

Eleanor Stephens

Side 1:

[1/1] She was born in Biltmore in 1905 and lived there on the Biltmore Estate until she married. Asheville was a long buggy or streetcar ride from Biltmore, and aside from birthday parties or shopping trips, there was little contact.

[1/19] The village was charming - a reproduction of an English village with a grocery store, drug store, weaving and wood carving industry [Biltmore Industries] in the middle. [Eileen McCabe]

[1/33] Her father was consulting engineer for the estate with an office in Asheville. [George Waddell]

[1/37] When she was 9 she went to Miss Arabelle Kitchin's school which was started in Biltmore, moved to Montford and then to Charlotte St., which was then called L'aria Fresca (house became the Jewish center - new center just opened - see Jane Mathews file re: building - Katharine Shepard re: school). She describes the house (they went inside for recitation and used charcoal stoves under sleeping blankets when on porch - "not pigs." It was considered healthy to stay outside. She said this had nothing to do with TB.) See Shepard tape. They took a cold bath every morning. [Arabelle Kitchin: In Katherine Shepard's abstract, the teacher's name is spelled Arabella Ketcham. Unable to verify, but "Kitchin" is probably correct. Katharine Bynum Shepard]

[1/63] Street cars convened in Pack Square. One could get from one end of town to the other in 1/2 hour.

[1/71] She graduated from St. Genevieve's (see tapes by Mother Potts, Sisters Winters and Ruth (Rudy) Camblos and enclosed Xeroxes), tutored to fulfill credit for courses not given, and went to Bryn Mawr for 4 years. [Mother Lorin, Mother Mabel Monk]

[1/97] She and her family had friends all over the city (see Bingham tape). [Jane Bingham]

[1/111] Several ladies in Biltmore Forest had open house one day a week (the same day) so they could receive friends from other parts of the city. Montford and Charlotte Street may have had their specific days also. As the ladies went from one house to another they left a calling card on the silver tray in the hall (all houses had this tray, used for that purpose). She and her mother had to return the calls. [Rev.]

Rodney Rush Swope (rector of All Souls Episcopal Church), Mary B. Swope (Mrs. Rodney R.)]

[1/147] We discuss the ice chest on the back porch and the stove and furnace which used coal (see Harmon Lee tape). After conferring with the cook after breakfast her mother ordered groceries by phone. Mr. Yates had a grocery on the square. [1915 Asheville City Directory: Yates & McGuire, City Market] Milk was brought from the Biltmore Dairy (Dr. Wheeler [a veterinarian] was the head of the dairy, see enclosed) Hucksters brought vegetables. She remembers sitting at the dining room table with her mother who liked to make mayonnaise herself. Place mats were used for lunch but starched damask cloths and napkins were used for dinner. All houses in Biltmore had electricity. [Harmon Lee, J. J. Yates, Dr. Arthur S. Wheeler]

[1/195] Her father was fascinated with electricity and when one of the street lights went out he climbed the pole to fix it. Mr. Westall called out to him, "Charlie, get down from that pole!" He was 14. He also helped build the power plant (now Carolina Power and Light - see enclosed). [Mr. Westall, Mr. Weaver]

[1/216] Her father was one of the leading engineers in the state, building the Bee Tree Dam (the first big reservoir for the city) and engineering some streets. He was always connected with the Biltmore Estate in an advisory capacity. [George Waddell]

[1/237] She was brought up to feel she should get all the education possible. Her niece went to Bryn Mawr also. The rules there were strict but it was not a "high class boarding school" with chaperones. [Prudence Rockwell]

[1/277] She was one of the ladies of the court in the first Rhododendron Festival. The ladies, in flower costumes, represented flowers in their state - she was Lady Azalea. The Coxe family used their coach in the parade. There were parties and dances but she does not remember a children's parade (see Harmon Lee tape - his brother brought his goat!) [Daphne Brown]

[1/345] Her father-in-law, a native of Charlotte, bought the Biltmore Village from Mrs. Vanderbilt and developed it with his friend from Charlotte. (see Mary Hyde and Robert Griffin tapes). He bought the Citizen Times (see Robert Webb tape). Both she and George (her husband-to-be) worked there. [John Noland, Edith Vanderbilt (Mrs. George W.)]

[1/362] The Biltmore Forest Country Club opened in 1925. There were Saturday night dances there and at the Asheville Country Club. The different age groups often mixed and, while her parents had cocktails, her friends didn't. She smoked for a while, as did her husband. He gave it up during the war as he didn't want to have to stand in

line. Her main interest was in horseback riding, motoring and camping with her family. [George Stephens]

[1/415] The Biltmore Estate was her front yard. The manager was a friend as were the Vanderbilts. She and her brother discovered an old-style home on the estate. There was also a 2-room cabin, barn and out buildings. The family moved in when she was 12 and she lived there until she married. She and her brother did a lot together. Her father built a tennis court where the Wachovia Bank now stands. [Chauncey Beadle, Charles Waddell]

