

Jane Raoul Bingham

Tape I, Side 1:

Mrs. Bingham describes the arrival of her grandparents and parents in Asheville. She describes visiting at Fernhurst and Richmond Hill as a child. Her grandfather and father constructed and developed the Manor and Albemarle Park (the buildings surrounding the Manor, also known as the "Manor Grounds"), later selling the property to E.W. Grove. As a child, Mrs. Bingham lived in two cottages at the Manor, and when she was eight years old her family moved to one of the first houses constructed in Biltmore Forest. Her father was president of the Biltmore Forest Company; throughout the three interviews the development of the town of Biltmore Forest from its beginning to the present is described, including many of the significant individuals involved. She discusses zoning, police and fire, Hendersonville Road right-of-way acquisition, the Biltmore Forest Country Club, the effects of the 1930s Depression, and changing architectural styles.

Mrs. Bingham was flower girl for Cornelia Vanderbilt's wedding. Memories of the Vanderbilts, Biltmore House, and the Biltmore homespun business [Biltmore Industries] are discussed.

Mrs. Bingham was a member of the Junior League beginning in the late 1940s. During the late 1940s and early 1950s she also began working for the Asheville Community Theater, where for a time her duties included driving for Charleton Heston. She founded a pony club; other equestrian projects are described, including changes in these activities in the city over the years.

Mrs. Bingham has been very active in organizations concerned with Parkinson's disease, the local sign ordinances, Common Cause, and other organizations; she describes these activities and the individuals with whom she has worked.

Other names of note mentioned in the interviews: William Green Raoul, Thomas Wadley Raoul, Mary Connaley, Richmond Pearson, E.W. Grove, Burnam Colburn, William Knight, Mrs. George W. Vanderbilt, Mother Margaret Potts, Judge Junius Adams, William Cecil, George Cecil, Cornelia Vanderbilt Cecil, Robert Bunn, Miss Yale, Miss Vance, Mrs. Arthur, Charlton Heston, Samuel Bingham, Sr., Samuel Bingham, Jr., Samuel Bingham III, H.A. Haseltine, A.W. Clemens, Sister Kathleen Winters, Wallace Davis, Mrs. Martha Northrop.

Introduction: looking at photos.

[5] Grandmother came to Asheville in 1893 with two daughters aged 16 and 11. Jane's mother hated the small town but her sister, being younger, was happy riding her pony to school (now Jewish Center). They lived in Montford until moving to Victoria Road. [Anna Doyle, [grandmother], Helen Doyle Raoul (mother), Kathleen Raoul]

[43] Played at Fernihurst (see McDowell tape) and spent time at Richmond Hill. [Mrs. Connally, Richmond Pearson, Mary Connally]

[67] Her father, one of a family of 10 children, to get away from heat and yellow fever of Macon, Georgia, visited Asheville in the summer. His father, unable to find a boarding house large enough, built the Manor (see The Manor and Cottages by Jane and Richard Mathews, 1991). [Thomas Raoul, John Bridges, Brock, Katharine Shepard, William Green Raoul]

[124] Her father went to Georgia Tech and came down with TB. Lived in Manor Gatehouse. [Thomas Raoul]

[134] In 1910 her parents married and lived in Manzanita Cottage. After Jane was born, her family lived in Milfoil Cottage and in 1920, after considerable enlargement, sold the Manor to Grove at a handsome profit. [E.W. Grove]

[186] Jane was 8 when the family moved to Biltmore Forest. They had chickens and ponies but few children to play with.

[244] The development of Biltmore Forest is described. Her father became president of the Company. Lots sold rapidly until the crash. [Judge Junius Adams, Burnham Colburn, William Knight, Mrs. Vanderbilt]

[266] The Depression hit everyone in the city hard. The Raouls found jobs for the cook and maid, and Carson, the groom and gardener, was the only servant - he even cooked. [Carson]

[294] She attended St. Genevieve's for 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades. She describes teaching methods, report cards, and awards. Her mother objected to the fact that the chapel was added to the old Victoria Hotel (now school) on the sunny side and the school was cold. [Mother Joubert, Mother Stelling, Mother Monk, Mother DuPlonk, Mother Lorin]

[507] The book St. Genevieve's Remembered is discussed. (See Mother Potts tape and enclosure. [Mother Margaret Potts]

Tape I, Side 2:

