HENRY IRVEN GAINES

Interviewed by:

Louis D. Silveri
June 25, 1975

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS RESEARCH CENTER
The University of North Carolina at Asheville
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Interview with Henry Irven Gaines, June 25, 1975.
Interviewed by Dr. Louis D. Silveri.

Dr. Louis Silveri: Did you have to go on to get an advanced degree in architecture?

Henry Gaines: No, no. I did not. Most of the fellows who graduate at Clemson from the architectural school down there go to Cornell to get their Master's. As I said in my book, I had planned to go, too, but I met this little blonde girl walking down the street, and that was the end of Cornell!

Dr. Silveri: Yes, I remember that story.

Henry Gaines: But I don't know that I have missed it too much. There's no school like experience, you know; so, I waded right in. Either fortunately or unfortunately, I went into practice for myself pretty early. I was only twenty-five years old when I opened my own office here in Asheville.

Dr. Silveri: Well, what was it that got you interested in architecture?

Henry Gaines: That's a mighty interesting question. When I was a youngster, I suppose I must have been about eight or nine years old. My father was the chairman of the school board in this little town where we lived.

Dr. Silveri: What was the name of the town?

Henry Gaines: Central. C-e-n-t-r-a-l. It was called Central because it's the central point between Charlotte and Atlanta, and the Southern Railroad needed some spot to build some shops. So, they built the shops at this little area down there.
Dr. Silveri: How far is Central from Spartanburg and Greenville?

Henry Gaines: It's about thirty miles from Greenville. Well, that's how it got its name. That's the little town, well, / people lived there for generations, being farmers. So, I was born and raised down there.

Clemson is only five miles from where I was born or raised, so, I went to Clemson. Then when I graduated from Clemson, I went to work in Greenville. That was in '22. Went to work for a very good concern called J. Serene & Company. They were architects and engineers, did mostly textile work, textile mills, and that sort of thing.

After I had been there / a year, there was a young firm called Beacham and LeGrand, who were some older than I, but not much older, just starting out in architecture. So they said, "Come on up with us. It will be more fun up here with us!" So I did.

Asheville was beginning to boom in 1925, and of course, Florida was, too. Well, Greenville was a nice little city, a prosaic little city, nothing particularly exciting was happening. So, / and I, being youngsters, said, "Hell, let's go where the fun is!" So we looked over Florida quite carefully and almost went to Florida. Then we came up here, and like everybody who comes around this part of the country, such pretty country, such beautiful country, we said, "Aw, the hell with Florida!" Then we came on up here.

I very brazenly opened up an office and got ready to practice
Henry Gaines: (continued) architecture.

Dr. Silveri: O. K. Before we get into that, I would like to go back and talk about the Piedmont section of South Carolina. That's what they call it?

Henry Gaines: That's right. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: You weren't in the mountains at that time, were you?

Henry Gaines: Just at the foothills. Just at the foothills. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: Did you ever come in contact with any of the mountain residents up here in North Carolina?

Henry Gaines: My father had a little farm over here at Rosman, North Carolina. You see, from Central, which was in Pickens County, it joins North Carolina. So, he used to drive up there in a horse and buggy, and he would take the kids with him. One summer we came up here and stayed practically all summer at this little summer place up here, and we drove up there in a pair of horses and a carriage. That was an interesting thing. Yes, we came in contact with a good many of these mountain people, who, as you have probably found out, are right remarkable folks. They really are. They think for themselves. They don't care what anybody else thinks. Much

Dr. Silveri: That's great. We can get back to it when we talk about your Asheville years. Did you say your father was a farmer?

Henry Gaines: Don't think I'm a typical Southerner when I talk like this
Henry Gaines: (continued) 'cause really I'm not. But my father's people fought in the Revolutionary War. After the Revolutionary War, they were offered either Continental currency or some land down here in the mountain areas of the Carolinas. These two old boys decided, "Well, their money probably won't be any good, but we might just take off and go down there." So they took off right after the Revolutionary War and came down to this land area down here. We got that as a grant from the Continental Congress, and my people have been there ever since.

My father--well, basically they were farmers, but my father also, he the first venture he got into, established a little country store that was in this little town. After the railroad came in, it got a little better. He eventually had a big old store and the farm, and eventually built a little textile mill, the first textile mill in 1907. He called it the Essequena (sp) Mill because Essequena was the Cherokee Indian maiden who is supposed to have warned the settlers that the Indians were going to attack. So I grew up really in this little town. I mean the land joined this little town, but it was really in this little town. I worked at the drugstore. I carried special deliveries at the post office and worked a little in the mill office. Worked a little on Saturday. Sometimes I worked at the drugstore. Sometimes I worked at the mercantile store, so, I had sort of a general experience. I had four brothers, so the five of us really had a good time together.
Dr. Silveri: How about your mother's maiden name?

Henry Gaines: My mother's name is Philpot. P-h-i-l-p-o-t. Her ancestors came from France, but they came in the lower part of South Carolina.

Dr. Silveri: To Charleston?

Henry Gaines: Yes. Just below Charleston.

Dr. Silveri: French Huguenots?

Henry Gaines: French Huguenots. Yes. My grandfather, for whom I'm named, his name is Henry Irven, and my name is Henry Irven. So, I was named for my Grandfather Philpot. He lost a leg in the Civil War, and I remember him walking around on a peg leg, not an artificial leg, but just a peg leg.

Dr. Silveri: I don't have you ask you what side he fought on, do I?

Henry Gaines: You don't have to ask which side he fought on. No.

Dr. Silveri: Were you old enough to hear stories from him? Did he live long enough to tell you?

Henry Gaines: Oh yes. He died when I was about eight years old, but he used to tell us the stories about the war. He had three brothers, one was a colonel, and he was a captain, and the other brother was a private in the Confederate Army. He lost a leg, and the private was killed. The colonel lived on through the war. But he came back down to this land. I think he told
Henry Gaines: (continued) me at one time that they had seven slaves was all they had. They weren't big slave owners.

Dr. Silveri: How about the other side of the family? The Gaines?

Henry Gaines: The Gaines crowd had a little bit more. I think my father said that when the war started they had about twenty-five slaves. You probably know these Southern men never do much work. They hunted and/and drank a little whiskey and that kind of stuff. When the war was over, they really had a hell of a time! They really did! I remember my Grand-father Philpot riding a horse with that peg leg. It always amazed me how he could get on a horse. He'd take that good leg and put it in the stirrup and swing that old peg leg over, and ride a horse. He could also plow. I mean I have actually seen him plow a furrow with that peg leg. It was amazing. It really was.

Dr. Silveri: You can remember, then, hearing stories from father and grandfather about the transition from slavery farming to, I guess, tenant farming, sharecropping?

Henry Gaines: Yes. That tenant farming, my father always had an aver-sion to "sharecropper." He never liked to refer to people on the farm as being "sharecroppers." He called them tenants in place of sharecroppers, but actually they were / as sharecroppers. You can see it came out of a necessity. I mean here were these colored people, and they had been set free. They
Henry Gaines: (continued) didn't anything except to farm. Well, the do-gooders came down like a lot of these / do, and then stayed a year or two and went back and didn't leave any money for them or anything. They had to eat. They had to live. All that the white people had were their farms, their land. They didn't have any money left either. So, they got together on sort of a mutual situation, and said, "Well, if you'll do the work, I'll furnish the land. We'll share whatever we have."

They did share, too. They really did. Sometime I'm amazed at the equity of the sharing. Even when I was growing up as a boy, all the farming was done by sharecroppers. They were all Negroes or colored people.

Dr. Silveri: Now your father had tenants on his place?

Henry Gaines: Oh yes.

Dr. Silveri: How much land did he own?

Henry Gaines: Well, when I was growing up, we owned about two thousand acres.

Dr. Silveri: Two thousand?

Henry Gaines: Yes.

Dr. Silveri: You couldn't raise cotton up here, could you?

Henry Gaines: Oh yes. Oh, cotton? Not here. This was in South Carolina. In the Piedmont of South Carolina?

Henry Gaines: In the Piedmont. Oh yes. Cotton was a big crop. Of course,
Henry Gaines: (continued) we raised corn and wheat, and were sort of self-sustaining. We grew hogs and cattle, and that sort of stuff. So, it didn't take much money, but cotton was the money crop.

Dr. Silveri: That was the money crop. Was he still doing that when he opened the mill, textile mill?

Henry Gaines: Yes. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: It was a cotton textile mill?

Henry Gaines: Cotton textile mill. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: What did he make? Just the cloth?

Henry Gaines: Yes. What they termed as standard print goods. You start off with the cotton in it, and you run it through the mill. It's woven goods, but then they sent it away to a printing company, who printed the stuff or it, whitened it, bleached / and that sort of stuff. This stuff was called standard print goods. That's what practically all the little mills in the South at all that time were making. They were sending it / North to be bleached and to be printed.

Dr. Silveri: I see. What year did he start that?

Henry Gaines: 1907.

