals an even more complex relationship to Texas and the South.

In an interview conducted by Pat Watters in 1965\(^3\), later published in part in the *New South*, Ames recalls her promise to William Alexander, president of the CIC, before she agreed to the position of director of Women’s work.

\(^3\) This paper uses quotations from a partial transcript made available through the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, interview number G-0003. An abbreviated version of the interview, edited by Jacqueline Hall, was also published in the *New South* Spring (1972) 31-35, a publication of the Southern Regional Council, a copy of which appears in the biographical material of the *JDA Papers*. 
he [Alexander] expressed this great admiration for the work I had done in Texas and the southwestern states but oh they were so different from the deep South. And I had an accent that was definitely not from the deep South. He did not feel it was right to encourage me to accept the job. He went on until he made me mad and I decided to terminate the interview and I said, now listen, I'm coming here and I'm coming here for a year. That agreement has already been settled, I'm coming here for a year and if I find out that I can't get any acceptance. . . I was going to go back home (Ames Interview 51).

In this instance Ames seems more concerned about gaining acceptance than her ability to lead women against the problem of lynching. She begins the same interview with the statement “I'm a native of East Texas and it is the old part of Texas, the slavery area” (1). She recalls her childhood reaction to overhearing adults discussing a lynching in Tyler as the start of her uneasiness with the southern status quo. In some ways, Ames presents southernness as a spectrum: she evidently feels southern enough to deal with the most southern of problems, the legacy of slavery, but not southern enough to convince “true” southerners of her claim to understand their regional ills.

Although Ames felt a strong connection to the problem of lynching, she recognized that her origins in Texas might label her as not southern enough to lead a southern movement. Fortunately the CIC had considered Texas part of the geographic South for at least a decade before Ames accepted the position of Director of Women's work, since a women's division of the CIC had been established there in 1921. As it turns out, Ames had fairly little trouble appealing to southern women; her ability to address different women’s groups according to their terms proved one of her greatest strengths.
At the 13 January 1937 biennial conference of the ASWPL, she reminded other members working on recruitment that “We can’t talk to people except in language that they understand and to bring up mental images of the kind they understand” (Organizational Papers, JDA Papers). This strategy might mean appealing to members of the National Federation of Women’s clubs by attaching lynching to the idea of world peace, or addressing missionary groups with Biblical references. In order to be successful, Ames not only had to approach these groups as a southerner, but as a southerner who understood their goals and motivations.

Ames’ sometimes conflicting, sometimes compatible identities as southerner and Texan influenced her personal life as well as her leadership of the ASWPL. Family correspondence indicates that, despite Ames’ twelve-year career in Georgia and retirement to North Carolina, the family still viewed Texas as home. Whether family members viewed Texas as southern seems to shift according to the writer and context, as they sometimes refer to themselves as southern and sometimes refer to southerners as a group that does not include them.

Mary and Frederick expressed a strong desire to return to Texas and valued their connections to the state above their connections to Georgia. Frederick married Hope Carl, whose family was from Houston, and established his medical practice there as soon as he completed his Boston residency. While he was the first child to return, likely because as the oldest he had already left for Harvard by 1929 and spent no time living permanently at the family home in Georgia, the two daughters also followed. Mary took classes at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, and attended medical school at the
University of Texas’ Galveston branch with support from Frederick and Ames’ mother, Laura Daniel. Even Lulu eventually chose to pursue her career as an editor in Austin. Mary especially seems to have thrived in Georgetown, the Texas community about 30 miles north of Austin where she had spent her childhood and where her maternal grandmother still lived. Although Mary had already graduated from Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia, she chose to complete her medical school prerequisites at Southwestern University, the alma mater of her mother and aunt. She managed to take advantage of her mother’s many connections in the state, using them to get a clerical job with the Texas Relief Commission (TRC). In Mary's circles at the University and around town, being the daughter of Jessie Daniel Ames carried significant benefits. She writes to her mother, “I am using the Daniel [Ames’ maiden name] altogether now because everyone of importance seems to know you” (27 August 1935). Mary also seems to have received special consideration at her job because of her mother's legacy. She writes that the chairman of the board of the TRC, Claude Teer, took a special interest in her because of his relationship with Ames and saw providing her with a job as an opportunity to help the Ames family.

Although Mary’s interactions with people who knew her mother were generally positive, Ames remembers attracting criticism for her involvement with the League of Women Voters and her unconventional approach to childrearing. On the form the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill sent to her to request biographical data when acquisitioning her papers, she wrote wryly of her children: “None of them went to reform school, a fate predicted by some of my closest friends in my hometown of Georgetown, Texas. Those friends were opposed to my votes for women and my frequent absences
from my business and my family justified them in their prophecy” (biographical material, JDA Papers). However, as joint owner of the local telephone company with her mother, Laura Daniel, Ames enjoyed a certain amount of immunity from less well-meaning Georgetown critics. In her interview with Pat Watters, she replies to the question of whether people in Georgetown objected to her activities, “Oh, many of them did! But you see it happened to be they couldn't do anything to me and I’ll tell you why, it was very mercenary. My mother and I owned the telephone company and 3 or 4 telephone plants out in the county. That was a monopoly” (Ames Interview 4). In Georgia, Ames’ success depended entirely on the receptivity of other southern women, but in Texas her economic position appears to have allowed her more freedom to express her political ideas.

Mary demonstrates a particular closeness with her mother during the period she spent in Texas. Instead of Ames’ advice laden letters of Mary’s teenage years, affectionate letters to Jessie from Mary dominate the family correspondence in 1935, when Mary moved to Georgetown. She asks her mother for recipes, complains about her roommates, and inquires about her mother's work. She also expresses a deep satisfaction with her desire to study medicine. On 18 September 1935, she writes to her mother, “There's nothing I want to do like I want to do medicine. It's really taking hold of me in a big way. I'm sure I should be a credit to you in that field.” Mary's confidence produces a striking contrast to an earlier letter from Ames, in which Ames cautions her daughter against rash decisions regarding her future.

For Mary especially, returning to Texas marked a homecoming and a period of maturation. She seems to have made the most of her mother's Georgetown reputation,
deriving a sense of comfort and acceptance from the people who remembered Jessie fondly. At the same time, she also began training for her own career as a pediatrician. Her letters indicate that she wishes to be financially independent of her mother as soon as possible, recognizing the strain the educations of all three children put on Ames’ limited income. Texas appears to have been a critical place for Mary, both in establishing a place of emotional connection and building independence.

Whether Texas was really her home seemed to be a point of some confusion, however. On one occasion Fredrick encountered Claude Teer, chairman of the board of the TRC, in Austin, and Frederick asked after Mary. Mary writes that Teer told him she had “gone home – which to them meant Georgetown and to Frederick meant Georgia. That must have given him an awful turn” (5 September 1935). Mary finds the incident funny, but it does point to the family’s confusion as to the location of “home.” Sometimes it is Georgetown, Ames’ childhood home, and at other times it is the house in Decatur.

Frederick also chose Texas as the place to begin his professional life, although he demonstrated less drive to support himself without Jessie's assistance than Mary did. Frederick's letters home from medical school and from his residency generally describe how little he, and later Hope, had to live on, while Mary's letters on finances tend to focus on how she plans to pay off the debt she owes her mother. Mary in this instance uses debt literally; she and Jessie appear to have agreed upon a financial arrangement by which Mary sent Jessie monthly payments of whatever she could spare.