[2/5] Smith-McDowell House and Fernihurst are discussed. Her grandmother's house was across the street on Victoria. (See Frances McDowell tape) [Texas McKee Bates, Mrs. A. T. Connally ("Fernihurst"), Mary McDonald, Frances Humphreys, Rubin Robin]

[2/50] St. Genevieve's didn't prepare students for the "7 sister" colleges. She went to Madera, Washington and then Vassar. Her sister graduated from St. Genevieve's, went to college and became a teacher. [Kathleen Raoul, never married]

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Tape II, Side 1:

[II/1/4] Depression hit Biltmore Forest hard. Houses her father sold came back to the Vanderbilts. Many were vacated, some emptied so they could be sold, some simply closed and occupants went to live with someone else. Her house was rented and they lived in several houses. She was young and unconcerned with details. Just knew that there wasn't any money. [Benjamin Franklin & Millicent Moats (new neighbors), Judge Junius Adams, Burnham Colburn]

[II/1/57] Building plans were casual in the beginning. Her father was arbitrator. Now there is a board of adjustment (see enclosure for rules). [Judge Junius Adams]

[II/1/69] Membership in the club was never automatic with purchase of property. Later the club was bought from the Vanderbilt family. Many members were from the northern part of the city - no preferential treatment.

[II/1/101] Beaver Lake was developed and most of the Jews went there. The girls went to St. Genevieve's as this offered the best education. [Lipinsky, Pollock, Zageir]

[II/1/134] Few people took vacations as Asheville was considered vacation land. The Raouls rented their house in the winter and she saw New England.

[II/1/142] Several families got together, rented a car on the train and went to the beach in Wilmington, NC. She had not seen the ocean before.

[II/1/155] People got to know each other through the club. Dances were held every Saturday night with live music. Her older children still go - the younger say it is snobbish.

[II/1/179] Today people get to know each other through the racquet club which joins the estate, and the Biltmore Saddle and Bridle Club.

[II/1/193] When she was a child the family had a stable. This is no longer allowed but riding is still allowed in the back of the estate.

[II/1/212] The Biltmore Estate owns all the undeveloped area of the Forest. Lots are sold as the owners wish but the rules apply (new map enclosed shows expansion. [William Cecil, George Cecil]

[II/1/231] Biltmore Forest is an incorporated town and vast amount of land is still owned by the Vanderbilt family but rules still apply. It was difficult getting permission to build a condo opposite Town Hall. [George Cecil]

[II/1/267] Application to build an office building complex on land bought from the Biltmore School was denied.

[II/1/288] Water originally came from Busby (Busbee) Mountain owned by the Vanderbilts. Now it is bought from the city. Sewer service is also from the city. Residents pay property tax to Biltmore Forest and county tax to the Buncombe County.

[II/1/306] Asheville wanted to annex the Forest. Her father went to Raleigh. [Thomas Raoul]

[II/1/327] Biltmore Forest was declared a historical region to resist the removal of property for the widening of the Hendersonville Road from a 2 to a 4 lane highway. This led to bad feelings.

[II/1/383] Sound barriers are being erected but land value on the highway has declined. There is an attempt to have part zoned commercial.

[II/1/400] The Town Council holds open meetings at designated times and this is announced by newsletter. There are 3 on the Council plus the Mayor. A new ordinance has just been announced regarding the removal of trash and clippings on the road.

[II/1/435] Fire broke out on the 3rd floor of her house, August 11, 1990. (Could not find mention of this in local newspapers.) Most damage was from smoke and water. The insurance check just came through (over 2 years). Her son had been a volunteer firefighter and was visiting and helped.

[II/1/500] She remembers the first fire truck (see enclosure). Fire fighters are now volunteers. There are 3 to 4 police officers (not residents) who watch for speeders and

give talks about alarm systems and Citizens Watch. She has a system but not used it yet. There have been robberies.

Tape II, Side 2:

[II/2/1] She feels that in the future new houses will be bigger than in the 20's. The ranch style of the 60's are no longer being built. The houses are more lavish (mostly built by doctors) and have their own pools. The new owners don't care about the club. [George Cecil]

[II/2/25] Houses are easier to care for because of layout and equipment. Help is scarce.

[II/2/41] She was away from the Forest for 10 years but moved back in 1947 with her husband and two children to be with her parents.