Dr. Silveri: That was quite early!

Henry Gaines: That's pretty early. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: How many did he have working for him?
Henry Gaines: They had ten thousand spindles when they started off, and I think that took about a hundred people. Then they finally got it to twenty-five thousand spindles, which I think at that time was about probably two hundred and fifty employees.

Dr. Silveri: How long did he keep the mill? Did he sell out later on?

Henry Gaines: He, like a lot of other fellows, lost it in the boom.

Dr. Silveri: I'm also interested in the changes in the relationships and the change in races. I remember the story you told about your father, who didn't like a particular man. I think you mentioned coming to the drug store.

Henry Gaines: Particularly Negroes. That really happened. I mean a lot of these people— I won't say a lot of them because most of them were perfectly honest in their dealings. You'd find every now and then a man like this man that I'm talking about. You see, they had to furnish the Negroes the equipment to work with, not only that, but they had to furnish them a place to live, and they also had to furnish them food until the cotton was sold.

Well, what this fellow did, he never gave these colored people any money. They were just really in slavery because he took all the money, and when they went to him for a settlement, he said, "Well, you didn't make any money this year!" Which was true in maybe one year out of eight or ten, but he never did pay them anything. My father said it wasn't honest, and he
Henry Gaines: (continued) didn't like that.

Dr. Silveri: How about the relationship in your hometown, as you were growing up, between the races? Were there any difficulties?

Henry Gaines: There was absolutely no difficulty. There was absolutely no difficulty at all. I must tell you, honestly, that the Negroes are second-class people. They realize it. They were treated as second-class people, but talk there were no riots. I never heard of a lynching. I mean people about Negroes being lynched. I never heard of a lynching around our neck of the woods. In fact, I don't remember reading about it in South Carolina. I suppose there was some, but I don't remember that.

The group of people that worked on our farm, my father thought of them as, not children exactly, but he thought of them as a part of the family. He thought of them like the animals, like the dogs, or like the children, too, except he didn't think of them just exactly like he thought of his own children. I mean if they got sick, it was his responsibility to see that they got a doctor, or see that they got some medicine or something of that sort. When wintertime started, he would buy them an ax, and say, "Now, here. The winter is coming. You go out there and cut yourself some wood for this winter." I remember him saying to some of these fellows, "We've got new pigs down here. Would you like to have a pig and raise yourself a hog for this winter?" He would give them a pig, and they would manage to get this hog raised. I mean it was a sort of an obligation, I
(continued) guess, that he felt to these people.

Dr. Silveri: Back then as far as voting was concerned, the blacks didn't vote?

Henry Gaines: No. I remember one time, the same time, I started to tell you about how I became an architect, my father was a chairman of the school board. This architect came over from Greenville. They were going to build a new school. He had the sketches, nice watercolor sketches, of this school. He also had the plans. I became intrigued with that. So, I said this is what I would like to do. So, I talked to this man, who was a nice man. He told me about architecture. So, that's when I decided I would like to be an architect.

But getting back to this colored question. My father, not only felt that they had to build a school for the white children, but they had to build a school for the Negro children, too. At the same time they built this awfully nice brick and schoolhouse for the white children, they built a little wooden school house over here, a little two-teacher school, for the colored folks. They didn't want them to be too educated, but they felt they would be better off if they could read and write. My father said, "That's all a colored person needs to know. He needs to know how to read, write, and cipher. That's all he needs to know!"

Dr. Silveri: Looking back on those years, after all the intervening years, you do have any regrets about the way that society existed?

Henry Gaines: No, I don't think so. It seems to me that everybody was so
Henry Gaines: (continued) content. I mean certainly they weren't, nor neither the white people / the colored people was as well off financially as they are now, but they seemed to be content. They really did.

Dr. Silveri: Someone told me that the prejudice against the poor whites in the South was the same as the prejudice toward the blacks.

Henry Gaines: Well, certainly. Obviously the poor whites had a harder time than the Negroes. My father felt no responsibility to a poor white make it, that didn't bother him. man. He looked down on him as a little farmer and if he couldn't / But if the colored folks didn't live, it bothered him. He felt sort of a responsibility to see about them. I think the poor white man probably had a harder time, than the colored folks did because the colored folks knew that as long as they were tenant on this farm (not my farm, but everybody's farm -- that's the way the whole she-bang ran) that they were going to eat. They weren't going to eat very good. They were going to have some cornbread and molasses, probably, or some grits, or something like that. But they knew they weren't going to be really sure-enough hungry. They knew if their shoes wore out that they could go up to the company store and buy themselves a pair of shoes based on the next year's cotton crop. So they had that much security that the poor white man didn't have.

Dr. Silveri: Did any blacks work in your father's textile mill?

Henry Gaines: No. No. The only colored man they had down there was a fireman. He fired the boiler. I remember him very well. His name was George.
Henry Gaines: He seemed very fond of George.

Dr. Silver: Was there a conscious effort to keep blacks out of the mill?

Henry Gaines: Oh yes. Yes. The white mill workers just/work in the mill with colored people.

Dr. Silver: Were there any attempts to establish a union in your father's mill while you were around?

Henry Gaines: The only unionized effort that was made, I think, was made, about 1923 or '24. After I graduated from college, I remember that was when they put in what they called the "stretch/system." When they said, "Well, listen, Bud, in the place of having ten men on this loom, we are going to put eight men on this loom, and we expect you to produce as much as the others."

In the period they tried it, these fellows had to move a little faster than they had been accustomed to moving. They didn't actually strike, but they got a committee together and came up and talked to my father about it. They said, "Now, listen. This just isn't fair. We can't do this. If you don't do something about it, we're not going to work anymore!" He thought it over, and he said, "Well, here's what you do. You let me try this for two weeks, and then if you find you really can't do it, come back, and we'll talk about it again." So, they came back and said that they still didn't think they could do it. He said, "Well, the hell with it! It ain't worth it. Go back to the old method again!" So, that was the closest thing we had to a strike. Of course, the workers won because they went back. I think those fellows would have gone
Henry Gaines: (continued) on strike. I really think they would. With what they went through, I think they would have gone on strike.

Dr. Silveri: Were there any mountain people that came down--
Practically all of these people--
Henry Gaines: Oh yes. Not practically all of them. I would say at least half of them came from the mountains of North Carolina and drifted in down there.

Dr. Silveri: Did your father build houses for the ones down there?
Henry Gaines: Oh yes. Yes. Had a village.

Dr. Silveri: Had a company town?
Henry Gaines: A real company town! Built a village and a little community church. It was a real textile town.

Dr. Silveri: Do you consider your father an enlightened mill owner?
Henry Gaines: Yes. I do. I think it's right remarkable what he did, because he came along (he wasn't old enough to be in army in the Civil War) with that situation right after that. I think he used to tell me that the schools he went to were little one-teacher schools. He never went to college or any of that sort.

I think it was right remarkable that he had as much precept as he had. He knew a lot about a lot of things. He did by reading.

Dr. Silveri: Oh, a self-started man.

Henry Gaines: Yes. He got his own education. When I look back, we didn't have much of a library at home. We really didn't. I often think back, and I
Henry Gaines: (continued) remember we didn't have a little library in the town, either. The only place we had any library at all, had a little tiny library in the school. I used to borrow books out of the library and read everything I could read. My father used to read a lot of things, but he read mostly newspapers. He took the daily newspaper, and he took the Progressive Farmer. (I remember that very well) and the Southern Christian Advocate.

Dr. Silveri: Was he a member of a church?

Henry Gaines: Oh yes. Oh yes.

Dr. Silveri: What church was that?

Henry Gaines: Methodist church. He was a steward in the Methodist church for fifty years.

Dr. Silveri: Was he disappointed that you didn't go on into the family business?

Henry Gaines: No. No. I have one brother older than I am who went into the business. I wanted to be an architect, and he thought that was all right. Then my brother next to me graduated in textile engineering, and he went into it, too. So, he had two boys that went into it.

Dr. Silveri: Well, the mill is no longer there and certainly not in your family. How about the land? Is the land still in the family?

Henry Gaines: No. I have one brother who still lives on the old place down three hundred acres or something like that. My father used to laugh and say that the Gaines lived off of that original grant.
Henry Gaines: (continued) Anytime they needed a little money, they'd sell a little land. Well, as I say, there was about two thousand acres when I came along, and I think our original two thousand acres is probably three hundred acres now.

Dr. Silveri: They went through it.

Henry Gaines: They did. When they wanted a new horse and buggy or they wanted a new automobile, they'd sell a little and buy it. Finally ran out.

Dr. Silveri: Was your father involved in politics?

Henry Gaines: He never ran for any office, but he was involved in politics. I mean he would pick a guy that he wanted to be governor, and he would go all out and electioneer for him to beat the band. He'd pick a guy he wanted to be congressman--

Dr. Silveri: Always Democrat?