Nevertheless, Frederick also found a home and a career in Texas despite a few years of financial hardship. Because he chose to live in Houston, rather than in
Georgetown, Frederick’s experience seems to have been less shadowed by his mother's reputation than Mary’s. Although there was likely little advantage to using the Daniel name in Houston, Ames’ public position still occasionally entered Frederick’s sphere. By the time Frederick became a practicing pediatrician, Ames had so distanced herself from Texas that a newspaper reported on her as a non-Texan. Frederick writes to Ames on 3 December 1935,

   Your trip to Texas did, indeed, produce comment, but, as yet, although a number of people have told me they saw your picture in various and sundry newspapers, I have not received threats, scoffs, ? letters or raised eyebrows. I will send you the answer from the Columbus C. of C. when I get around to it. They referred to you as a busybody, an out of stater who is unacquainted with Texas conditions and suggested that you were a Northern woman; they didn't call you by name, but my astute judgment told me they most likely meant you.

While people in Georgetown who knew Ames personally would never have confused her for a northerner, however much they disagreed with her career, by this point Ames appears to have publicly downplayed her connection to Texas so thoroughly that at least one newspaper forgot she had been born there. The newspaper also indicates that someone altogether unfamiliar with Texas politics was likely northern, implying Texas’ identification with the South.

   Lulu's relationship to Texas appears slightly more complicated than her two older siblings, who both chose to return there as quickly as possible. Lulu had developed close relationships to people in Georgia, primarily through her work as editor of the Agnes Scott College school newspaper, *The Agonistic*. When she moved to Texas in her
twenties in order to pursue a career in journalism, she reflected on the time she spent living in the South as particularly educational for her. She writes in a letter to Ames,

\[\text{I want sometime to drive through the real delta of Mississippi, particularly to Oscar Johnson's Delta Pine and Land Co. and see a plantation in operation...I still am glad that I live nine years in the Deep South but I regret most actively at times that I'm not so observant as Johnathan [sic] Daniels\textsuperscript{4}, for example, and that I didn't learn and see more during the years I lived in that section (4 January 1939).}\]

Lulu in particular had developed an interest in social reform during the time she lived in Georgia. Her first job in Texas found her in Waco editing the Farmer’s Banner, a publication of the Texas Agricultural Association, which she accepted not out of any particular interest in agriculture, but in the hope that she might be able to assist the laboring population of Texas.\textsuperscript{5} However, despite her initial excitement at her budding independence, in the same letter she also states that she feels depressed over “the realization that I’m leaving home,” having lived in Decatur for nearly ten years.

Lulu also alludes to her southern upbringing in a letter to Jessie on 3 September 1935, written while she was visiting a northern friend: “I find that I still say ‘ma’am’ and ‘sir’ in spite of the local tendency to say ‘yeah’ and ‘naw’ to everything… southern training or something but it sounds better to me – probably because I’m used to it.” Although it is unclear whether Lulu feels that Texas is a part of the South, or that she acquired such habits in Georgia, she nevertheless identifies herself as a product of southern training regarding the way she speaks.

\textsuperscript{4} Likely Jonathan Worth Daniels, editor of the Raleigh News and Observer, author, and White House Press Secretary in 1945.

\textsuperscript{5} Lulu had gotten the job through a contact of her mother’s, but she eventually grew bored reporting on the price of cotton and moved to Austin, hoping to work for a newspaper there.
The family seemed to feel that a Texas identity was southern, but also specifically Texan. When Mary was about 17 and just beginning to date, Ames warned her that southern men have not been brought up the way she is used to. She writes, “In addition to men in general, who are a new experience to you, you are up against a most virulent breed in the man of the Old South. Over here more than at home, you have to establish your own code and stick to it” (11 September 1930). Ames goes on to assert that southern men in particular are unlikely to see women as their equals, and that Mary should date them cautiously.

Ames herself married a southern man, and she always felt unwanted by Roger Post Ames’ New Orleans family. Late in her life, Ames began the project of writing her autobiography, which, although incomplete, sheds light on her own married life and explains many of the precautions she asked her children to take in their personal relationships. She writes that Roger’s sister believed she had married him “for his position and his money” (biographical material, *JDA papers*) and that, because of their rocky emotional relationship, he likely had little reason to think otherwise. Since Roger spent so much of his career with the United States Public Health Service traveling, Ames found herself spending more and more time with her mother and sister, as making a home in New Orleans appeared to be out of the question. Eventually Roger’s family demanded a divorce. Roger responded by taking work in South America and refusing to return to the United States. The couple finally reconciled in 1914, four years after the Ames family had begun pushing for a divorce, and they made plans to take their children to Georgetown. Unfortunately Roger died before he could make the trip, leaving Ames again dependent on her mother and sister.
Ames does not blame Roger’s southern background for their inability to interact as equals. She blames their cyclical pattern of a long separation, a brief period of hope, and disappointment mainly on her own immaturity at the time of marriage. She writes, “Roger never had a chance to live a normal man’s life. He married a woman in years, but one who was adolescent in her emotions, a child in understanding, an infant in not knowing what she wanted and so unable to get it” (biographical material, *JDA papers*). Though she harbors some resentment towards Dodie, the sister who she feels wanted her out of the family, Ames’ tone regarding Roger mainly conveys sadness. She seems to consider their youth and immaturity a greater barrier to happiness than any cultural differences brought on by his southern family and her upbringing on the frontier. Still, she does not appear ever to have used her connection to him or to New Orleans to convince anyone of her southern origins.

The ASWPL, then, did not have the uncomplicated southern origins that Ames presented. Ames felt that she understood the psychology of lynching well enough to lead a movement against it; however, she worried that other southerners might see her as an interloper. She and her family also maintained strong ties to Texas throughout their lives, especially her middle daughter, Mary. Texas was at once a part of the South and something outside it, giving Ames enough credibility to lead her campaign but forcing her to construct a southern identity that she did not always feel was her natural one.
III: Ames’ Opinions on Race

“It was my sense of justice and fair play and it was the only thing that ever moved me and it always has.”

Jessie Daniel Ames describing her compulsion to advocate for African Americans

(Ames Interview 40)

During her career, Ames developed close personal relationships with several African Americans who were similarly invested in reforming the South. Although the CIC was an integrated organization and worked closely with the NAACP, the ASWPL never took the radical step of integration, preferring instead to retain their message of white women protesting a crime committed in their name. Ames did consult African American women and valued their input, in some cases developing deep personal relationships, but she also saw her organization as part of an incremental movement to educate white southerners, rather than to agitate for full equality.

She was not alone in this attitude; many southern liberals in the 1930s concerned with the appalling lack of opportunity for African Americans in the Jim Crow South would have agreed with her moderation. Some, like William Alexander Percy, even took a highly paternalistic attitude. While Ames seems remarkably free from a sense of noblesse oblige, she also appears to have made some compromises in her racial attitudes for the sake of attracting members to the ASWPL. While Ames herself recognized friends

6 Ames and her family did employ African Americans as housekeepers, as evidenced by their presence in family photo albums. Unfortunately, Ames’ relationships with them, particularly Louise Kirkland, who worked for Ames in Decatur, remain mysterious, as they are seldom mentioned in any of the family’s preserved writings. See appendix I for her photograph.
and leaders among her African American peers, she did not require such attitudes from the other women in her organization so long as they recognized the detrimental effects of lynching.

Ames felt drawn to activism regarding race out of what she called a sense of justice, first experienced when she observed the dilapidated African American schools near her home in Georgetown, Texas. She recognized that the parents of those students wanted the same educational opportunities as she wanted for her children, and so felt driven to help (Ames Interview 3). By 1924, she headed an extensive program in Georgetown “to improve Negro housing, schools, libraries, to ensure Negro farm agents to work with Negro farmers, for better healthcare, a school for delinquent girls, adequate railroad accommodations, and for textbooks dealing with the economic and racial development of the Negro people” (Scott 196). Although as director of women’s work she chose to focus on lynching rather than on the myriad programs she had overseen in Texas, her sense that African Americans should have the resources to make a fair start continued to drive her career. Although none of her programs advocated integration, they did allow her to recognize shared values and aspirations, which proved critical to her friendships with African Americans.