[II/2/52] She showed me a rotogravure - a full page from the N.Y. Times of the Vanderbilt wedding. The Biltmore House officers wanted to buy it but Bunn kept it to give to her. [Robert Bunn]

[II/2/67] She describes the Vanderbilt wedding. Her mother kept her in kneepads so she wouldn't skin her knees while roller-skating. Costumes were designed for everyone.

[II/2/80] Cornelia Vanderbilt was 15 years older than Jane but they all went around together. Mrs. Vanderbilt gave a swimming party for her birthday (she was still living at the Manor). A pool had just been put in and no one knew how to swim. [Cornelia Vanderbilt]

[II/2/104] Mountain people were trained to weave and make toys. She was living in Tryon and was aware of the nature craft, woodcraft and weavers. Biltmore Weavers was started by Mrs. Vanderbilt. [Miss Yale, Miss Vance, Mrs. Arthur, Mr. Velier, George Cecil, Cantril, Mrs. Vanderbilt]

[II/2/131] When she returned to Asheville she became involved with the Junior League and Asheville Community Theatre. She was prop girl and as Heston didn't have a car the year he was here, she drove him around. (See enclosure). [Charleton Heston]

[II/2/149] She got a Pony Club started, (a pony is a horse ridden by a juvenile - not a small horse). Her father-in-law was one of the founders of the Tryon Riding and Hunt Club (see obit). Her husband hunted also but couldn't take that much time from his

work. She heard about the United States Pony Club and started the Western North Carolina branch. The livery stable was on Hendersonville Road. Over 100 members belonged, coming from Hendersonville, Tryon, Canton, Asheville, and West Asheville. [Samuel Bingham, Carter Brown, Samuel Bingham, Jr.]

[II/2/185] Rallies were held based on the 3-day Olympic events. In this area they lasted one to two days in preparation for the Regional Rallies. Today the activities are more elaborate.

[II/2/215] The upper age limit for participants is 21. Certificates were given by National examiners. She became regional supervisor for all of North and South Carolina and as this became too time consuming, became head of the Western North Carolina branch again. By-laws were established and a board set up. She "rotated herself out of it."

[II/2/314] There are more horses today than in the "horse and buggy days" but these are for pleasure. Transportation of horses is by big vans and the sport is "top notch and classy" - no longer just for fun or any old horse. The 4-H organization does a lot of the kind of activity she was involved with in the past.

[II/2/348] She was given a rooster and was surprised to learn it was not allowed in Biltmore Forest - people objected.

[II/2/398] Cultural changes are discussed.

[II/2/416] She taught French at Country Day School and her children were given scholarships. Mr. Haseltine's programs are discussed. The school started as a small private school to prepare children to go to northern Prep Schools (going through the 9th grade). St. Genevieve's still in operation but though she felt loyalty to her school, when she returned to Asheville in 1949, she enrolled her daughter in Country Day. [H.A. Haseltine, A.W. Clemens]

[II/2/507] She felt Country Day had a better program and her husband didn't want the little girl in a Catholic school. The schools were next to each other and she explained to the nuns her husband's attitude which they accepted - After God and the Pope comes a husband. Both the Country Day School building and the Haseltine School building were condemned by the fire department. The schools merged and moved to Gracelyn and Merrimon to the building built by the Junior League and vacated by the Asheville Biltmore College.

Tape III, Side 1:

October 1, 1992

Although the nuns at St. Genevieve's did not proselytize there was, in the past, prejudice about Catholicism. [Sister Kathleen Winters, Al Smith, John Kennedy]

[III/1/507] Prior to the Depression her father was very involved in city and county politics. He was concerned about graft and started the "Tax Payers League." He tried to talk people into voting Republican to "throw the rascals out." Wallace Davis is described - he was charming and "ran the jail" - from the inside. [Thomas Raoul, Judge Junius Adams, Wallace Davis]

[III/1/68] She and her husband were opposed to the cut being blasted. The tremor was so strong that a swimming pool on Town Mountain Road was cracked. Her husband was on the board of the Conservation Council of North Carolina. Betty went to Duke Law school (on a full scholarship) so she would be able to talk to politicians. [Samuel Bingham Jr., Betty Lawrence (former librarian at Pack)]

[III/1/120] At ground breaking ceremony at Country Day, the flag was presented by Sam III and his father was on the building fund drive (see enclosure). The parents ran the school - voted on tuition etc and had part in everything. [Samuel Bingham Jr., Samuel Bingham III]

[III/1/156] The rivalry between St. Genevieve's and Country Day School, which became Carolina Day School in 1987, made the merger hard. St. Genevieve's could not raise enough money now that nuns were no longer joining orders (Vatican II).