Henry Gaines: Oh yes. Always. Yes sir. I remember after I moved to Asheville that we went back down there for Thanksgiving, and we had these two good friends up here, a man and his wife, that we said we would take home with us for Thanksgiving. Mother said that would be fine. They were Republican. I said, "Rick, when we get down home, I don't want you to say anything anything about being a Republican 'cause my old man will probably kick you right out of the house!" He always referred to Republicans as radicals, never called them Republicans. They were radicals.

Dr. Silveri: It would be interesting to know, and I don't know if you know,
Dr. Silveri: (continued) whether your father voted for Al Smith in 1928.

Henry Gaines: No. He did not. He just went to walk, I guess.

Dr. Silveri: ¿Was your father strongly anti-Catholic?

Henry Gaines: He was not a fanatic about Catholicism, but he didn’t believe in the Catholics at all. He wouldn’t vote for a Catholic, but neither would he vote for a Republican either.

Dr. Silveri: He didn’t vote!

Henry Gaines: He just didn’t vote. That’s right.

Dr. Silveri: That’s very interesting. O. K. You said now you came to Asheville in 1925. You were twenty-five years old?

Henry Gaines: Yes.

Dr. Silveri: You were born in 1900?

Henry Gaines: Born in 1900. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: You were married before you came up here?

Henry Gaines: Married in 1924. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: Came up in 1925. You didn’t know anybody in Asheville, did you?

Henry Gaines: Well, my wife had an aunt and uncle who lived here. I don’t know that I had ever known them, but Betty had visited them once or twice up here, so we had that entrée up here. They were very good to us, too. Took us under their wing and helped us out a lot.

Dr. Silveri: You said you put out your own shingle. You went into business for yourself instead of joining an architectural firm that was here already?
Henry Gaines: Well, I'll tell you what we did. I believe I mentioned it. I went to work for this firm in Greenville call Beacham and LeGrand. Well, when we opened this office here, we called it Beacham, LeGrand, and Gaines. We had a three-way partnership, but these two fellows had a good business in Greenville. We were struggling along, but they said, "Aw, hell, we don't want to put more money in this thing." Well, I was here, and I didn't have anywhere else to go, so I had to stay. They withdrew, and I kept running my own office.

Dr. Silveri: You were kind of cut off then?

Henry Gaines: Yes, I was.

Dr. Silveri: O. K. So, the early / clients were a long time in coming, but you do talk about the gentleman, I think from Florida, that came up and wanted to build a hotel, and how you got onto that. What year was that? I have forgotten.

Henry Gaines: I guess that was about the latter part of 1926, when he came up here.

Dr. Silveri: When all of the Florida people had been coming into Asheville?

Henry Gaines: Oh yes. They were beginning to come up.

Dr. Silveri: That's quite an interesting story, Were you the main architect of that hotel that went up there?

Henry Gaines: Yes, yes.

Dr. Silveri: You got about half-finished?

Henry Gaines: Well, we got all the steel frame up, and they got the masonry thing work up to about the tenth floor. This was going to be thirteen stories. That's
Henry Gaines: (continued) how far they got. They were going right along with it.

Dr. Silveri: This was in Hendersonville?

Henry Gaines: Hendersonville. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: O. K.

Henry Gaines: This was in Hendersonville.

Dr. Silveri: I think it can be found in your book that they just dismantled the whole thing?

Henry Gaines: They did. They took the whole darn frame down.

Dr. Silveri: There was some litigation about it. At one point some of the people who had money in it wanted to receive the bathtubs?

Henry Gaines: Yes.

Dr. Silveri: But the court wouldn't let them touch it?

Henry Gaines: Right.

Dr. Silveri: Before long a lot of bathtubs got --

Henry Gaines: Gone. Yes. A lot of nice hardware and that sort of thing. I remember going through that Referee in Bankruptcy where this man who had the bathtubs—really there were three or four men. The plumbers who had the bathtubs, the man who had the finished hardware, and the electrical man had a lot of stuff up there that had never been installed. They asked permission from this Referee in Bankruptcy to bring it down to Henderson-ville and put it in a bonded warehouse. They knew somebody was going to
Henry Gaines: (continued) steal it up there. This man ruled that they couldn't move it off that property. Of course, they did. The people just came up there, loaded the stuff up, and took it on.

Dr. Silveri: Did you get anything out of that?

Henry Gaines: Yes. I got a little money. When we first started off, this man said, "Well, if you need any money, just our people in Miami know." So, I went along. I got enough money to pay my expenses for some time, but I didn't get any profit out of it. I said, "I'm going to leave the profit, and I'll have a good bit of money then." They owed me twenty-five thousand dollars when the thing broke, and of course, I never got any of that!

Dr. Silveri: Did you write that off as a loss back in those years, a business loss?

Henry Gaines: I didn't do anything about it. I mean, hell, I didn't make enough money to pay any taxes anyway! It didn't make any difference! I didn't have enough money to take a loss anyway!

Dr. Silveri: Do you remember? You were in Asheville in 1928. I understand Al Smith came and visited Asheville. Do you remember that?

Henry Gaines: He did. I don't remember too much about that because I wasn't too interested in Al Smith either. I followed along in my father's footsteps! I wasn't quite as rabid about the Democrats and Republicans as he was! But he did come here.

Dr. Silveri: I remember that some other people told me that he visited
Dr. Silveri: (continued) here, and some of them were Democrats. I spoke with Piercy Carter.

Henry Gaines: Yes! Oh yes!

Dr. Silveri: He was in the Democratic party for a long time. He went right down the line for Democrats. He told the story of how, as a Precinct Captain, he was getting the people out to vote for the Democratic candidates. Before long he realized that they were not voting for Al Smith. "Don't bother to get them out of the house! They're not voting for Al!"

Henry Gaines: No. A lot of people just wouldn't vote for Al Smith.

Dr. Silveri: I understand the Depression hit Asheville area a long time before this . . .

Henry Gaines: It did.

Dr. Silveri: The land boom busted?

Henry Gaines: The land boom busted before the bank holiday . . . It really was a miserable time! It really was! Nobody did anything. There was practically no business going on of any kind. There certainly wasn't any architectural practice going on. You'd talk about building anything, and they'd laugh at you!

Dr. Silveri: That's when you began to sell--

Henry Gaines: That's when I sold apple juice. That was some experience selling apple juice! God, I hated to sell that stuff! I really did! I hated that stuff!
Dr. Silveri: But people would buy it.

Henry Gaines: You know that's the thing that surprised me so much because when this man talked to me about selling it, a quart of apple juice for five dollars, I just couldn't see how anybody would be crazy enough to do that. But it was a good food product. I mean it really was. People who bought it continued to buy it. Once you got a way to buy it, he was supposed to buy a bottle a week, and a lot of them did. I made a living out of it for a year!

Dr. Silveri: Do you remember the Sheriff of Buncombe County named Jesse James Bailey?

Henry Gaines: Oh yes! Oh yes! Have you talked to him?

Dr. Silveri: I have. Yes. I have many hours on tape of Jesse.

Henry Gaines: He's a remarkable fellow.

Dr. Silveri: He is.

Henry Gaines: Yes, sir. He really is. If you want to get the background of these mountain people, that's the guy to talk to.

Dr. Silveri: Yes. It really is.

Henry Gaines: He really is a remarkable fellow. He's a great storyteller. You probably know.

Dr. Silveri: Yes. He's a nice guy. He gave me a good interview.

Henry Gaines: He's a great storyteller.

Dr. Silveri: Yes. Well, you know, it was in 1928, someone was telling me, the Republicans swept the county and the city.
Henry Gaines: Oh yes. Yes. They really did. They had good men. Excellent people. They really did. But, by golly, next time they had an election, those Democrats came right back and pushed them right back out again.

Dr. Silveri: That was after the Stockmarket Crash?

Henry Gaines: Oh yes. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: I understand it hit Asheville pretty bad.

Henry Gaines: Oh, it did. It was awful.

Dr. Silveri: You managed to struggle along little by little.

Henry Gaines: Little by little we made it.

End of Side I, Tape I

End of Side II, Tape I

Dr. Silveri: Was that the early thirties?

Henry Gaines: Yes. That was the early thirties.

Dr. Silveri: Wasn't the gentleman going to build a place—where was that located?

Henry Gaines: That's out south of here on Cane Creek. It's almost in Henderson County, but it's out that way.

Dr. Silveri: Is the house still there?

Henry Gaines: No. His house isn't there. I don't know whether you remember
Henry Gaines: (continued) this, but we built it out of logs. It caught fire and burned up. Then a man bought that from Bauman before the fire. I was trying to think what that man's name was. He was a Jewish man that came in here from Italy. I think he got out during the war. I think he got with considerable money. Anyhow, he came over here. Name Arnstein. He bought that place over there. Then after it caught fire and burned up, we built him a brick house on the same foundation over there. That house is still there. It's a beautiful place. Really is. Lovely.

But this man Arnstein was an interesting character, too. He blew in here. Evidently he knew a little about the dairy business, or he picked up some information along. Bauman, at that time, had given up the beef-cattle business and gone into the dairy business. So, Arnstein propositioned him and bought the place from him.