Ames maintained a particularly close relationship with Robert Moton, president of the Tuskegee Institute from 1915 to 1935 and a member of the CIC, and his family. She appears to have considered her visits to Tuskegee a relaxing, welcome respite from the taxing routine of speaking circuits and lynching investigations that usually served as her reason for travel. In a letter written on 23 October 1934, Mary instructs her mother to “Give my love to Mrs. And Major Moton and do try to rest just a little bit.” Laura Daniel,
likely referring to the same trip, also writes to her daughter, “You said that you were better after your week stay in Tuskegee. How sick were you, or were you just resting?” (1 November 1934). Both letters indicate that Ames enjoyed her time at Tuskegee, using her trips there for personal relaxation as well as for conducting business for the CIC.

Ames’ daughter Lulu played a key role in establishing and maintaining this relationship, as the Moton family expressed great affection towards her. On 14 March 1934, Robert Moton wrote Lulu a brief but warm note thanking her for a picture she had sent to them of herself and adding “I have read your article in the ‘Aurora’ which I think is excellent. Evidently you inherit your mother’s genius both as to thought and diction.” When Lulu graduated from Agnes Scott in 1936, Jennie Moton mentions that they still have the photograph. She writes “So many people have asked who you are. Your photograph stands on the table in Major’s den. Robert tinted it, and it is beautiful. With more love than I know how to express—affectionately, Jennie B. Moton” (26 May 1936). Robert also wrote Lulu a congratulatory note for her graduation (30 May 1936), and Jennie wrote another addressed to Jessie, in which she updates her on various members of the Moton family and closes with the line “Was happy to read the pleasing statement in the Richmond paper, on your statement concerning the harm publicity does the matter of lynching. With the best of good wishes, congratulations, and much love from all of us, to all of you” (26 May 1936). The Motons evidently supported many of Ames’ strategies for the ASWPL, and both families appear to have felt genuine affection for one another.

Lulu's closeness to the family likely solidified during the summer and fall of 1934, when she received treatment for her leg, crippled by polio, from Dr. George Washington Carver at Tuskegee. The facilities for polio victims at Tuskegee received
national funding only because of the refusal to admit African Americans to Georgia’s
Warm Springs (J. Smith 85), a resort which Franklin Delano Roosevelt had transformed
into a treatment facility to help manage his illness. Lulu had access to Warm Springs, as
evidenced by a letter for Dr. Michael Hoke, a member of the board of trustees and friend
of her brother, Frederick. Hoke writes to Lulu on 22 August 1934 “May I suggest you
come down to Warm Springs the first of next week – you may find me in my office each
morning, Mondays through Wednesdays.” The relative proximity of Warm Springs to
Decatur, less than 80 miles away, coupled with a personal invitation, ensured Lulu’s
access to one of the best research facilities in the nation.

However, Tuskegee also emerged as a research facility in its own right because of
Carver’s experiments with peanut oil. Most whites were at best dubious of his treatment’s
effectiveness, and other researchers considered him a quack (Oshinsky 66), but Ames
sought whatever therapy might increase her daughter’s mobility and independence. Lulu
seems to have received treatment at Tuskegee twice. The first visit is documented in a
series of letters from Mary and Lulu to Ames in June of 1934. Their letters are followed
by a letter from Carver to Ames, in which he writes “My Mrs. Ames, your letter thrills
me to know that your dear little girl is improving. I am glad that it will not be long before
she can return…. I am getting some wonderful letters from persons who have been
helped like your daughter” (18 August 1934). Lulu does appear to have returned, as
evidenced by a letter to her mother from Tuskegee on 5 September 1934.

During the ten days Lulu spent at Tuskegee in June with her sister Mary, the
Motos appear to have been responsible for supervising the girls in Ames' absence. Ames
evidently felt comfortable enough with the Moton family to leave her daughters, one of
whom was undergoing therapeutic treatment, in their care. Ames' decision reveals her trust in her children's maturity, but it also demonstrates remarkable trust in the Motons and closeness between the two families.

Lulu's letters home during this period note the Motons’ generosity and openness towards her and Mary. Although their letters are addressed from Dorothy Hall, the university’s guesthouse, rather than from the Motons’ personal home, they often spent evenings with the family. By the time Lulu returned in September, she was evidently considered mature and intelligent enough to be made a part of the family’s political conversations as well. She describes a particularly interesting conversation she had with Jennie on the lack of a really good novel written from the point of view of an African American. Lulu writes on 5 September 1934,

Mrs. Moton sent Miss Williams for me last night and I went over for about two hours. Mrs. Moton and I discussed literature and, of course, we drifted into Negro literature. She let me borrow tow[sic] of Dr. du Bois’s books which I must read in a hurry if I want to finish them before I leave. I might be conceited but her conversation seemed to point toward a definite aim. She told me exactly what sort of novel she would like to have written about the Negro; we followed for the most part the conversation you and I had the day you outlined your proposed book for the Motons and Catherine. Her outline was full and clear and she indicated that the time had come for such a book to be written; that the representative Negro novel had never been written and that the sort of stuff that has been written is anything but a true key to the character of the Negro race; that the already written stuff is doing alot[sic] to carry on the misrepresented Negro.
Lulu appears to have felt honored to be part of such a serious conversation and flattered that her experience as an English major and editor of the college newspaper at Agnes Scott led Jennie Moton to encourage discussion of literature as a method of social reform. Lulu seems to have retained her belief in the importance of literature that addressed the subject of race in her adult life. In 1940, when she was living in Texas and working for the Farmer’s Banner, she wrote to Ames “This morning with my coffee I finished Native Son. It is well written and terrific in every way.... Richard Wright undoubtedly has great writing ability and also great powers of stripping all people and leaving them to go through his book stark, staring naked, so far as their souls are concerned” (8 June 1940). Of the three children, Lulu was consistently most interested in the social implications of her mother’s work, and she took advantage of her time at Tuskegee to explore what members of the Moton family thought.

Ames' closeness to the Motons, established by her trust during Lulu’s treatment, was likely maintained by two factors that seem to have influenced Ames' ability to form interpersonal connections with her African American professional contacts. First, she was able to see the Motons as being like herself. They held middle class values of propriety, enjoyed a standard of living similar to her own, and demonstrated their commitment to education and self-improvement. Second, they agreed with her policies of running the ASWPL, particularly regarding her decision not to join the push for federal anti-lynching laws.

Not all of Ames’ friendships with African Americans were as harmonious and intimate as her relationship with the Motons. Mary McLeod Bethune, active with the YWCA and the NAACP, did not always agree with Ames’ strategies for the ASWPL.
Bethune, like the Motons, demonstrated her education and propensity for hard work well enough to gain Ames' respect. Ames said of her “Yes Mrs. Bethune and I were very close friends and I think that life of her—I don't know who wrote it—just simply did not do that woman justice. When she went down there she had about a dollar and a half to start that school…” (Ames Interview. 87). Ames appears to be referring to the Bethune-Cookman school in Daytona, Florida, eventually Bethune-Cookman University, which Bethune founded in 1904. Ames, ever supportive of efforts to improve education, admired Bethune’s work. However, Bethune did not agree with Ames' position on a federal anti-lynching law, which became a serious point of conflict between the two.

In 1935, Bethune, speaking at Atlanta University on January 11 to a group of ASWPL members, including Ames and prominent African American women, expressed admiration for the ASWPL along with her disappointment that they had not supported the Costigan-Wagner Bill. She said, “when I was in New York they asked me to use my influence to get the Southern women to wholeheartedly get behind the endorsement of this anti-lynching bill. I know how happy they would have been if you had said in the papers this morning that you had given your full endorsement to this bill. But I think you have been cautious and wisely so.” While she did not like that the ASWPL declined to support federal legislation, she could at least understand the prudence of agitating for change one step at a time.

