

Lewis and Porge Buck

Side 1:

Porge's widowed mother was living in Tryon, and the Bucks decided to move from Maine, where they would be closer to her mother (but not in the "thermal belt" of Tryon since they wanted to have four seasons).

[15] After subscribing to the Asheville Citizen-Times they answered an ad for Ravenscroft. They wanted a place where they could live, do their artwork and have a gallery. Ravenscroft was too large, but they saw a house on Montford and Chestnut with a realtor (170 Montford) and liked the fact that this was an area designated historic. It took 3 years to sell their house in Maine. [Mike Cox]

[34] The house was still on the market; they bought it and set up an in-home gallery. It lasted 3 years, the way most small galleries in Asheville do, and they realized this was folly. They did not realize that Historic District did not mean socially acceptable, and most people simply would not come to the gallery.

[55] Lewis, unable to find a job bookkeeping, went to work for 8 years at the North Carolina Room of Pack Library. They moved to West Asheville and then to their present home in Black Mountain.

[60] She found a warehouse on the River, bought it, divided it into spaces which were rented to other artists and then sold to RiverLink (see Jean Webb and Karen Cragolin tapes)

[73] She is a print maker, printing for other artists, runs an 'open shop' (artists come and use the presses) and does her own work. Rent from other artists paid the mortgage, and they had space to do their work. Lewis is a painter doing large work (see snapshot).

[90] They met in art school in Richmond in 1950. He had a degree in English when he went to art school. He was in the Navy 1943-46 and took the G.I. Bill. They had a job in Europe for a year. Their first son was born in France, the second in Washington D.C. [Eric Buck, Peter Buck]

[117] They led tours for service men under the leadership of a naval friend who thought they could do a better job than the American Express. [Joe James]

[148] Porge said, "If you are going to do something, just do it!" They visited Maine in the summer with the Audubon Society and liked it. They were offered two-week scholarships to the Hog Island Camp that Audubon ran and were asked to run the National History Field School program in Washington. This was to allow people in government to increase their knowledge of their fields. Space was allotted and they found the teachers for bird identification, introduction to ecology, plants, wetlands, marshes etc. and conduct field trips.

[194] They decided to move to Maine, sold their house and became inn keepers. They ran this for 10 weeks a year but lived in the house all year.

[227] In Washington Lewis had been working for the National Rehabilitation Association as office manager and administrative assistant. He edited the Journal of Rehabilitation. She did freelance illustrating and volunteered setting up docents for the National Zoo and leading tours of the zoo.

[297] They had lived in a variety of areas - from the middle of Washington to a log cabin in the country. Montford was one more experience. She had thought that since Montford was a historic district there would be order and cohesiveness. She was wrong. The district had been dropped rather like a blanket over part of Montford. It had covered a lot of real estate that needed redevelopment - big old houses. It also covered very small houses that people lived in and had been in for quite a long time and suddenly they were faced with the requirements of belonging to an historic district.

[312] There were meetings all the time. There was an active community organization that met in the community center. She got active in it.

[318] They got there after a crisis had occurred in the middle of Montford. There was a proposal to build town houses on 176 to 200 Montford, back to Pearson, with a high wall on Pearson, which would have cut off the neighborhood. The Historic District didn't want "in fill housing". The property is for sale again - Logan Delany died 1994. [Logan Delany]

[340] She met Logan several times and has the book his sisters [aunts?], now living in NY wrote Having our Say (see enclosure - Logan not on family tree).

[414] They came in well after the relocation. The Historic Preservation Society was fighting the 'infill' housing that Logan had planned. People put their houses up for collateral to hire lawyers and won. He was disgruntled and let kudzu grow all over the sidewalk. The laws of the district had no teeth. Any complaints going to the city were met by Logan. [Logan Delany]

[509] Their house was on the zoning line of R3 and R4, and Planning and Zoning will not allow an artist studio in these areas, thinking that this would constitute a commercial activity, like a factory. So - they didn't say anything about this. They needed an opening in the building to get the permission, went to the Preservation Society for approval (explaining they were "print making" not "printing", such as flyers) and installed it. (see photo of cellar door)

[605] It is an eternal struggle to keep out the inroads of commercial rezoning. To keep crack houses out, beer cans off the street and lawns, etc.

