

Robert Bunn

Tape I, Side 1:

[I/1/3] His father was an English brick maker. After the Civil War the Government contracted [ordered] him to leave Patterson, NJ and build a brick wall around the soldiers' graves in Salisbury, NC (see enclosed).

[I/1/25] Lawyer from Waynesville asked him to build 3 brick yards. [He built 3 courthouses - one in Asheville] [Welch]

[I/1/32] Brick yard on what is now 15 Clayton Street used clay from property. One can still see dug out portion behind house (photo)

[I/1/52] Bricks used in Coggins residence, which contains turkey tracks, did not come from Bunn yard - his bricks kiln dried not sun dried. (see Coggins tape) [George Coggins, Thomas Patton]

[I/1/115] House built in 1905. Discusses carriage and buggy. His first car had been owned by George Vanderbilt (1913) and was purchased from Sawyer. [George Vanderbilt, Gene Sawyer]

[I/1/155] Charlotte Street was a one-way wagon trail which went over a creek to Chestnut. [Judge Frank Parker, Haywood Parker, Mary Parker]

[I/1/198] After the train came through, other brick yards built. His father's first wife died. His mother had a private school and lived with Mrs. Justice before marriage. There were three children by this marriage. [Albert, John, Robert Bunn, Kitty Dermit, Mrs. Justice]

[I/1/246] He attended the city school on Orange Street.

[I/1/256] At age 5 he found some empty whisky bottles and carried them around in his red wagon. He took them to the saloon and got 1cent each. The doctor gave him more to sell and he stored them under the porch. His mother was with the WCTU and made him put them in the barn before her ladies meeting arrived and would see them. [Wally Back (saloon), Dr. Zimmerman]

[I/1/318] He cut grass for 10-15 cents a yard and sold hot dogs to children for lunch at school. [G.D. Allison (grocery)]

[I/1/351] Before prohibition, children went to school poorly dressed. After liquor voted out there was more money for food and lunches.

[I/1/391] Stills were licensed before prohibition. After that, liquor used for medicinal purposes. There had been bars on 3 of the 4 corners at College and Lexington. Evangelists preached about liquor. [John O'Donnell, Red Hamby]

[I/1/455] He voted in 1918 but wasn't much interested.

[I/1/463] The city grew rapidly in 1925 and he was in real estate on the corner of College Street. He saved his money and bought a Packard. When the bust came he was the only real estate man with a car. His mother had taught him not to invest in land. [Jim McCormick, Bill Merryweather, Kerber]

[I/1/564] Before the Depression many people left the center of town for Biltmore Forest. Three families moved back. [Jane Bingham]

Tape I, Side 2:

[I/2/3] He worked for Finkelstein's but, in order to avoid the draft, he joined his brother in Yancey County to work his two mica mines. The draft board was about to call him but he showed the sales slip for his load and was exempted. The Asheville Mica Company on Coxe Street employed 30-40 people. Mica was essential for motors and electrical work. [Barnett, Vance Parker]

[I/2/118] When the country went off the gold standard, he collected gold for the pawn shop. [Franklin Roosevelt]

[I/2/133] After the war he brought surplus and obsolete clothing which he peddled through Eastern Tennessee. He was licensed by the U.S. Mint in Pennsylvania and sold gold to Finkelstein, preferring to get the cash right away and not wait 4-5 months.

[I/2/172] He was always buying and selling. He had a shop on 64 Biltmore Ave for plating silver and when someone offered to sell some walnut frames he put them in the window and they quickly sold. He bought some light fixtures from the Vanderbilt house for \$15 and sold them for \$150. [Paul Green, Vanderbilt, Peg Daniel, Rita Reese]

[I/2/256] When Dr. Norburn's house was being up he sold 2 1/2 million dollars' worth. [Dr. Charles S. Norburn, Charles Bryant, James Rickert]

[I/2/327] One of his greatest sales was a Tiffany lamp and a billiard table from the Vanderbilts. He had thought of going out of business 3 years ago and had an auction but prefers to keep his shop and considers dealing with furniture will always be profitable. [Vanderbilt]

[I/2/353] He tells about dances at the Manor Hotel. Southern families would rent cottages and local people were included. He helped Arthur Murray at the Battery Park Hotel but thought he danced stiff legged. [Arthur Murray, Cornelia Vanderbilt, Irene Castle]

[I/2/430] At a horse show in Biltmore Forest, Vanderbilt [Cecil?] wanted John (Bunn's brother) to ride for him. John wanted to ride his own horse. Cecil gave everyone a drink out of his flask. He could get whiskey through the Embassy in Washington. [Rita Reese, John Bunn, George Cecil]

[I/2/507] He lived 2 blocks in back of Wolfe and the children played together. Tom talked about writing plays - he wrote two and played in one. [Thomas Wolfe, Bob Bruce, Mrs. Westall, Mabel Wolfe Wheaton]

[I/2/588] When Tom was ill in the West he wired his sister to come. She didn't have a suitcase so he got one from the store. [Mabel Wolfe Wheaton, Leo Finkelstein]

Tape II, Side 1:

[II/1/5] Reviews some previous stories [heater in store starts] [Thomas Wolfe, Leonau Powell, Helen and Mabel Wolfe]

[II/1/63] Discusses moving to various locations and selling oil paintings from England [heater off!] [Jim Moore, Mr. Gibbs]

[II/1/171] City wanted to buy his store (next to parking garage) to develop Pack Place for \$68,000. He wouldn't accept this and took it to the Superior Court. He had a vacant lot beside him and the 100 foot sign on the side of his building would have cost \$5000-\$6000 a month. He got \$95,000.