Not all African Americans present agreed that a bill was necessary. Jennie Moton, also present at the event, stated that “if it [an anti-lynching bill] is passed, what then, unless the Southern people take the right attitude towards it, we have them [lynchings] worse than before it was passed… Personally, I have no regret that you did not endorse
the bill.” Her opinions are more similar to those of Ames herself, who felt that lynching, by definition already illegal, would gain nothing from additional legislation so long as southern whites felt themselves above the law.

By 1938, though, Bethune was losing her patience with the ASWPL’s cautious, step-by-step approach. On hearing that Ames had supported Tom Connally, a senator opposed to the Wagner-Van Nuys Anti-Lynching Bill, Bethune wrote a 14 February 1938 letter to Roy Wilkins, assistant secretary of the NAACP, in which she stated

I must confess to you that I am deeply shocked at the contents of the letter written to Senator Tom Connally by one of our most outstanding interracial leaders, Mrs. Jessie Daniel Ames. I thought I knew Mrs. Ames’ heart and intentions along the lines of justice in all human affairs too well ever to expect from her pen or lips such a statement as contained in the first paragraph of her letter in regard to the disposition of the Anti-Lynching Bill. Her utterances and advocacy have been, prior to this, most courageous and, as I thought, in the right direction (Organizational Papers, JDA Papers).

Bethune sent a copy of that letter to Ames, but she also wrote a note directly to her on 24 March 1938, after the bill had been successfully filibustered in the Senate. She writes only “My dear Mrs. Ames: Enough said. I understand you thoroughly. We should all press forward, doing our best. I have unswerving confidence in your interest and cooperation and sincerity. Sincerely yours, Mary McLeod Bethune.” Jacqueline Hall takes Bethune’s response as an indicator that Ames could continue to count on southern black women for support (Revolt 247); however, Bethune’s terse note also indicates some of the growing tension between Ames and members of the CIC and ASWPL who felt her
position on a federal anti-lynching law was inappropriate. The ASWPL continued to oppose a federal anti-lynching law until it dissolved in 1941, which became an increasingly serious point of contention between Ames and other activists.

In fact, Ames’ unyielding refusal to support federal legislation and her resulting personality clashes likely led to her dismissal from the CIC in 1944, when the CIC folded and establish the Southern Regional Council in its place. The ASWPL had disbanded in 1942 because of Ames’ recognition that women’s voluntary organizations were becoming increasingly devoted to activities related to World War II and the declining numbers of lynchings. However, Ames had continued her duties as Field Secretary for the CIC and expected to assume a prominent position in the new organization (Revolt 260). Instead, she resigned under pressure and retired to Tryon, North Carolina, where her only income seems to have been Roger’s modest pension and the support of her children. In Tryon, she found projects and admirers within the Methodist church and local women’s groups (Revolt 261). However, from 1944 until her death in 1972, she never organized anything at the same scale as the ASWPL.

Ames greatly admired the ambitions and accomplishments of her middle class African American peers, even if she did not always follow their advice. The women’s division of the CIC had after all been established because white women realized that some African American women existed who were like themselves. Although it accomplished little until Ames took the helm in 1929, the women’s division had been born out of a 1920 conference that brought white southern women together with their middle class African American counterparts. Although the drive of a focused campaign came later, echoes of this “vision of a bond of common womanhood” (Revolt 95)
remained important to the philosophy of the ASWPL as well as to Ames personally.

Ames seemed to consider bright, educated, and passionate African American women like those at that first conference to be potential friends and allies. However, she prioritized ending lynching through educating white southerners over creating an organization that modeled her personal interactions with African American friends.
IV: Traditions of Activism

“The Women of the South in every organization are attempting a very large social program for the benefit of the South... And I have yet to see, except in the case of the Baptists, that a single one of these organizations include in their program the Negro woman, the Negro child, and the Negro race, and yet the Negro is blocking the program of every one of these organizations.”

Jessie Daniel Ames at the 1930 anti-lynching conference which resulted in founding the ASWPL. (Organizational Papers, JDA Papers).

When Ames began her work with the ASWPL, she was building on a long tradition of female southern reform. Southern women had been active in church groups, women’s clubs, and civic societies for decades. These groups were generally for females only, and most attempted to better their local communities in some way. They had strong traditions of valuing motherhood and generally saw social reform as an extension of their obligation to their families to improve the world for their children. Social reform had long been an acceptable pursuit for southern ladies, provided that “women in the progressive period carefully cherished a lady-lake aspect and were modest about their achievements” (Scott, x). Part of Ames’ genius was her ability to unite women from disparate organizations to her cause, convincing them that putting a stop to lynching was crucial to their goals.

The ASWPL built on the work of earlier women in the CIC, notably Carrie Parks Johnson, who had held the position of director of women’s work before she took notice of Ames’ work in Texas. Johnson had been one of the first to pressure Will Alexander for
a women’s division of the CIC after she and Sara Estelle Haskin attended the biennial conference of the National Association of Colored Women at Tuskegee Institute in July of 1920. Both women had encountered educated, organized African American women whom they could relate to as peers, and they wanted Alexander to help them duplicate the experience for other southern white women (*Revolt* 89).

Under Johnson’s direction, the CIC hosted a women’s conference in Memphis in October 1920 that led directly to the establishment of the Women’s Committee of the CIC. The event featured articulate African American women as speakers: Margaret Murray Washington, Elizabeth Ross Haynes, and Charlotte Hawkins Brown. Attendees responded sympathetically to their call for action, but with more sentiment than action. Although Johnson set up state-level women’s divisions for the CIC, a model that Ames retained for the ASWPL, women in the CIC made little discernable progress. Hall describes the response of attendees at the Memphis conference as “an outpouring of emotion that would become the paradigm for—and often the only accomplishment of—interracial meetings for a decade” (*Revolt* 94). Johnson did important work in creating an emotional appeal and making interracial work respectable, but it was not until Jessie Daniel Ames joined the CIC that the Women’s Committee established concrete goals as well as a method for recruiting women already active in similar organizations.

These women were not meant to serve as delegates from their various groups to the ASWPL but to take the ASWPL’s message back to their organizations. In a document Ames titled “Standards for 1933,” she states the goal of recruiting women who are members of other groups, writing “These women are invited to become vice chairmen not to represent their organizations but to represent the movement to their organizations”
(Organizational Papers, *JDA Papers*). This strategy allowed Ames to appeal to individual women even if the organizations in which they were active declined to endorse the ASWPL.

Ames also recognized the uselessness of recruiting influential people just for the privilege of utilizing their names. She criticizes the Consumers League, a well-established, New York based organization that advocated for workers’ rights throughout the United States, for engaging interest in their speakers rather than recruiting women who would do useful work. She writes to her friend and colleague, Catherine Newell, about a conference she attended in December of 1932: “Miss Mason⁷, and evidently the others, feel that if they can get a great many names of important people on their letterhead or to speak at their luncheons, they are making great progress.” (16 December 1932, Organizational Papers, *JDA Papers*). She concludes her letter by writing,

> The Consumers League is made up of a great many people who are sympathetic, whose names lend weight to a letterhead, and whose presence can secure a crowd of curious people who want to be able to say they have either met or heard some prominent person speak…. I do not believe that it is humanly possible, even for a hundred people intensely interested and willing to give their time to the study and dissemination of our present economic status, to be as effective as one Chairman of Christian Social Relations in a single Methodist Church.

Ames viewed a reliance on big names as misguided, driven more by a desire for publicity than a desire to accomplish change. She considered her efforts far better spent in recruiting unknown but passionate people willing to devote their energy to her cause.