Side 2:

When the Historic District 'blanket' dropped on Montford there was a mixture of zoning in the area without unity. There was no HRC zoning - only city zoning. The city could give o.k. but the HRC could say 'no' - but no teeth - just good will and the threat of (!) They never got together and said, "Historic District can have its own special zoning and we can allow certain things."

[2/29] If this had been downtown the people would know what was allowed. In Montford there is threat of encroaching commercial development along with houses that are being upgraded. She went to many meetings where houses with no historic value had to get permission to put fences in to protect a child and paint their house a certain color. There were many promises and no carry through.

[2/49] The people in Montford were looked on as "eccentric, ignorant, poor and powerless."

[2/51] The residents tried to keep the property from going commercial. She went to many meetings and had no chance to be creative.

[2/92] With the warehouse they did not need the Montford house room. On one side of their house was a vacant lot but on the other side (15 feet away) the house had been sold to 'Helpmate', the home for battered women. The door was kept locked and sometimes the women couldn't get in, were constantly calling the person on duty and yelling at children playing in the back. Their cover was blown and they left. A young man with an 18 wheeler kept it in the back yard and started it early in the morning. The man who bought the Buck's house went to the city council for 6 years before there was a ruling that a truck that big couldn't be parked in a neighborhood. "Hammer Hammer Hammer - it really takes it out of you, and if you look for people who have some kind of social conscience, and who want this neighborhood to be this and this and this, you have to give it 24 hours a day. It takes it out of you." [Bill Baber]

[2/160] They moved into a condo with no maintenance and had the warehouse. On the Brevard Road - Laurelwood - built in 1972. They lived there 5 yrs. (see snapshots) and became involved with the river. (see Webb and RiverLink)

[2/200] They were on the cutting edge of Montford - there are more efforts to zone commercial and with Highland Hospital property sold, there will be business back there.

[2/208] There was an active drug dealer across the street from them in Montford, a shot house across from school and drunks sitting on the wall around Randolph School. (see snapshot)

[2/214] The police were sent to the community meetings and complaints were registered. They were told drunks could not be arrested when walking on the street (violation of civil rights). There was loud talking at 3 am, "boom boxes" and active prostitutes. When the police were told of illegal activity they replied that they would have to put people undercover. She couldn't walk to town without getting comments from drunks.

[2/271] She also spoke for other people at the community meetings. The Chief of Police told her she would have to get used to these things, that she had moved into a culturally different area. They didn't care. People in Montford didn't have the kind of clout that would have gotten results - such as Biltmore Forest and North Asheville.

[2/295] She heard that Valley Street was made into S. Charlotte Street so the doctors from Town Mountain could get to their offices. The blacks were moved to Montford - just 'stash them in' and 'don't care about it.'

[2/295] They went into the neighborhood blind - this has nothing to do with race - just noise and degradation. They thought in a very naive way that a historic area meant something else, and it didn't turn out at all. "If you chose to live there, you had to hack it. They weren't going to hack it for you at all." "I don't think the police looked on the historic district as anything. I don't think they even considered it. But they looked on Montford as an undesirable district. There is going to be a substation there." (see photo)

[2/351] Most of the big houses are Bed and Breakfasts. There is a rapid turnover because people, coming from the North don't know about the neighborhood. The Flint Street Inn, (see photos) however, is doing well and bought a house next door run by a mother of one of the owners of the first house. The owner of the inn threatened to shoot two people who were shooting at each other if they didn't go away!

[2/383] They mention the shooting that took place in Montford Park - this was drug related. (see Simmons tape)

[2/388] Oralene, who ran the Montford Center and is now at Reid Center (see her tape) knew what was going on. [Oralene Simmons]

[2/397] Porge tells of going to a black homecoming of the Alexander Baptist Chapel in Leicester with Katie, who is still a domestic, and an amusing story with Susie Bell. [Mrs. Katie Worthy, Susie Bell Clark]

[2/538] The Bucks decided to sell their warehouse and condo and find flat land in Black Mountain where they could have a studio.

[2/556] She is active in RiverLink and is concerned that funds will be cut. He heard that the gates to the park had been padlocked when Karen was taking a bus load of kids through. (see Jean Webb and Cragolin tapes) [Karen Cragolin]

[2/607] She said West Asheville suffered by being a stepchild and separated by the river and highways