[1/484] Dr. Wheeler's wife was trained in the French Army Riding School and started a riding school in Biltmore Forest. She was still teaching at 90. [Anna Wheeler (Mrs. Arthur)]

[1/537] Horse shows were held where the Biltmore Forest office is now. Later they moved to the area where the Carolina Day School is Today there is riding on the estate - a stable and a private entrance beyond Deerfield. [Wanda Stanard, Jane Raoul Bingham]

Side 2:

[2/4] When she was a child her dresses were made by her aunt. They were cotton, elaborate, and rompers were made for play. Her grandmother made her underclothes and twice a year a colored lady came to the house to sew. Variety stores began to open in the city but her aunt, following Altman catalogues or copying clothes bought in New York and Paris, continued to make dresses for her. Hats were bought in the store but flowers, feathers, and bows from the home "chest" were often added. Her aunt brought back a shirt for her brother from Paris and made copies of it. Maids wore uniforms - pink or blue with a starched white apron for day and black, with a white cap, for dinner. Her family servants did not live in. The Parkers had a house for servants behind their house on Chestnut Street. Thursday night and Sunday night were maids' night out. They left some dishes to be warmed up by the family. [Mary Parker]

[2/81] Doctors made house calls. Minor delivered her in the Biltmore Hospital, gave her books to read beyond her years and was a great friend. Wolfe does a sketch of him in one of his books. Her father was on the hospital board. [Dr. Charles Minor, Thomas Wolfe, Dr. William L. Hilliard, Mary Hyde]

[2/117] When she graduated from college she worked at the Asheville Citizen, covering school events, etc. under the direction of Lathrop, who had come from Raleigh after having been in Paris and London (see enclosure). The second year she became assistant to the editor and wrote a column on Sunday. Her father-in-law-to-be

was part owner of the paper and, having bought Biltmore Village, sold it off in lots. Her husband-to-be also worked at the paper. [Virginia Terrell Lathrop (Mrs. Albert), Robert Latham, George Stephens, George M. Stephens]

[2/156] Before her marriage in 1929 she and her mother traveled in France and England for 6 months. After her marriage she and her husband rented a house at 310 Vanderbilt Road.

[2/178] Mr. Raoul showed property to be bought from Mrs. Vanderbilt for development. They chose an old stage coach inn off Hendersonville Road but when the rent was going to be raised they decided to move and bought a bungalow where the children were raised. Later the house was turned so it can be entered either from Hendersonville Road or Biltmore Forest. [Thomas Raoul, George M. Stephens, Jr., Hugh Waddell Stephens, Eleanor Belknap Stephens]

[2/236] During the Depression the family kept chickens, ducks, sheep for a short time and a cow. George worked at the paper.

[2/258] Several families wanted to start a school for their children, met in 1936, and started the Asheville Country Day School (see enclosure and tape by Eileen McCabe). [Daphne Brown, Eleanor Field, Bill Dodge]

[2/285] Material was ordered - called the Calvert Method - and excellent teachers hired. The children went to the school until time for boarding school or the George School (Quaker, near Philadelphia). [Dorothea Weaver, married to Vern Rhoades, Mary Ward (Mrs. Miller Ward)]

[2/334] Her husband drove her and their son George Jr. to school and snapped the photo included in the book (enclosed).

[2/349] In 1963 no one had servants and everyone entered the house by the back door. She was expecting Mr. and Mrs. Sandburg and had dinner prepared for 4 - when the whole family arrived plus a boyfriend. The Stephens decided to turn the bungalow around. [Mr. and Mrs. Carl Sandburg, Margaret Sandburg, Helga Sandburg]

[2/369] George was too old to join the Army but joined the Civil Flying Corps (see Griffin tape). The last servant she had left to do war work. She had an electric churn to make butter and a neighbor or her son milked the cow. Her husband was running the printing business (see enclosure). She was occupied with the children's education during the war. Her brother joined the army and was sent to the Pacific. [Lacy Griffin, George Waddell]

[2/449] Her brother-in-law was in the army and the family helped Sophie cope with twins. [Edward Martin, Sophie Myers Stephens Martin, Sophie and Elizabeth (twins), Joseph Martin, Edward Stephens Martin]

[2/461] There have been significant changes in Asheville. Her husband was into everything and felt that the different elements would have to get together to help the city recover from the deep Depression (see Katharine Shepard tape). He, like his father, was interested in city planning. [Curtis Bynum]

[2/511] The Cherokee Drama started as a project of the Regional Planning Association. George went to Cherokee and met with Hunter who wrote the pageant. [Herbert Hunter]

[2/545] Her father was one of the men who went to Washington to talk about a park. Her husband was a "timber cruiser" (counting trees). After his graduation from Chapel Hill he spent a year with a team counting trees for a lumber company. The Carolina Mountain Club laid out the Appalachian trail (see enclosed picture of the award). They were in and out of the park all of the time and knew it well when it really was a wilderness.

Her husband was very active in the Pen and Plate Club and has many papers in the files in the North Carolina room of Pack Library (enclosed).

Also see snapshots of three Victorian houses on Biltmore Ave. she remembers and admires.