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⁷ Lucy Randolph Mason, director of the National Consumers League and organizer of the Virginia ASWPL (*Revolt* 179).
Her letter also alludes to the powerful backing she had received from Methodist women since the beginning of the ASWPL. From the first conference in 1930, when the ASWPL emerged out of the CIC’s division of women’s work, the ASWPL had drawn the bulk of its membership from church organizations, including Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists. She had also utilized Methodist women in the 1920s when she was the leader of the women’s Texas CIC, keeping a card file of Southern Methodist social service chairmen whom she visited and sent literature to (Revolt 109). Ames would also reach out to women’s clubs, Jewish women’s societies, and civic groups over the course of her career.

Unlike Carrie Parks Johnson, Ames gave the women that she recruited to her cause specific, targeted actions to take in order to reform the South. A document titled “Standards for 1933,” adopted at the conference of the ASWPL held in Atlanta on 18 and 19 November 1932, lists goals for the organization and recommends strategies for accomplishing them. Women could participate at various levels of involvement on their state level branches of the ASWPL—as state chairman, vice chairmen, members, or simply as supporters who gave their signatures as an endorsement. State chairmen reported to her and her staff in Atlanta on the actions taken by their state councils.

Of particular interest are the five actions Ames recommends for women in the ASWPL that she calls “members of State Councils who are officers in some organization with local units” (18 November ASWPL Conference Minutes, Organizational Papers, JDA papers). Ames was particularly interested in members with ties to other organizations, and she wanted on every state council active members of organizations within the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal churches, PTA, YWCA, and
Federation of Women’s Clubs. Her five suggested actions were writing to sheriffs, writing to the governor, obtaining signatures at their organization’s conferences, presenting the subject of lynching at smaller events, and reaching out directly to small, local units of their organization. ASWPL members were also asked to help set up a local committee that would send literature to and ask for support from editors, teachers, and ministers (Organizational Papers, JDA Papers).

These activities allowed ASWPL’s message to be established quickly among disparate groups and communities that Ames might have otherwise struggled to reach. They also relied on women who were already connected to a particular group to act as spokeswomen for the ASWPL, strengthening Ames’ presentation of the ASWPL as an organization of southerners concerned about their own communities. In this way, Ames structured her organization to take advantage of the existing networks of southern female societies, a method of reform familiar to the South and to the women involved.

Educating government officials and other women about the crime of lynching constituted a major part of the ASWPL’s operations. However Ames also expected southern women to take a more active stance when necessary. In The Changing Character of Lynching, she summarizes the activities of the ASWPL: “State Associations have been set up; methods to prevent lynchings developed and followed; investigations made of lynchings allegedly involving crimes against white women; public forums held in small towns and county seats; flyers, pamphlets, posters, one-act plays written, published, and distributed” (19). Although opportunities to prevent and

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8 Part of Ames’ duties for the CIC included writing short books and pamphlets that could be published and distributed as educational literature. The Changing Character of Lynching, published in 1941, was one of these short books.
investigate lynchings occurred less frequently than opportunities to host speakers and disseminate literature, Ames lists these two activities first. She expected members not only to understand the false rhetoric used to defend lynchings and to argue against it but also to take an active stance when lynch mobs formed.

Ames herself investigated a number of lynchings as Field Secretary of the CIC, a position she held in addition to director of women’s work. In *The Changing Character of Lynching*, she also mentions an alleged lynching near Savannah, Georgia, in 1939, documented in detail in a publication Ames calls “a local Negro newspaper.” ASWPL members pressured the police to investigate the report, which was proved false (21). Ames’ encouragement to push for investigations and to travel to sites of lynchings emphasizes the commitment of the ASWPL and the CIC to base their arguments on fact rather than rumor. Ames participated in various initiatives that the CIC called “the story behind the story,” which involved collecting statements from people involved with alleged lynchings in an effort to uncover what had really happened. She describes several of these instances in her interview with Pat Watters, stating that the experience generally strengthened her resolve to continue her work. Ames describes interviewing the family of a murdered girl whose death had resulted in a particularly violent lynching in Marianna, Florida, as especially draining (Ames Interview 29). The details of that event matched exactly the sort of crime Ames had developed her organization to prevent: an innocent African American man accused of raping a white woman had been tortured to death before he was allowed access to a trial that lacked the evidence to convict him. Although

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9 Probably the 1934 lynching of Claude Neal. Although Ames does not identify her interview subject, she was likely speaking to the family of Lola Cannidy.
the total number of crimes like the Marianna lynching were declining, this instance confirmed to Ames in 1939 that the ASWPL remained a vital organization.

Even more rare were opportunities to directly prevent a lynch mob from harming its intended victim; ASWPL members generally had to resort to praising sheriffs or private individuals who moved prisoners to different counties to protect them. Ames encouraged women to know their own powers of persuasion; she encouraged them to use their vote for public officials who took a strong stand against lynching. Ames frequently complained that women did not know their own power as citizens. Because sheriffs were elected officials, Ames encouraged ASPWL members to send letters of support to local sheriffs who defied lynch mobs and to inform sheriffs who supported mobs that ASPWL members would vote against them.

The ASWPL also encouraged the rare private citizens who confronted lynch mobs, especially if the individual was a woman. Among Ames’ papers appears the story of Mrs. J.C. Butler, a sheriff’s wife in Carrol County, Tennessee, who in 1931 prevented a mob from lynching Harry Wauford, who had been accused of shooting a white police officer. Within the Organizational Papers of the JDA Papers, a report describes her with the words:

Mrs. Butler is a slender little woman, weighing about 110 pounds, and is the mother of five children. She is modest and unassuming, but fearless. Her blek [sic] eyes are sharp and penetrating. You see courage in every line of her face.

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10 The report appears to have been composed by a member of the CIC. It is signed by the Interstate Secretary and seems to have been used to educate members of the ASWPL, although its intended purpose is unclear.
When the Secretary of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation called to congratulate her on her heroic stand, she was busy with the work of the family. She is a good Mother, and was looking after the interest of her children (Organizational Papers JDA Papers).

The ASWPL certainly would have supported anyone who prevented a lynching, but the description of Butler draws particular attention to the way the CIC, and by extension the ASWPL, wanted to portray women who took such emphatic action. Although the CIC report praises Butler’s courageous defense of law and order, it also emphasizes that she is physically unintimidating, meek, and maternal. Other sources documenting the event drew less attention to her physique or personality. The NY Times, which covered the story on 18 April 1931, refrains from editorializing on Butler’s character. The article considers her actions remarkable but makes no explicit references to her femininity or maternal characteristics.

Historian Margaret Vandiver, who covers Butler in her 2006 book on lynching and legal execution in the South, calls Butler’s confrontation “the most extraordinary case of a prevented lynching” (Vandiver 146) and notes that not all interventions by private white citizens were successful. She cites the Huntingdon Tennessee Republican’s coverage of the event, which claims that “After viewing the conditions that surrounded them the mob arrived at the conclusion that they would have to harm a woman and batter down the jail doors to secure the prisoner, they left.” Vandiver concludes that Butler’s success derived at least in part from diminishing public support of lynching, rather than entirely from her gender. This interpretation is probably true, since the number of lynchings in the South declined and anti-lynching activism increased during the 1930s.
However, Butler’s actions also show the peculiar power that an upstanding, respected white woman could exercise against mob violence in the South. Her case provides evidence that the CIC and AWSPL had strong reason to believe they could effectively use the position of white women in southern society.