Dr. Silveri: I'd like to go back to the early years when you were practicing architecture. Over the years you have seen a lot of changes. You must have become acquainted with the architects who were living in Asheville in those years.

Henry Gaines: We did. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: Were there very many?

Henry Gaines: When I got here there was Parker, Green, Lord, and East. I think there were just four or five architects when I came in.
Dr. Silveri: One thing that impressed me about your book is in architecture they will go anywhere to do any work. I mean they will take off for a year like when you went down to Thomasville. Take off and supervise the work and so on. Is it the responsibility of the architect, not only to draw up the plans, but to supervise the construction?

Henry Gaines: Yes. He has that responsibility to see that his plans and specifications are carried out. So, it takes a supervisor on that. In the Thomasville year I didn't miss anything in Asheville because there wasn't any work going on. I really have had an interesting life in this architecture. I wouldn't change any of it, really.

Dr. Silveri: When you began making plans for, let's say, private homes in the twenties, what kind of heating system did you use then?

Henry Gaines: Mostly we used then hot water or steam or exposed radiators and a coal-fired boiler.

Dr. Silveri: Coal fire. Not too much oil?

Henry Gaines: Well, practically back then we didn't use oil at all!

Dr. Silveri: Because coal was easier?

Henry Gaines: Because coal was / easier to get. Then It was cheap. We had what everybody called the "furnace man." He would probably be a colored man. He would go around to everybody's house in the morning, stoke up the furnace and get the thing going for you. We had one, and I think he took care of about ten furnaces for people. He got up every morning about three o'clock and rode a bicycle.
Henry Gaines: (continued) Went around to everybody's house. Then after we got a little more affluent and things came a little better, we bought a stoker, an automatic stoker, to feed the coal in. He only had to come around then about once every other day and fill up the stoker.

Dr. Silveri: When you came to Asheville what were some of the more noteworthy structures in the city and surrounding areas?

Henry Gaines: Grove Park Inn was here. The Battery Park Hotel and the Vanderbilt Hotel had just been finished. I think they were finished in '24.

Dr. Silveri: The Vanderbilt Hotel. Was that downtown Asheville?

Henry Gaines: Yes.

Dr. Silveri: It's not there now, is it?

Henry Gaines: Yes. It's called Vanderbilt Apartments. It's that place for financed elderly people, one of these federally financed things. The Battery Park, as you probably know, is standing up there empty, vacant. But those were the new buildings in town. The little Jackson Building, over on the Square, (the sort of Gothic thing) it had just been built, too.

Dr. Silveri: Speaking of Pack Square, did you know the Wolfe family who lived over there?

Henry Gaines: I never knew the Wolfe family. No. I never came in contact with them at all.

Dr. Silveri: Did you read his book?

Henry Gaines: Oh yes. Oh yes. I knew a good many of the people that he
Henry Gaines: (continued) wrote about in the book.

Dr. Silveri: What was your reaction to it?

Henry Gaines: I read it twice. The first time I read it, I thought it was kind of tiresome. There was an awful lot of repetition to it. Tom had great ex-
you
pressions. I know/read the book, too. It's so well written. But I had to read it twice to really appreciate it. It was not one of the kind of books that you couldn't put down. I think it took me a couple of weeks to read the darn thing. But the second time I read it, I got a lot more out of it than I did the first time.

Dr. Silveri: You recognized a lot of the people?

Henry Gaines: Oh yes. I recognized a lot of these people.

Dr. Silveri: Of course, you know what the reaction was in Asheville to it?

Henry Gaines: Oh yes. Well, there was a time when I think Tom would have been run out of town, if he had come to town. But after he became a little more famous and people sort of got over the shock, everybody recognized him as a great writer and everything. But he made a lot of people mad. He really did.

Dr. Silveri: Were there any significant changes in your profession in, say, the first ten years that you were practicing from 1925-1935? The Empire State Building was built, when?

Henry Gaines: The Empire State Building was built during that time, I think.
Dr. Silveri: During the thirties sometime. Early thirties.

Henry Gaines: Well, the Chrysler Building came along just a little later.

No. The Chrysler Building came before the Empire State Building. The building that I remember, I had met Raymond Hood, who was the architect whether for this American Radiator Building. I don't know, you recall the thing or not, but he built it out of black brick and put gold color trim on it. Do you remember that? It wasn't a very big building.

Dr. Silveri: New York City?

Henry Gaines: Yes. I don't remember where it is, but anyhow, it made a big impression on me. I think one of the things that impressed me about it, Raymond Hood said that he wrote all the brick manufacturers and told them that he wanted some samples of black brick. He said he got all these samples back. Everybody that wrote him said, "Dear Mr. Hood, we received your letter requesting some samples of black brick, but we know your secretary because made a mistake / we know you don't want any black brick. So, we're sending you red brick and white brick and everything." He said he didn't get a single sample of black brick out of the whole crowd. He had to get somebody make some black brick for him.

Dr. Silveri: What were some of the giants in architecture in those years, the twenties and thirties?

Henry Gaines: Well, of course, Hood. Then Bertram Goodhue. You know, he was great Gothic man. Van Allen did the Chrysler Building. Starrett and
Henry Gaines: (continued) Van Vleck were coming along. I remember them pretty good. I can't remember somebody I saw yesterday. I probably couldn't remember your name, but I can remember those fellows back there. They were the fellows that were doing a lot of that work up there.

Dr. Silveri: Frank Lloyd Wright came later?

Henry Gaines: Frank Lloyd Wright came along a little later than than that. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: In the 1930's the Depression hit. Times were rather difficult. When did you begin to get more commissions to do work?

Henry Gaines: Things began to break from about 1933 on. Things were all right. Right after the bank holidays and the big Depression, the Federal Government started this Work Progress Administration thing. Then it became the Public Works Administration, and the Federal Government began to put money into things like schools, public buildings, and things like that.

The first commission that I got to get me back out of the Depression were (well, I got a few little houses, but I mean anything of any consequence) some schools. I've always been thankful that they took cognizance of the fact that architects had to live, too. So, they said, "Well, yes. You can include the architect's fee and also the architect's supervisor's fee in this grant that you are getting." So, it got a lot of architects out of the hole.
Dr. Silveri: You were not associated with anybody else until the Second World War. Is that it?

Henry Gaines: No. That's right. I practiced alone until the Second World War. Then we put the Six Associates together.

Dr. Silveri: So, it was during the thirties that you did get a number of commissions from the Federal Government. . . . [inaudible]

Henry Gaines: That's right. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: I can see where the New Deal helped everybody.

Henry Gaines: It did! It really did!

Dr. Silveri: Did you vote for Roosevelt in 1932?

Henry Gaines: I voted for Roosevelt in 1932, and I never voted for him since. I thought he was the greatest thing that came along, but he sure got too far out for me. I'm a good Democrat, but I voted for Roosevelt once, and I voted for Republican presidents ever since. I even voted for Nixon! I'm sorry I did. But I don't know if I had voted for Humphrey, I'd have been just as bad off with it.

Dr. Silveri: But you wouldn't have voted for McGovern though? Have voted

Henry Gaines: No. I wouldn't / for McGovern. No. I couldn't vote for McGovern. I really couldn't. That man was too far, far out for me.

Dr. Silveri: What has transpired since 1972 with Nixon and Watergate?

You were staying at home. . . . [inaudible]
Henry Gaines: Yes. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: Times were hard in Asheville. I know. What evidences of the Depression did you see throughout that decade in Asheville and the surrounding areas? Were there soup lines in the city?

Henry Gaines: Yes. Yes. There were soup lines. There were a lot of incidents of kindness that really gives you a lot of hope for the human race. You would see a person that maybe had a little something, and you would see them divide. A man might have a good garden out here. Well, you see him come along down by people’s houses and just leaving them vegetables and this sort of thing.

Then I can recall one or two of my friends. You know, it was up and down. Maybe this week I had fifty dollars, and next week I wouldn't have any money, but my friend over here would have fifty dollars, so he would lend me ten dollars. I would lend him ten dollars. It really was a very cooperative sort of a community. Everybody was in the same wagon, and everybody did the best they could.

Dr. Silveri: I’ve heard so many people talk about that. That’s the way it was then.

Henry Gaines: I remember one thing that sort of impressed me then. Mr. Grant ran the Charlotte Street Grocery Store. In those days you had a charge account. Of course, you called the man up. You didn’t go down to the store. You called the man up, and he delivered the groceries.
Henry Gaines: (continued) Well, Betty and I got down to where we owed Mr. Grant for two months' groceries. It was embarrassing. I mean it really was. I'm sure I wasn't the only guy doing that, but it was embarrassing to us. Betty said, "I believe if you could get together a few dollars and let me just go down to the store and buy groceries, I think I can do better if I than I can charge them. I just almost automatically order more things if I don't have to pay for them."