[II/1/203] He told the developers of Pack Place that it would never pay. It has cost the city many thousands. Buildings are empty all over the county. This did not affect his business.

[II/1/264] His first buying trip to England was in 1961. He and his wife have made a second trip. [Duke and Duchess of Bedford]

[II/1/298] Furniture he bought was shipped in small containers. He occasionally bought with specific customers in mind. [Turner Davis]

[II/1/334] He sold a lot in Asheville but was also in the shipping business. People used to pass his store after visiting the Vanderbilt house but now that McDowell Street had been extended they get lost in the city.

[II/1/365] He has given a piece of furniture to the Smith-McDowell Museum (see enclosure). [Governor Swain]

[II/1/374] He has not done any advertising since his auction. He used to use TV.

[II/1/384] He decided to go out of business in 1970 and is still going out. Very little interest in antiques right now and we are in a Depression. Tastes change and interior decorators are influencing people. [heat on]

[II/1/405] Houses have more windows and there aren't wall spaces for large paintings.

[II/1/455] Discusses books on appraisals. He is the only store listed in North Carolina.

[II/1/493] Tiffany glass and silver have lost popularity. Beautiful stainless steel flat ware being produced.

[II/1/511] He was able to talk to Hunt in Texas when he was trying to sell Dr. Norburn's furniture. He still has 2 prize pieces upstairs now but they have lost value because of style change. [Dr. Charles S. Norburn, Anne Norburn]

Tape II, Side 2:

[II/2/5] When Dr. Charles S. Norburn's wife died he went on buying trips with Bunn. He learned a lot from Dr. Norburn who was an expert. [Helen Norburn, Mary Norburn, Anne Norburn, Lillian Norburn, Dr. Charles S. Norburn.]

[II/2/32] Fine furniture is a good investment. Banks use it. Style will come back.

[II/2/41] He tells about a movie made in Chimney Rock and a movie in Asheville he played in 20 years ago. When "The Swan" was being filmed he worked with Universal Movie Company 2-3 weeks securing carriages, cows, horses, wagons and old autos. He thought Grace was a "lovely girl" but "didn't appeal" to him. Bees were drawn to her dressing tent by empty Coca Cola bottles. Grace and her maid rushed out and he had the bottles moved. [Charlie Blackwood, Clay Camble Young, Grace Kelly, Susan Hayworth, Van Heflin, George Bishop, Reynolds (estate)]

[II/2/146] When "Tap Roots" [1944] was being filmed, despite warning, Long rode a frisky horse, got thrown and broke his arm. [Richard Long, Boris Karloff]

[II/2/185] He said Alex Guinness was a stinker and in New York referred to Asheville as a "little old mountain town." He liked the other actors. [Alex Guinness, Grace Kelly, Louis Jordan]

[II/2/225] He feels that Murray was a smart operator, franchising classes all over the country, but was stiff "like he had a yardstick down each leg." An Asheville girl opened a studio in New York and said she had been taught by him. He threatened to sue her if she didn't join his organization. She was going with a lawyer who told her to ignore it. [Arthur Murray]

[II/2/282] He tells about a trip to a night club with Wolfe and a visit to Cincinnati with a friend. [Tom Wolfe, Bob Lutz, Rebecca, Katie]

[II/2/431] He knew his wife for a number of years but promised he wouldn't marry until his mother died (age 98). Married 1958. [Fan Bunn]

[II/2/450] He worked on the construction of Oteen Hospital.

[II/2/490] Charleston families came up for the summer at the Manor and local boys took them dancing. He visited Charleston and they ignored him - so next summer he told the boys about it and they left the girls alone!

[II/2/521] He describes the Manor and Battery Park dances. He promoted dances and often supplied the bands.

[II/2/579] The Depression was so bad in Asheville that he split \$10 a day surveying with his brother. [continue to tape 3 for an ingenious enterprise] [Mr. Branch]

Tape III, Side 1:

[III/1/5] He noticed a pile of glass by a Black apartment house and saw the tenants throwing bottles on to the rocks below. Bottles were the most expensive cost in running a dairy and when they were not returned the dairy lost money. He and a Black man collected 1,300 for the Biltmore Dairies and Carolina Creamery. His next door neighbor was in charge of the bottle exchange and tried to get his collection from him (he had to sort them in his back yard) but a cousin showed his "badge" and scared him off. [Mr. Ledbetter]

[III/1/83] He started a small advertising company, managed a 5-piece dance band and had handkerchief sales. (This was so successful it took 2 hours to count the money.) [Bob Lutz]

[III/1/277] The Highland Hospital fire is described. [Zelda Fitzgerald, Sara Neeley, Dr. Allen T. Hipps]

[III/1/302] He was 14 and splitting logs when he got to know the E.W. Grove's chauffeur. [E.W. Grove, Marjorie Grove, Dampfries]

[III/1/350] The Grove Arcade Building is discussed. [Charlie Parker, Harry Parker, Edith Alexander Parker, Frank Parker]

[III/1/419] He tells about the election campaign of Reynolds for the U.S. Senate in about 1934. He drove around in the back of a Ford with someone beating a drum. [Robert R. Reynolds, Cameron Morrison, Leo Addison]

[III/1/510] A survey of businesses was held with 8 moderators. Some business people didn't want to show records.

Tape III, Side 2:

[III/2/12] Review of his various jobs during the Depression - [what an enterprising man]

lunch time-

[His wife goes out for a bag lunch and he enjoys sitting behind his desk in his leather chair surrounded by beautiful old furniture. People often come and go, and often he makes a big sale.]