Portraying Butler as maternal drew on a decades old tradition of emphasizing motherhood as the reason that women undertook various types of social reform. The Federation of Women’s Clubs, a national organization founded in the late nineteenth century and still influential during the 1930s, especially emphasized that their progressive projects were an extension of the members’ concern for their own families. Jane Cunningham Croly, journalist and key organizer of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, wrote in 1898 that members were “a revelation of a new force in progressive womanhood, that of the home-keeping and home-making woman” (Croly 89). Croly cites a member who considered a woman’s chief duty to be training her son “to comprehend the importance of his actions, his duty to his government and to his neighbors. When every man does his public duty, the woman need only hold up his hands” (Croly 155). Women were seen as a counter to the ambition and ruthlessness of men, ensuring that children could grow up in a world that also valued duty and responsibility.

The ASWPL occasionally uses similar arguments. A document titled “History of Movement” lists the reasons women felt compelled to form an organization against lynching. Dispelling the myth that lynchings were necessary to protect white women from rape ranks first. Another is maternal obligation: to prevent “the shock and permanent damage to the sensitive minds of youth, the undermining of all respect for law and the courts in the lives of those who later on would constitute voting citizens,
impressed upon the women their double responsibility since in the hands of those women as mothers and teachers, these young people passed their character forming years” (Organizational Papers, *JDA Papers*).

At the very first meeting of the ASWPL, Lugenia Hope\(^\text{11}\) had stated, “I believe it is the woman’s work to put over this lynching program. We can sit down and talk over these things. We have the mother feeling of the son who is lynched and the white who is ill-treated” (1 November 1930, ASWPL minutes, Organizational Papers *JDA Papers*). Hope considered motherhood both a call to action and a unifying factor between herself as an African American woman and the white women of the ASWPL.

Not everyone saw motherhood as a shared bond, and using such a conventional argument didn’t prevent other groups from using the same argument against the ASWPL. The Women’s National Association for the Preservation of the White Race formed in 1931 to oppose Ames’ organization. They sent letters to Ames and ASWPL secretary Bertha Newell stating their purpose: “to give notice to the women of the white race who are defending criminal negro men… that an organization of white mothers has arisen to defend our girls, both against negro men and you” (15 November 1931, Organizational Papers, *JDA Papers*). Although for the most part the CIC and ASWPL maintained the necessary conventions to keep them respectable, even their generally moderate activities still provoked a backlash from southerners who believed in the status quo.

Further complicating Ames’ attempts to reconcile activism with a traditional female role was the fact that she was running a woman’s society within a male parent organization. Ames describes the CIC president, Will Alexander, as a man totally

\(^{11}\) An Atlanta activist and member of the African American YWCA, Hope had invited Carrie Parks Johnson to the meeting at Tuskegee that led to the creation of a women’s division of the CIC.
unprepared to deal with women as his peers. Although he was initially welcoming
towards Ames and her family, granting them the use of his home in Atlanta during Ames’
1929 move, Ames eventually found that “the only way he could handle a woman was to
get up and leave the room” (Ames Interview 8). Ames seems to have been far more
aggressive than most of the women Alexander was used to working with, and the
difference definitely resulted in some tension.

Arthur Raper, whom Jaqueline Hall interviewed in 1974, provides a bit more
insight into what it was like to work with Ames. He acknowledges her effectiveness,
crediting her for shifting the discussion of lynching away from rape: “it simply wasn't
respectable to use protection of Southern white women as a defense for lynching any
longer. And Mrs. Ames made a very real contribution, exactly at that point” (Raper
Interview). However, he also calls her an “excessive feminist” and found it off-putting
that she insisted that the women’s division operate separately from the men’s.

He also mentions CIC education director Robert Eleazer, saying, “Eleazer nearly
hated her.” Raper posits that Eleazer’s resentment may have stemmed from his attitude
towards women: “They were to be here and do these nice things and well, it was sort of
an…well, I don't need to explain that role, because it is very well observed anywhere
where you can walk into a house and in three minutes, you can see whether the wife is
doing anything except taking care of him.” Raper considers his own attitudes more
accepting, though he still found Ames to be a difficult colleague. Certainly tensions
existed in the office, though it is very difficult to discern whether Ames’ perceived
abrasiveness is a reflection of her personality or the preconceptions of the men who were
her peers.
Despite some of her male colleagues’ opinions of her personality, Ames’ legacy provides strong evidence that publicly, at least, her strategy worked. During the decade in which the ASWPL operated, lynchings across the South continued to decline, and the members involved managed to maintain reputations as respectable white women. By 1942, the ASWPL seemed to have achieved its goal of refuting the myth that lynching was provoked by the rape of white women, and it quietly disbanded. However, while the AWSPL was most active, Ames successfully utilized the strategic advantage of embracing a traditional female identity both in maintaining respectability for her members and in rallying skilled women to her cause.
V: Gender Identity in the Daniel Family

“Then the time of testing came, and lo, she was strong and she stood, an unconquerable soul.”

Lulu Hardy describing her mother’s response to widowhood in her autobiography

(“In the Fullness of Time,” JDA Papers)

When Jacqueline Hall wrote about Jessie Daniel Ames in 1973, in the first edition of Revolt Against Chivalry, she wrote in the context of many feminist historians trying to rediscover female figures who had found outlets in female connections and friendships for creativity that might have otherwise languished. Hall therefore found Ames’ relationship with her sister, Lulu Hardy, troubling, especially because one of her main insights into it was the fragmented autobiography that Ames composed at the end of her life, in which Ames expressed resentment and criticism towards her spoiled older sister.

Since Hall began her research, however, other sources have come to light, which are now part of the Jessie Daniel Ames Papers. Hall conducted portions of research with haphazard boxes of family materials that she received directly from Ames’ daughter Lulu. Since she did not have the advantage of a fully processed archival collection certain materials were missing or overlooked. In addition to the fragmentary autobiography12 Ames wrote late in her life, and an earlier essay she wrote titled “The Story of my Life,” which Hall quotes in Revolt Against Chivalry, the JDA Papers also contain material authored by Ames’ mother, Laura Daniel; Ames’ sister, Lulu Hardy; And Ames’ niece,  

12 These fragments, which will be cited as “biographical material” consist of reflections on Ames’ marriage and relationships with family members, diary entries from the late 1950s, when Frederick was dying, the form she completed when the University of North Carolina began acquisitioning her papers, and other scattered documents.
Laura Hardy Crites. Ames’ mother kept a diary, which exists in the collection as a transcription Ames made after Laura’s death in 1937, including comments from Ames. Lulu Hardy wrote her own voluminous autobiography, “In the Fullness of Time,” which, although still a manuscript, appears far more chronological and complete than Ames’ musings. Crites’ essay “The Sisters” was written in direct response to Jacqueline Hall’s interpretation of the family, which drew heavily from bitter sentiments that Ames expressed toward her sister at the end of her life. Crites attempts to reveal some of the nuances of Ames’ relationship with her sister, Lulu, which at various points in their lives was a source of comfort as well as competition.

Lulu, married early to a southern gentleman, seemed to represent both the security Ames longed for and the dependence she detested. To Hall, the relationship mirrored Ames’ inability to feel at home in a male organization or among southern ladies. However, when Hall revisited the relationship in a later essay, written in 1992, she found the relationship more nuanced. While the two women experienced each other as rivals and Ames resented her sister’s dependence on her as they aged, they also experienced periods of support and cooperation. Hall writes, “I would amend my view of Ames’ rejection of conventional femininity, stressing instead her attempt to heal the split between the masculine and feminine voices within” (Second Thoughts 148). Throughout her life, Ames pragmatically adopted masculine and feminine roles according to her circumstances. Her relationship with her sister shows some of her conflict with masculine and feminine activities, but it does not display an utter rejection of Lulu’s more traditionally feminine identity.