So she did. I remember Mr. Grant called me up one day. We still bought groceries from Mr. Grant, but we paid cash. I had told him that as soon as I could get some money I would pay him back. He called up one day, and he said, "Listen. Are you worried about this money you owe me?" I said I don't know whether I'm worried, but I certainly am concerned about it. He said, "Well, don't be that way. If you'd rather I'd deliver your groceries, go on and order them. This thing isn't going to last like this forever, and you'll have some money someday and you can pay me. Hell, if you don't ever pay me, it won't make any particular difference!"

So, we finally got enough money to pay Mr. Grant off, but I mean was the that sort of the situation that everybody was in. Everybody was trying to help everybody else out on the thing. All during those hard times, there was no rioting. There were no groups meeting on the streets talking about "If you don't give us something, we're going to blow up the town!" There wasn't anything of that kind, which is an absolute turnaround from what there is now.
Henry Gaines: (continued) I mean people come to the point now where they think that the Federal Government or the State Government or somebody owes them food, or owes them a living, or owes them housing, maybe owes them an automobile. I don't know.

But anyhow, in those bleak days of the Depression, when nobody had anything, there were no riots. There was no talk of somebody being an S.O.B. enough for not having a job for us and that kind of stuff. It was remarkable. It really was.

Dr. Silveri: Very interesting. Let's take the early thirties in the city of Asheville. I understand that the city has grown over the years. It's taken in territory... .

Henry Gaines: It's taken in a good bit more territory. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: For instance, Haw Creek. Are you familiar with Haw Creek?

Henry Gaines: Yes. Fairly familiar.

Dr. Silveri: Was it all farms there in the thirties in Haw Creek?

Henry Gaines: Yes. Yes. Pretty little farms down there, too. Yes. They were.

Dr. Silveri: I understand that there's probably one or two farms left down there?

Henry Gaines: I suspect that's true. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: It's all built up with houses. Well, what was the northern boundary of the City of Asheville? Do you recall, say, in the thirties?
Dr. Silveri: (continued) Did it take in Beaver Lake?

Henry Gaines: Now, Beaver Lake was taken later. They call that little old stream, that makes Beaver Lake, Beaver Creek, don't they? Well, that was just about the northern boundary at that time. They took in that. I believe West Asheville was a separate little town when I first came here. Of course, they've taken in West Asheville.

Dr. Silveri: I want to ask you more into the situation that resulted in you combining with others into the Six Associates.

Henry Gaines: As the war effort became stronger and stronger, practically all building had stopped. That is, all private building. Of course, the government was still doing a lot of building. The Engineer Corps was handling most of the construction for the Armed Forces, with the exception of the Air Force and the Navy. The Air Force and the Navy always handled their own stuff.

All of us had been to the various and sundry district engineers' office to see about some work. I mean there was a lot of work going on. Well, they would say to me, "How many people do you have?" That would be the first question. It was always "hurry up" stuff. I would say I have eight people in my group. "It's too small. You can't get this out fast enough for us!"

So, one day we were sitting around, a group of us, talking about the situation, wondering what what we were going to do. If we ought to try to get a job with the Engineer Corps, or if we ought to get a job with the Federal Government somewhere along the line 'cause we sure weren't going to make
Henry Gaines: (continued) a living at practicing architecture. There were six of us sitting around the table at the S&W Cafeteria. Each one of us had about eight people in our offices. One of fellows said, "Well, hell! What are we talking about? Why don't we pool our resources and pool our force of people? Then we would have a good organization!" So, everybody said, "That's a good idea! Let's try this out!" So, we did. We called the thing Six Associates.

The first job we got was this hospital, Moore Hospital, up at Swannanoa. It was an Army hospital. It was right funny about that thing. We thought it would be handled out of the Wilmington, North Carolina district office or else it might be handled out of Charleston. So, one of us went down to Wilmington, and one went down to Charleston to see if we could get this job. They said, "No. We don't have any record of a general hospital being built in the Asheville area."

The fellow, down in Charleston, said, "Do you know where the French Broad River flows? Where does it go?" I said, "Well, hell. It goes over to Tennessee and finally gets to the Mississippi." He said, "Well, no wonder! You ought to go to Nashville. These district offices are set up on the flow of the water! If you want to get this job, you go to Nashville!" Nashville did handle it. So, you never know, do you?

Dr. Silveri: That's something! You mentioned Moore Hospital. Is it an Army hospital built in Swannanoa? It's not there anymore, is it?
Henry Gaines: No. No.

Dr. Silveri: Well, what's housed in the building now?

Henry Gaines: It's been taken over by the State of North Carolina. It's a juvenile...

Dr. Silveri: It's called the Evaluation Center.

Henry Gaines: Yes. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: So, you do recount in your book the many, many commissions you got from the United States Army to build hospitals and so?

Henry Gaines: We have. It's been remarkable. I don't believe there's been more than three or four years from that time until now that we haven't had some sort of work from the Armed Forces. Just last month, our office got a forty-million-dollar job down at Camp Lejeune for the Armed Forces. A hospital job.

We chased all over, and fortunately we kept up these contacts with people.

Dr. Silveri: Did the Six Associates develop a specialty? You built more hospitals, didn't you?

Henry Gaines: Oh yes. We built a lot of hospitals.

Dr. Silveri: Do architects specialize usually in building certain buildings?

Henry Gaines: Well, it depends on what the client wants. If he wants a hospital, we're hospital specialists! If he wants a textile mill, we're sort of textile mill specialists! We really don't specialize in ours. We, fortunately, have done a lot of hospitals, but it wasn't by choice, by any means.
Henry Gaines: (continued) I mean it just happened to be that was a good field.

Dr. Silveri: A time in which more hospitals are being built.

Henry Gaines: Yes. That's right. I think in the last fifteen years hospitals have expanded to beat the band.

Dr. Silveri: How many people are working at Six Associates now?

Henry Gaines: About seventy people.

Dr. Silveri: Well, that takes a good income just to keep you going, doesn't it?

Henry Gaines: Yes. It does. Yes. It does.

Dr. Silveri: And you range all over the area? All over the Southeast?

Henry Gaines: Yes.

Dr. Silveri: How far north have you done jobs?

Henry Gaines: We did one job in New Jersey. We've done a good many things in Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia. We did a little plant down here for Kearfott, which was an electronics--made the little, tiny things for that. They decided that they wanted to build a plant up in New Jersey. They said, "Would you like to build us a plant in New Jersey?" We said, "Hell, yes. We like to build a plant in New Jersey!"

We looked around, and none of us were registered in New Jersey. So, we said, "One of us has got to get registered in New Jersey!" So, we wrote this board up there. A lot of states reciprocate. I mean if you are registered in North Carolina, you are registered in New Jersey. But New Jersey is one
Henry Gaines: That wouldn't do that.

(continued) of these states. They said, "You have to appear before the board."

Stewart Rogers said, "Well, Gaines. You are elected. You go up there and appear before the board." So I went up there, and they were meeting down on the shore at one of the seashore places. I've forgotten where it was, but it was in the summer. It was hotter than hell! I'm telling you!

I went in and told them who I was. They said, "We've got some other things right now that we have to attend to. If you don't mind, would you just wait out in the lobby? We will call you." Well, I sat out there, and it became lunchtime. Nobody said anything. Those fellows didn't come out. I said, "Well, hell! I'll go get some lunch."

I went down and got some lunch. Came back about two o'clock and sat there. I like to smoke cigars, so I smoked one cigar right after another. About four o'clock this guy came out and said, "Oh! I meant to come out and tell you that you're all right. You've got good credentials. Sure, you can practice architecture in New Jersey!" Those guys had entirely forgotten me! I guess when they went in there, somebody said, "Well, let's get this guy out of the way!" They never called me or asked me a question, or anything!

Dr. Silveri: You just got right back on the train?

Henry Gaines: So, I got right back on the train. Yes, sir. And came home!
Dr. Silveri: O. K. The Second World War ended. I think you put down in your book that you did keep Six Associates together. You had talked about breaking up?

Henry Gaines: Yes. We did. We decided that we would come back to our individual practices again, that there wasn't going to be any more of this war work. Stewart Rogers, who was the youngest member of the group, said, "Well, hell. I haven't got much of a clientele. Why don't you fellows go on back then, and let me see if I can keep Six Associates together? We've got a good group here. Let me see what I can do with it."

It wasn't too long until somebody called up. I think the first thing we got was a furniture plant down here. I had done a little bit of furniture work. Henry Wilson down at Morganton called up and said, "I want to build this furniture plant down here. Can you do it for me?"

Dr. Silveri: Old Fort or Morganton?

Henry Gaines: At Morganton. I said, "Why, sure!" Well, I went over and talked to Stewart. I said I think the thing to do is to handle this through the Six Associates. I had gone back. I had only picked up a couple of fellows. The Six Associates still had a good many people with them because nobody had found anything to do. We started out with that, and the Six Associates began to pick up a little more momentum. Then in about a year, we had another meeting, and we said, "Aw shucks! Let's all go back together! It's fine to be together!" So, we went back together. It's been going great guns
Henry Gaines: (continued) ever since.