[III/1/185] Teaching French, merger of Country Day and Haseltine schools because of fire condemnation and new location on Gracelyn and Merrimon also covered side 2, tape 2. [H. A. Haseltine]

[III/1/233] The philosophy and purpose in teaching between Haseltine (after 9th grade boys went to public high school) and Country Day (students took ERB tests from 3rd grade on in preparation for boarding school prior to college) discussed. [Mrs. Northrop]

[III/1/301] The merger meant a lot of give and take. The teachers who came with Mr. and Mrs. Haseltine were loyal and stayed until they died. [Mr. Clemens, Mr. Haseltine, Mrs. Haseltine, Mrs. Martha Northrop, Mrs. Winifred Quinn McCabe, Mrs. Martha Nelle Lovett]

[III/1/358] Asheville School for Boys was for boarders even though they came from town. [Samuel Bingham Jr.]

[III/1/386] The Episcopal Church started Christ School in Arden. It became very popular and well regarded. [Jack Stevens]

[III/1/428] There was great enthusiasm when UNCA was created. Many of her friends are involved and the atmosphere of the city was enhanced. She compares the city of 50 years ago and today (see enclosure). Asheville choral society, symphony, drama. She has attended the College for Seniors. [David Brown, Lin Brown, Richard Sampson, John Ager, Mr. McClure]

[III/1/569] The merger of St. Genevieve's and Country Day to create the new Carolina Day was hard. The Country Day got the money and stayed where it was. In the compromise the name was changed but all identity and philosophy of St. Genevieve's was lost.

{III/1/619} The loyalty to St. Genevieve's was shown when so many graduates came to the book signing (see enclosure). [Mother Potts]

Tape III, Side 2:

[III/2/6] She worked for over 12 years to get a sign ordinance signed. She started with her garden club and found that, while the members agreed, their husbands gave no support. She raised money to have architectural drawings made of the Tunnel with and without signs. She displayed these and traveled with groups.

[III/2/64] When she ran into Lin Brown, the new chancellor's wife who had had previous experience in fighting signs, the group became active, knowledgeable and forceful. The 2010 plan was passed and signs are to be phased out on a 7 year plan. This will, of course, be an ongoing struggle. Discovery Asheville has similar meetings [UDO stands for Unified Development Ordinance - see Asheville Buncombe Discovery Magazine - a "multi-faceted informational program designed to maintain and improve livability in Asheville and Buncombe County"]. The "2010" printed findings are a tool for development. [Lin Brown, David Brown, Walter Boland, Susan Meyer Roderick, Douglas Swain, Gene Rainey, Frank Martin, Julian Price, Roger McGuire, Karen Fields]

[III/2/234] Her husband and a friend's husband developed Parkinson's disease. They heard about a support group in Weaverville and were encouraged to start one here. The Asheville group affiliated with one of the national groups. She is preparing for the 6th annual walkathon which is a fund raiser. Dr. Graham has just been

afflicted with the disease (enclosure). [Samuel Bingham Jr., Nancy Marlow, Dr. Billy Graham]

[III/2/291] She went to hear Gardner in Raleigh in 1972 where he was talking about the Common Cause position in the Vietnam War. She started the "telephone tree" and was asked to go to Washington. She became coordinator of the 11th district. There are over 200 registered members in Western North Carolina (see enclosures). [John Gardner, Jake Canter, Annie Ager]

[III/2/383] Obtaining open meetings in congress was a big success. By-laws were set up with a rotating board.

[III/2/424] For a while the group was inactive but Dean Cochran of St. Eugene's took an interest, called Raleigh and was referred to Annie and to her. [Dean Cochran, Sam and Ellie Zitin, Peggy and Bob Tinkler (see enclosure), Annie Ager]

[III/2/452] Recently the state meeting was held in Asheville. The national chairman came down. She calls this the "People's Lobby." The group concentrates on one issue at a time (like financial reform with some side issues such as environment) not like League of Women Voters which works on many issues at once. [Ned Cabot, Pat Watts]