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13 See Bibliography for folder numbers.
By the time Ames accepted her position with the CIC in 1929, her family was almost entirely female led. Her mother, Laura Daniel, had been Ames’ business partner in Georgetown, Texas, since the death of Ames’ father James Daniel in 1911. Her sister Lulu also began supporting herself after the death of her husband, James Hardy, in 1924, when Lulu was 47. Of Ames’ two brothers, Jamie died from an accident in a baseball game right before her marriage to Roger in 1905, and Charley largely lost contact with the family after he ran away from home at age 15. By the time Ames accepted her position with the CIC in 1929, she, her sister, and her mother were all widows supporting their dependents and each other without any close adult male relatives. For Ames in particular, women served as crucial figures of support during her marriage to Roger and her early widowhood. Ames was too far estranged from Roger’s family to receive any help from them, and her closest relatives were all women, so by necessity she looked to females for guidance.

The loss of nearly every male figure in Ames’ life, although emotionally draining, also enabled Jessie, Laura, and Lulu to pursue self-sufficiency in ways they could not have attained had Ames’ father, James Daniel, lived. Ames describes her father as a family tyrant towards everyone except his favorite, Lulu. In “The Story of my Life,” which she seems to have written near the beginning of her career with the CIC, she describes Sunday afternoon rides where she discussed politics with him and her brothers as the only time she felt close to him. However, she could not shake the feeling that Lulu remained his favorite, writing “We three, father and Jamie and I, grew close together. We had little jokes and bywords that the others were not a part of. But I was always merely a substitute for Lulu” (“The Story of my Life,” JDA Papers).
Ames’ mother, Laura, also suffered under James’ exacting demands and favoritism. Ames speculated that Laura’s sincere and deep religious faith provided an escape from her unsatisfying marriage, adding a note to Laura’s diary in 1966 that “All her activities in Georgetown, in the community and in the church, were a release for her I am sure” (Laura Leonard Daniel Diary, JDA Papers). Laura certainly needed some method to cope, as the couple experienced a major rift regarding their son, Charley, who began to rebel against his father’s expectations of academic success. Ames’ sister Lulu records the events that led to her brother’s running away, as well as her parents’ reaction to his disappearance in her lengthy autobiography, “In the Fullness of Time.” She recounts that her father regularly punished Charley for his low marks with thrashings “that made the whole family sick” until eventually, right after taking a set of exams Charley knew he had failed, he disappeared. Lulu writes,

Papa would not take the boy’s absence seriously. He himself had run away from his home when he was younger than Charley. He had never gone back again, but he had made his own way in the world from that time until now. He was confident Charley could do the same. Charley was a good telegrapher, large for his age, confident of bearing and of open countenance. Papa said that if Charley couldn’t make a go of it, he knew the way home. But he wasn’t expecting him any time soon.

But it was another thing with Mama. Her face took on that gentle, waiting look it had worn when she was so sick when I was a child. A step on the walk at night, and she would start and keep her eyes glued to the door (“In the Fullness of Time” JDA Papers).
Charley began an occasional correspondence with his mother, but he never returned to the family home in Georgetown. Lulu records that one Christmas, after she was married, Charley brought his wife to her home in Tennessee (“In the Fullness of Time,” *JDA Papers*), but he is never mentioned in the Ames family correspondence and seems to have remained a distant figure in Laura, Jessie, and Lulu’s lives.

James Daniel’s children found various explanations for his exacting behavior, but the most articulate came from Lulu, reflecting on his death. She assumed that his temper came from deep insecurity and weakness, the symptom of an energetic man who exercised his opinions with iron-fisted authority but lacked the calm self-assurance of his wife. Lulu writes

> He had made himself strong in just the same way he had made us strong: through punishment, through lashing himself to an ideal. But it was Mamma who was strong. She never had to think about it; or talk about it; or make herself toe the mark. She just went along smoothly and easily. Then the time of testing came, and lo, she was strong and she stood, an unconquerable soul.

> And when Jess told me about how he died, clinging to Mamma in his delirium, consenting even in the end to join her church and be baptized with her baptism, I knew that I was right (“In the Fullness of Time,” *JDA Papers*). In the Daniel family, women emerged as figures of strength through their ability to cope with circumstances they could not control. James attempted to dominate and mold his family through unquestioned authority; Charley rebelled against him by removing himself from the family. For the Daniel women, who could neither assert their power at home nor escape, their strategy simply became to endure. This strategy, to find meaning
and productivity in the face of loss and external circumstances, eventually came to define all three women. None of them lived out the quiet, dependent widowhood many women in the early 20th century accepted as their due.

Even though Ames could not control her environment while she still lived with her parents, she did feel happier after Lulu’s marriage, when the family moved from Georgetown to Laredo, finally ending the daily comparison to her sister. Ames recalls the period in Laredo before her brother’s death as one of the happiest times in her life. She even met her husband and agreed to be married, despite a nagging feeling that Roger would have preferred Lulu to her. Roger proved just as unreliable as her father in terms of offering male support, and their marriage was generally unhappy, a situation only exacerbated by Roger’s disapproving family. However, later in her life Ames managed to find honorable qualities in Roger, and she blamed their unhappy marriage on their shared immaturity, rather than on his lack of character.

Although she found herself willing to forgive Roger, Ames never entirely rescinded her resentment towards her sister, Lulu. In some ways, Lulu represented everything Ames had once desired for herself. She was petite and pretty to Ames’ taller, fuller frame, as well as the favored daughter, who married a successful man and began the privileged life of a genteel southern woman. Ames felt she herself lacked the confidence and grooming for such a life, and she found her relationship with her husband utterly unfulfilling. Nevertheless, Lulu’s home in Tennessee seems to have served as a partial refuge for Ames during her marriage, when she could not bear to be around Roger’s family during their long separations. Ames drew comfort from the fact that Lulu wanted her, even if Roger did not (biographical material, JDA papers). Lulu’s daughter
confirms that Lulu offered her home as a haven to her sister ("The Sisters," *JDA Papers*). Both sisters also named a child after each other. Lulu had a daughter *Jessie*, and Ames named her youngest *Lulu*.

However, Ames also recalls a moment at Lulu’s house in which she felt her sister had become jealous of the attention her husband, James Hardy, had been showing Ames. She describes an evening after James had been taking her out bowling for several weeks, leaving Lulu alone with the baby, as a tipping point for a fight between the couple. James entered Ames room after she had gone to bed and demanded that she leave the next day, then became extremely apologetic the next morning. Lulu told her sister that James had become jealous of Ames’ influence and that he had grown angry because he felt Lulu loved Ames more than him. Ames accepted their apologies, but writing much later in her life, she also adds, “What actually happened, as I later worked it out, to my own satisfaction, for almost the same thing happened sixteen years later, was that Lulu had become jealous—not so much of me as of me about to invade her private preserves without knowing it. Mr. Hardy was having too good a time with another woman, even if that woman was her sister” (*Biographical Material, JDA Papers*).

Whether Lulu really felt jealous is difficult to determine. Perhaps she did, or perhaps, as her daughter Laura Hardy Crites recounts it, Lulu genuinely opened her home to her sister, and most of Ames’ discomfort came from her own unhappy marriage, rather than from the friction of two adult women sharing a home ("The Sisters," *JDA Papers*). Lulu writes of her husband, head of a household that included at times Ames and her son as well as their own children and his sister, and occasionally even students from his military academy in Tennessee: “I think he rather enjoyed the role of dominant male,
although there were times when he felt that too large a part of my time and interest fell to Jess” (“In the Fullness of Time,” *JDA Papers*). Whatever the case, Ames continued to live with her sister for the bulk of her married life.