Dr. Silveri: Is that the same Henry Wilson that made unsuccessful attempts at the U. S. Senate recently?

Henry Gaines: No. Different man. This man is now dead. But he ran Drexel Furniture Company, which was there at Morganton, for a long time and decided he would go into business for himself. He was very successful with it. He was successful from the very minute he started. He did a great job.

Dr. Silveri: Even through the rest of the 1940's business was pretty good?

Henry Gaines: Good. Yes. We have never been without work since that time. Since after World War II, we got going, and we've always been busy. We've always had enough backlog to keep us going.

Dr. Silveri: Will you tell me some of the buildings the Six Associates designed by since the Second World War? In Asheville?

Henry Gaines: Let's see ... what have we done here in Asheville? Well, we've done most of the work over -- we did the original site plan and a good many buildings over at the college, UNC-A. That library over there, for instance, is our project and many of those jobs over there.

Dr. Silveri: The library's beautiful!

Henry Gaines: That's nice. That's a nice library.

Dr. Silveri: Who is the one who designed that?
Henry Gaines: Bill McGehee. Bill did that, and I thought he did a nice job, and, of course most of that stuff up at Buncombe Tech, we've done, Mission Hospital and St. Joseph's Hospital. Several of the city schools. We've done all of Mars Hill College. Those are the newer things that we've done.

Dr. Silveri: Not the Civic Center. You didn't do that?

Henry Gaines: No. We didn't do the Civic Center.

Dr. Silveri: I remember (going back) you did tell in the book about the building of the county building and the city hall.

Henry Gaines: Yes. That was a mess. Really, it was.

Dr. Silveri: Unfortunately.

Henry Gaines: It had a possibility of being such a nice little plaza over there, but it didn't happen. I doubt if people really think much about it.

Dr. Silveri: In Western North Carolina, what has Six Associates built at

Henry Gaines: We've done Western Carolina University practically all of the work over there until about five years ago. What really happened to us; after the war there weren't any architects west of Asheville. So, we had this us about whole group. After they would stay with three years, long enough to go out and take the examination and get their license, they would go in business for themselves. So, now we've got a whole group of our graduates out here west of us. They've been picking up some of those jobs out there that we used get all the time. But we did most of that work over there. We did that Finishing Plant down at Old Fort, Gerber, Taylor Instruments out there. We've done a good many.
Dr. Silveri: Did you do any work up at Boone or Appalachian State?

Henry Gaines: Yes. We did a group of four dormitories. That's been some time ago. Normally, we like to think that we repeat, but we didn't repeat too much up there. I think what happened was that we got kind of busy, and we didn't keep our fences built up, up there.

Dr. Silveri: Six Associates is a corporation?

Henry Gaines: Corporation. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: How many owners of this corporation? There's no stock, is there?

Henry Gaines: Oh, yes! It's a rather unusual organization in that it is a corporation, but it's a personal service corporation. Glenn Snipes, who is our attorney and also our / set this thing up for us. Being a personal service corporation, you don't have to pay corporate taxes. Which I thought he was pretty smart. That means that you can't accumulate any great amount of money in the corporation. Also, the law is that if you call it a personal service corporation, when I retire I'm no longer a person in this personal corporation. So, I have to sell my stock back to the corporation or sell it to some of the other fellows.

There were six of us who started it, and all six of us have equal amounts of stock. Then I retired, Tony Lord retired, Earl Stillwell retired. That left just three of the other people among the original fellows. Bill Dodge died, and one of the other fellows has died. Anyhow, there were still six of us. Those three fellows have now allocated (they kept some of the
Henry Gaines: (continued) stock as treasury stock; some of the stock to some of the younger fellows coming along. I think eventually the stock will go to six people, and keep it going that way.

Dr. Silveri: That's fascinating. I've never talked with an architect before. Would you tell me what the process is if I came to you and told you that I wanted you to design a house for me? There are certain things I wanted in the house. How do you begin?

Henry Gaines: I would say: "You're married, of course." You would say: "Yes." How many children do you have?"

Dr. Silveri: I've got six children. I'm going to need four or five bedrooms.

Henry Gaines: That's right. Then you would say: "I've got two boys and four girls." You have a pretty good-sized family. Are your children at such age where two of them can occupy one sleeping area? Or would it be prac-tical because you've got four boys to build one big room and put all four in that room? Are you formal in the way you live? Do you have a formal dinner every night? Or do you have trays that you sit around and look at TV? How do you live? What furniture do you have? What do you like? Do you have any hobbies? Do you have to have a hobby room? What does your wife like to do? Does she like to sew? Does she need a sewing room?

Dr. Silveri: You have to set up whatever's first, and how much you have to spend for it?

Henry Gaines: Yes. Then we always say: That's not enough! You'd better get some more. Then from that: "Let's go out and see your property."
Henry Gaines: (continued) Have you bought your property? Most of the time they have. They have a piece of property. At times somebody will come in and say, "Well, I'm looking at a piece of land. Let's go see if it's any good for building a house on." But most of the time people have property.

In this rolling country, the first thing you have to do is get some topography to see what kind of slopes you've got on it and all that thing. You probably want to see Pisgah. Or you want to see Mount Mitchell, or something of that sort. You've got to get the view right. Then you want to watch out for the breezes, the sun, and that sort of thing. I think in Asheville the morning sun is fine, but the afternoon sun in the summer gets too damn hot! So, you want to get your living area where if you want to go out and sit in the sun in the morning, you can.

End of Tape I

Side I of Tape II

Henry Gaines: (continued) ...It's like putting a crossword puzzle together all the time!

Dr. Silver: When I was coming in, before I turned the tape recorder on, you said I think you said, when I asked you how many houses you had designed, probably about three hundred?

Henry Gaines: I'd say two or three hundred. Yes. When I started, I started out with houses, except for the Fleetwood. Most young architects do start out
Henry Gaines: (continued) with houses because you don't make as much money on houses as you do, for instance, a schoolhouse or a textile mill or something of that sort.

Dr. Silveri: What's the normal fee for building?

Henry Gaines: Eight percent. You get six percent for the plans and specifications and two for supervision of on-site construction.

Dr. Silveri: Eight percent of the cost of the building?

Henry Gaines: Cost of the building. Yes. Some people like to do houses, and some people don't. I happen to be the kind of person who likes to do board houses. I mean I like to sit down at that drafting board and do it myself. I really do. Last year, I did a house. I did every bit of the drafting myself. I find, why heck, I can draft just as good now as I ever could. I like to make details and all of that sort of thing.

Dr. Silveri: What do you consider is the best house that you've done? Is it still around? They are all good. I know. But there must be one that you especially enjoyed building and are quite proud of it.

Henry Gaines: Well, it's kind of hard to say. First, I might say that I like traditional houses. I like that better than I do the contemporary houses that we do today. I did a house over here for Philip Stull, who was President of American Enka Corporation, which I enjoyed a lot. We got a very nice circular stair into which I had a good time doing.

But I think the two houses that I had more fun than any other were down at Marion, North Carolina. One morning the telephone rang. This man
Henry Gaines: (continued) said, "This is Gene Cross. My wife saw a house over at Hickory that you did, and she'd like for you to do a house for us. Could you do it?" I said, "Why, sure, Gene. I'd be delighted to!" He said, "When can you come down here and talk to us?" I said, "I can come down this afternoon."

In about thirty minutes, the telephone rang. He said, "This is Sidney Cross in Marion. We're thinking about building a house. My wife saw a house over in Hickory that you did, and she liked it. Could you do a house for us?" I said, "Why, sure. I can do a house for you."

So, these two boys were brothers. I got along just fine with the two boys, but when I got the two gals together, every time one gal would think up something special she wanted, the other gal would think of something she had to do. So, I did a juggling act all the way through that to keep those two houses. They both wanted big columns and big colonial houses. That's what they liked about this thing. To keep them from being too much alike and still get a little bit of personality in each one of them was a real juggling act. So I had a time doing those two!

Dr. Silveri: What's the biggest building that you, yourself, have designed?

Henry Gaines: That I did myself?

Dr. Silveri: Yes. Could it be the Fleetwood?

Henry Gaines: Yes. Yes. It would be the Fleetwood. Yes, it would be the Fleetwood, but I really can't really count the Fleetwood because it's not
Henry Gaines: (continued) around anymore!

I guess the biggest single job I did and really got it built, before we got the Six Associates together, was the Drexel Furniture Company job. I did it. It cost about three million dollars back in the late thirties, so it was a good-sized plant.

Dr. Silveri: Where is that located?

Henry Gaines: That's down at Drexel, North Carolina, which is just beyond Morganton. I didn't have much fun doing it. Really, I didn't. I mean it was sort of a chore. You just get this damn machinery and put it together, and then put a roof over it. It's not like doing a house. You feel like people are going to live in the house, and that people are going to have pleasure in it and that sort of thing. I couldn't do that in these damn textile plants. All these places are work, but I don't get a kick out of those. You get the money out of them though. Boy, you make real money on those!

Dr. Silveri: Your fee is higher?

Henry Gaines: Your fee is a graduated scale. We start off with eight percent. Then when you get something, say a half a million dollars, you jump down to seven. A million dollars, you drop down to six. Two million dollars, down to five. Then down to four. You can't do any less than four. But the bigger the job is, the fee drops down on it.

Dr. Silveri: There's always a prime architect for each job?

Henry Gaines: Yes. Yes.
Dr. Silveri: Then a lot of draftsmen?

Henry Gaines: A lot of draftsmen. Yes. We found, and I think most offices have to do this, you have to have one person who is responsible for it. I mean your client doesn't want to call up there and say, "I want to speak to Henry!" And you say: "Unfortunately, he's not working on your job.

You'll have to speak to Stewart Rogers." because about what they want,

Well, they don't like that. If I contact them and they talk to me/ then they want to talk to me. So, I have to really, I mean even if I'm doing the drafting on the thing, I have to keep perfectly familiar with what is going on. It sort of keeps you on your toes. But it's remarkable that you can run four or five other jobs at one time, and keep perfectly familiar with it. Bill Jones calls up here and wants to know about Bill Jones' job, you know what to talk to him about. Then if five minutes later Bill Smith calls up, you just change over to Bill Smith. I always thought that was sort of remarkable, and all architects can do this. They really can. All the architects I've ever seen talk about one job and another job, forget this one, and pick this one right up.

Dr. Silveri: Do you have a landscape architect working in your firm?

Henry Gaines: We have one landscape man with us. "Buzz" Temm was used to do a lot of our landscape work, especially when I was doing houses. You know "Buzz." "Buzz" was a different sort of landscape architect. He never did do any plans. He just came out and walked around. Who was that old colored man
Henry Gaines: (continued) he used to have who was doing all the planting for him? I think his name was Gus. He would stand there about five minutes. "Now, Gus. Go out to the nursery and get that big boxwood over there by that rock wall. You know the one I'm talking about?" "Yes, sir. I know which one you are talking about!" "Well, bring it out here." (He would send the truck out there to get it.) Now, dig a big hole right here, and put that boxwood right there!"

To me it was a most unusual way of doing it because I always have to put it down on paper first, but not "Buzz." He landscapes by ear! It always looks wonderful! It really does!

Dr. Silveri: Do you remember an interesting personality in Asheville? Did you ever know Reuben Robertson?

Henry Gaines: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Dr. Silveri: He was the man who built Champion Papers.


Dr. Silveri: An extra ordinary man.

Henry Gaines: Oh, yes. Yes, he was. Dr. Norburn, you know, married his daughter.

Dr. Silveri: Yes. What other people come to mind when you talk about personalities of the Asheville area in 1925?

Henry Gaines: Well, of course, Mr. Cecil and his two boys who had the Vanderbilt-Biltmore Company here. They were good citizens and unusual
Henry Gaines: (continued) people.

Then I guess really one of the most interesting people, who turned out very badly, was Wallace Davis, who was president of the Central Bank and Trust Company.

Dr. Silveri: He was the one who committed suicide... inaudible?

Henry Gaines: No. He didn't commit suicide. He went to jail. But Arthur Rankin was the one who committed suicide. Wallace Davis, if he had only been twenty years later, would have been worth millions of dollars, because he was twenty years too soon. He was a gambler from way back. He took a chance on everything in the world, and he manipulated politics and everything. Boy, if he could have just gotten into this Federal crowd, he would have owned the United States! He really would, but he was a little for it.

Mr. Gay Green was one of the fellows from around town. He owned a lot of real estate in town. He formed the Imperial Life Insurance Company. I guess that thing was here when I got here in 1925. He established early. Anyway, he started out as a Negro burial society, insurance for burying these Negroes, and of course, he got into the life business. He made a real, sure-enough fortune out of that, which he merged with some big insurance company in Nashville, Tennessee. They took it over before his death. But he was one of the town characters.

Dr. Silveri: Did you know Mr. Grove of Grove Park Inn... inaudible?
Henry Gaines: No. I didn't, but I knew Mr. Seely. He was the son-in-law of Grove. He ran the Grove Park thing and handled Dr. Grove's interests here in Asheville. Very good man. Good citizen. He has a son who lives here in Asheville now, Fred Seely.

Dr. Silveri: Incidentally, speaking about the Groves and Grove Park Inn, have they remodeled that interior since it was built?

Henry Gaines: Yes. They have. Then they've also built some motel rooms on it. They remodeled the lobby, which I think was a damn shame, because the lobby used to be exposed stone. I mean stone walls and the columns were all stone. Mr. Seely had written all sorts of little verses on the stone. It took up a lot of time. People could walk around and see it. Somebody bought the darned thing, and they went in and plastered the darned things inside, which I think sort of hurt it. Then they built these motel rooms. The thing always had much too much public space and not enough rooms to make it pay financially. It's changed hands a good many times since the Groves sold it.

Dr. Silveri: What about the one next to it? The one that has Channel 13 stationed in it now?

Henry Gaines: That's a nice house. Mr. Bynum owned that house. Bynum was a man -- he was one of the National Dairy people. I'm not sure which one it was, but he was also quite a scholar. He was really a very well thought of man here in town. He died. I think he has one son somewhere. Anyhow, that's a nice house, and he sold that house.
Dr. Silveri: (continued) I wanted to ask you about Tunnel Road. What did Tunnel Road look like when you came to Asheville?

Henry Gaines: When I came to Asheville, the Hildebrand family had a house over there. You had to go up over the mountain, you know. The tunnel wasn't there when I first got here. They built the tunnel after I got here.

The Hildebrand family had a house over there, and there was one other family. Norman Hildebrand was a man about my age, and he had a big family. I used to go over there and have supper with them, occasionally. I would say two or three times. But anyhow, we would have to go over the mountain to get there. There wasn't anything but a farm.

Dr. Silveri: Naturally, if the tunnel wasn't there then there wouldn't be a Tunnel Road.

Henry Gaines: No. That's right.

Dr. Silveri: The tunnel was built in . . .

Henry Gaines: The tunnel was built about '26 or '27. In other words, they got started on that pretty soon after I got here.

Dr. Silveri: I guess from that time on the area began to grow.

Henry Gaines: But that Tunnel Road area over there has been built in the last twenty years. When the Holiday Inn went over there, the first Holiday Inn in Asheville. They built that thing, and then all the other motels came then. Then they got the shopping center. That's a fairly recent development
Henry Gaines: (continued) over there. Yes.

Dr. Silveri: Who did the Mall over there? Where Sears is and all those stores are? The local architects?

Henry Gaines: No. No. Coleman, who is supposed to own it. I suppose he and the loan company own it. But anyhow, Coleman was the one who originated the idea. He came in to talk to us about doing it, but Coleman didn't have any money. We talked it over, and we said this thing is a gamble. We don't know whether this thing is going to go or not. If it can't go, Pokey can't pay us. There is no doubt in about that. He hasn't got that kind of money.

So we said, Pokey, we appreciate it, but frankly, it is too much of a gamble. Well, that was his proposition: "If it goes, you get paid. If it doesn't go, you don't get paid." We said, "we can't gamble that way."

Dr. Silveri: Particularly, since just a half a mile away is the Tunnel Road Shopping Center?

Henry Gaines: Yes. Shopping mall and other things. He picked up this crowd down in Columbia, South Carolina, who had more nerve than we did. They did the thing, and I suppose they came out fine. I wish now we had gambled on it!

Dr. Silveri: I guess the biggest thing was having Sears.

Henry Gaines: Oh, sure. When he got Sears, he had gone to town.

Dr. Silveri: There's no name there. What do they call it?

Henry Gaines: It's called the Asheville Mall.
Dr. Silveri: The Asheville Mall.

Henry Gaines: He got all of those big stores, as you know, out there now, Belks, and . . . .

Dr. Silveri: Beautiful place to shop.

Henry Gaines: Isn't it! It really is! Yes. Old Pokey did all right on that!

Dr. Silveri: When I was down here three years ago, they were talking finally about doing something about the tunnel. Have they made up their minds that it's going to be an open cut?

Henry Gaines: I think the State Highway Department, along with the Federal people, have finally decided to make a cut, which I think is a mistake. I hate to see that mountain cut. That's going to ruin that whole thing over there. They think they can do it quicker and do it cheaper, but I don't know. It seems to me they have got a two-lane tunnel there now, and if you put another two-lane tunnel in there, you could certainly have four lanes going through that thing, which I think would serve the traffic for a long time. Some people in Asheville don't think they're going to do anything with it! It's taken so long!

Dr. Silveri: They're making the cut right where the tunnel is now?

Henry Gaines: Yes.

Dr. Silveri: It's going to be four lanes?