Ames had considered Lulu’s favored position in the family a source of resentment from her earliest memories, but according to Lulu discord between the sisters first emerged when Lulu decided to marry an old love interest from college instead of the teacher to whom she was engaged. Lulu had been working as a teacher at a private academy since graduating from Southwestern in Georgetown, Texas. She and her mother had to persuade her father to accept her decision to work, as he wanted to be perceived as a man able to support his daughters. She became engaged to a fellow teacher, Max Froeling, but ended the engagement after reconnecting with James Hardy, an old college sweetheart who returned to Georgetown after his first wife’s death. Lulu’s family found her behavior shocking, especially Ames, who according to Lulu “championed Max’s cause so vehemently that I almost wished he might have known. She looked on me as a changecoat of the rankest kind, and declared that Jim better hurry things or someone else would turn up and checkmate him” (“In the Fullness of Time,” *JDA Papers*).

Ames’ disapproval of her sister’s approach to romantic relationships continued into Lulu’s marriage, particularly after Lulu insisted on moving from her small set of rented rooms into a house, despite her husband’s limited finances at the beginning of their marriage. Ames, who had helped furnish the apartment according to Lulu’s tastes, felt that her sister’s demands were selfish and unreasonable. Lulu writes, “Jess was indignant and sided with Jim for she thought too much money had already been sunk in the apartment, and besides if that were not so, it was just as ungrateful as anything she
had ever heard of, and was the same as telling Jim that I did not like what they had done for me” (“In the Fullness of Time,” *JDA Papers*). Lulu stuck to her guns about the house, precipitating the first fight of her marriage, but her sister’s disapproval continued to trouble her.

The Hardys remained in Georgetown after the rest of the family moved to Laredo, and Lulu recounts separation as bringing both relief and pain. She writes “Parting with Jess was both easy and hard—easy because she had taken a rather critical attitude toward my own newly acquired ready-made family, and hard because I really thought I should rather have her criticism than not have her at all. What I wanted and did not want was pretty badly mixed up just at the end, as the final moment of parting came” (“In the Fullness of Time,” *JDA Papers*). Lulu wanted closeness and approval in her relationship with her sister, but she also wanted an escape from Ames’ criticism. Meanwhile, she became the object of her husband’s attention and affection, accepted by his family and beloved by the young son from his first marriage. At this time in her life Lulu presented the successful married life Ames envied despite conducting her romantic life according to principles that Ames thoroughly rejected. Ames’ disastrous marriage and early widowhood put her back in Lulu’s shadow, forced into emotional and financial dependence on a sibling whose life had somehow turned out more satisfying despite commanding less of her respect.

Ames emerged from dependence into affluence after Roger’s death in 1914 with the help of her mother’s telephone company, a forgotten investment that turned out to be her father’s most profitable. The 1920 census lists her as head of her household in Georgetown, records her occupation as “book-keeper,” and indicates that she had at least
one servant living with her (1920 United States Census). Despite her new independence, in later life Ames appears to have viewed her sister with even greater resentment than she did as a young woman. Her correspondence from 1929 to 1941 contains no letters written directly between Lulu and Ames. Ames seems to have gotten most of her information about the Hardys in letters from her mother, or from communication between her children and their cousins.

This period of stalemate, however, does not capture the sisters’ full relationship, especially regarding the fierce cooperation the sisters exhibited in other periods of their lives. When James Hardy died, Lulu’s daughter recounts the two sisters’ concocting a plan for the family that would allow all of Lulu’s children to continue their education while Lulu obtained a master’s degree so she would be able to support herself (“The Sisters,” JDA Papers). Although Lulu’s husband had left enough money for Lulu to live a modest, retiring widow’s life, she soon grew bored and frustrated with only two children left at home. With evidence in her immediate family that women could find meaning and self-reliance after widowhood, she turned to Ames for help.

Lulu trusted her sister’s advice, writing that, “Having gone through with a similar experience of her own when she was left a widow at twenty-nine, she could speak from positive knowledge. And having come through her ordeal with unusual success, she could speak with authority” (“In the Fullness of Time,” JDA Papers). In the plan they devised, Lulu’s two youngest daughters, Verona and Laura, lived with their Aunt Jessie for a year and attended school in Georgetown while Lulu attended Columbia University in New York. Evidently Verona developed a particular closeness to Ames during this time, and Lulu felt that she had lost her daughter’s allegiance (“The Sisters, JDA papers). At the
end of her life, Verona chose Ames to care for her rather than Lulu, a move that the family considered a significant indicator of Verona’s closeness to her aunt, rather than her mother.

Ames’ relationship with her mother also shaped her experience and outlook, as well as her relationship to Lulu Hardy. Laura Daniel corresponded regularly with Ames and her children in long, affectionate letters. She and Ames also mutually supported each other throughout Ames’ adult life. They were business partners running the telephone company together in Georgetown, and Laura funded Frederick’s education at Harvard until 1932, when she lost her savings and Ames began sending her money instead. Laura’s letters are also generally approving of Ames’ career choice. Laura herself firmly believed in female voluntary organizations, being an active member of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the Methodist church.

Laura came to live with Ames in Decatur in 1936, when she was ill with cancer, and she remained there until her death in August 1937. The fact that Laura chose Ames to care for her, instead of her other daughter, seems to have been something of a victory for Ames over her sister. In a transcription Ames made of Laura’s diary, Ames includes this note,

I am keeping one letter Mama wrote to Lulu Hardy in September 1930. It was not mailed for it was not a pleasant letter, but I am keeping it for it is the only evidence that I have, that Mama considered that I had been a help to her in the business and that I had taken from her much unpleasant words and conduct. And throughout this letter she shows that she did love me and that her cry “I want to
go home to Jessie” meant that in me she had a security which she had from no one else (Laura Leonard Daniel Diary, *JDA Papers*).

While Ames also mentions in the note her frustration that her obligations kept her from being as attentive to Laura as she would have hoped to be, she clearly takes satisfaction in her mother’s opinion of her presumably masculine role in business, despite criticism at the time. She is, however, just as pleased that her mother values her feminine role as comforter and nurturer, considering her more emotionally supportive than anyone else, evidently including Lulu. Although Ames regrets to a certain extent that her career prevented her from being as present as she could have been, she drew comfort from the fact that her mother saw her both as a competent breadwinner and a nurturing figure.

Throughout her life, Ames developed a complicated relationship between the masculine qualities she utilized as a leader and the more feminine and maternal role she sometimes wished to embody. Although she did enjoy her power and influence, she also remained aware that her family’s female leadership emerged out of necessity. She craved approval and support from her father and husband, and she resented her sister for obtaining so easily what she strove to achieve. However, she also approached Lulu for emotional support during her marriage, provided guidance and support after Lulu’s husband died, and valued her roles as nurturer and caregiver. Although Ames thrived in some of the more traditionally masculine roles that she assumed, she remained aware that circumstances had forced the women in her family into independence, and she continued to see the value of more feminine traits.

At the end of her life, in her 80s and no longer able to care for herself, Ames found herself in relative obscurity, dependent on her daughter Lulu for care and support.
She had managed to carve out some meaning for herself during her long retirement in Tryon, North Carolina, as a mentor and member of local voluntary groups, but she remained frustrated by her dramatically reduced schedule and financial dependence. She did not live long enough to see second wave feminism, and her resignation from the CIC effectively shut her out of any national Civil Rights activities of the 1950s and 60s. Even a resolution passed in her honor in the Texas State Senate in 1973 ignores the importance of the ASWPL, applauding instead her early involvement with women’s suffrage and her role as Field Secretary of the CIC (biographical material, *JDA Papers*). Jacqueline Hall, researching women’s history in the 1970s, began to add Ames’ contributions back into the narrative of what is now known as the long Civil Rights Movement, putting her back on the plane with her better known peers Howard Odum, Guy Johnson, and Will Alexander. A look at the complex motivations and relationships behind her public face reveals that she neither accepted or defied southern womanhood, instead viewing it as a tool she could use to improve the lives of people in a region to which she felt deeply connected.
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Oral Histories


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