Henry Gaines: Six lanes. It's going to be six lanes through there.

Dr. Silveri: It seemed a few years ago that they were ready to go.
Dr. Silveri: (continued) But nothing's happened!

Henry Gaines: I really don't know what's going to happen over there. One thing that's held them back; there's been a good bit of opposition to it. Just about the time they say they are ready to go, then somebody writes a letter to the paper and gets a lot of signatures and throws another road block in their way.

Dr. Silveri: Speaking of newspapers, did you know any of the people associated with the local newspapers?

Henry Gaines: Yes. I knew Donald Elias very well. Then I knew Mr. Webb. Mr. Webb owned the Citizen, and Mr. Elias owned the Times. Then they merged the thing. One company owns it now, the Citizen-Times Company.

Dr. Silveri: Multi-Media Corporation, isn't it?


Dr. Silveri: Does Mr. Bunnelle live in Asheville?

Henry Gaines: No. He's retired. He lives down at Pawleys Island, South Carolina.

Dr. Silveri: Do you know Mr. Luther Thigpen, who was the Editor?

Henry Gaines: I don't know him very well. I know him, but I mean I don't know him intimately.

Dr. Silveri: He's not from this area though? Is he originally?

Henry Gaines: I don't think so. I don't believe so. I don't know where he came from. I mean I know him. I see him down at the Mountain City Club.
Henry Gaines: (continued) occasionally, but I have talked with him or anything. I know John Schell very well. He's the general manager of the company. He's a good friend of ours.

Dr. Silveri: Before, we talked about Jesse James Bailey and the mountain people. One of things I'm interested in is the Southern Appalachia mountain culture, and so on. You know, you don't get that much identification in the Asheville area as their being part of Appalachia.

Henry Gaines: No. You really don't. I think really when people think about Appalachia, they immediately think about the coal fields of West Virginia. These mountain people that we think of as Appalachia have always been sort of self-reliant farmers or raised cattle or sheep or something of that sort. They never were that—they were different sort of people from the West Virginia coal miners. I think. Therefore, I think when strangers come into Asheville and they expect to see Appalachia, they expect to see that type of people. Well, you don't see that kind of people.

You may go way back up in the hills, and you'll see a little two-room log cabin, but that man who is living in there is taking care of himself. He doesn't call on anybody to come help him. He eats pretty good. He doesn't have any money, but he doesn't need any money. I think that's why you don't think of these Appalachian people like most people have pictured Appalachia.

Dr. Silveri: In your years in Asheville, you have seen the economy of the region change drastically.

Henry Gaines: Oh, yes. Yes. Asheville has been just like this. I mean it
Henry Gaines: (continued) goes / and it goes down. It goes up, and it goes down. It really does.

Dr. Silveri: There's a lot of industry that has moved in, and it's still an agricultural area, too.

Henry Gaines: Yes. We're very fortunate to have the industry we have. They are all good industries. They are all nice industries. They really are. Fortunately, I think most of the people who have moved in here have been very well satisfied because this mountain labor, as you probably know, is excellent labor. They really are. They work, and they are skilled with their hands. They've always done something with their hands. They are skilled people.

Dr. Silveri: You've never regretted your move to Asheville, have you?

Henry Gaines: Oh, no. No. I'm so happy I didn't go to Florida! Because Florida wasn't anything like as nice a place to live. I think when it burst, it burst worse than we did!

Dr. Silveri: Have you done much traveling around the country?

Henry Gaines: Yes. I like to travel, and I like to drive. I really do.

Dr. Silveri: That's the way to see things as you are driving along. On some of these super highways, you don't see as much.

Henry Gaines: No. You don't. But both my wife and I like to travel.

Dr. Silveri: Have you been up to Massachusetts, at all? Around in that area?

Henry Gaines: Yes. Yes. The fact is our daughter married a New York boy, and he has a brother who lives in Maine. They are leaving next week to go to
Henry Gaines: (continued) Maine to spend their vacation with my kinfols in Maine. They come down here. So, it makes a very interesting arrangement.

Dr. Silveri: You know, the mountain area is a very beautiful resort area. I imagine sometimes people miss the ocean. Where do they go? Charleston to the ocean?

Henry Gaines: Yes. Yes. Myrtle Beach.

Dr. Silveri: Myrtle Beach. That's quite a drive from here, isn't it?

Henry Gaines: It's a little closer than Charleston. About six hours. When we go to the ocean, there's a little place called Pawley's Island in South Carolina, which is north of Charleston, just about five miles out of Georgetown, South Carolina. It's really unspoiled. I mean it's a little old island there that you cross over a little creek. There are a lot of old houses there. When it looks like hell when you drive into it, but it's a very delightful place. It really is. That's where the man from the Citizen-Times has gone down there, and they're retired now. Of course, he doesn't live there. He lives on a big plantation on the other side, in a big house and all.

Dr. Silveri: I have just thought of a couple of things that happen in 1930 that affected this area. One of them was the building of the Blue Ridge Parkway, and another one was the creation of the Great Smokies National Park.

Henry Gaines: That certainly helped this area. But the thing that really got us out of the Depression was the American Enka Corporation. When they came in here and built that plant out there. They came in pretty soon. I forget when
Henry Gaines: (continued) they did come.

Dr. Silveri: They came in the late 1920's.

Henry Gaines: It gave us all a lift, and it's been a great thing for us. They've had a great many people. They have three thousand or thirty-five hundred people! The pay is pretty good. They've just done a great thing for us.

The park-to-park highway here has been a grand thing for us. The Blue Ridge Parkway.

Dr. Silveri: Beautiful. Another thing just came to mind. When you came up here to Asheville, and you first saw the Vanderbilt Mansion, what was your reaction?

Henry Gaines: Well, I think overwhelmed would be. I mean, I was sort of awed by it because I had heard about it. But of course, you hear about it, but you don't expect that thing to be what it is!

Dr. Silveri: Who was the architect? Was that Hunt?

Henry Gaines: Richard Hunt. Yes. Richard Hunt was the architect who formed the American Institute of Architects. One time since I lived here, the National Institute of Architects had their national meeting here in Asheville. So, we said wouldn't it be fine if the architects could all go out to Biltmore House and have a cocktail party? Some of us said that would really be wonderful. So we went down to see old Bill Cecil and tell him about the situation as Mr. Hunt was the founder of the American Institute of Architects, which he already knew, by the way. He knew that Hunt had done the house. Told him our problem,
Henry Gaines: (continued) He said, "Oh, I can't do that! You know, you fellows think that because Mr. Hunt was the architect, and you are architects, that you are the only people who would want to do that. If I said yes, go out and have a cocktail party at Biltmore House: my brother George down here you now runs the dairy. Don't think he would want to get all the dairymen up there and have a cocktail party? Don't you think when the governor comes to town, everybody will want to have a cocktail party for the governor? I can't do that."

I appreciate the fact that he couldn't. But he said, "I'll tell you what I will do. I've got the plans that Mr. Hunt did of the house. (They had their headquarters up at Grove Park Inn) I'll get those plans, and you can take them up to Grove Park Inn. The fellows can look at the plans!" They are marvelous plans. They really are. By golly! Just sheet after sheet after sheet of details and everything else. Beautiful plans!

Dr. Silveri: That's probably the outstanding architectural building here in Western North Carolina.

Henry Gaines: Oh, it is. Yes. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if that isn't about as good a piece of French architecture that's in the country. I mean I don't know of anything around anywhere in the country that can touch it. Fortunately, they've had the dairy. The dairy brought them some money, so they could keep it up. That place is in good shape right there.

Dr. Silveri: Yes. It is. I don't imagine they make enough from people
Dr. Silveri: (continued) who visit there to keep it up.

Henry Gaines: No. They've only opened that thing up to the public eight or ten years ago. In fact, George Cecil's father lived out there. I don't know that George ever, I guess he lived out there. I guess after he and Nancy were married he lived out there a little while.

Dr. Silveri: Was there any attempt to give it to the State or to the Federal government?

Henry Gaines: No. Now, they do have some kind of tax breaks since they opened it to the public. They still charge admission, but the reason they opened it to the public was because they got this tax break on the thing.

Dr. Silveri: We've talked more than an hour and a half now.

Henry Gaines: I'm afraid I've done all the talking.

Dr. Silveri: That's what I'm here for. I don't know if you want to make any more comments about your years in Asheville. I think you have loved all of these years, and you're still here. You're going to be here for the rest of your life.

Henry Gaines: Yes. I hope to be here. I have a cemetery plot here, so I think on that great day I'll wake up and see my mountains over there. At least I hope so.

Dr. Silveri: I want to thank you very much for your time.

Henry Gaines: Why, you are quite welcome. I think this is a very interesting thing you are doing. Aren't you enjoying it?
Dr. Silveri: I am. Very much.

Henry Gaines: How long are you going to be here, Louis?

Dr. Silveri: For the whole summer for the next summers.

Henry Gaines: Are you? Oh. That's grand! That's grand!