

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Chattanooga - Hamilton County Public Library

Chattanooga, Tennessee

An Interview With

PENELOPE JOHNSON ALLEN

By

Tom Williams

March 28, 1982

PREFACE

This manuscript is a transcript of an interview conducted for the Oral History Project of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Public Library. The purpose of the project is to capture the first-hand accounts of the social history of the Chattanooga area in the twentieth century.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that the transcript reflects the patterns of the spoken, rather than the written, word. The information is presented as it was recalled by the interviewee at the occasion of the interview and has been edited only for clarity.

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Two indexes have been prepared for locating specific information from either the transcript or the tape. The page index to the transcript is located at the end of this volume. A meter count number has been given in the left margin of the text for locating a section on the tape. It should be noted that this number will vary depending on the equipment used.

Funding for this project was provided by local foundations and organizations, including the Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga, the Chattanooga Area Historical Association, and the National Society of Colonial Dames, Chattanooga Committee. The project was sponsored and administered by the library.

CHATTANOOGA - HAMILTON COUNTY BICENTENNIAL LIBRARY

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

PERSONAL DATA SHEET

Date May 2, 1983

1. Full name (include maiden name and married name, where applies):

Penelope VanDyke Johnson Allen

2. Current address and phone number:

Life Care Center of East Ridge
1500 Fincher Avenue
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37412

3. Date and Place of Birth:

October 27, 1886 Chattanooga, Tennessee

4. Mother's maiden name:

Sue Coffin Cleage

Place of Birth:

Quincy, Illinois

5. Father's name:

James Whiteside Johnson

Place of Birth:

Chattanooga, Tennessee

6. Spouse's name:

Samuel Boyd Allen

7. Children's names and addresses (if possible). Indicate daughters married names:

Penelope Allen Moore (Mrs. Auburn B.)
1710 W. 43rd Street
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Williams: If you would, Mrs. Allen, just recall this WPA [Works Project Administration, historical records] project and how it got initiated first.

Allen: Well, the way it got initiated, I had been going from county to county getting proof of records that I got for people to fill out applications to join the DAR, Colonial Dames, and things like that. I'd go to the original record to prove the statements made.

Knowing that this WPA was going to be brought into existence, I went to a friend of mine who was a close friend of Colonel Harry Berry, who was head of the WPA project in Tennessee. They told me it was to start soon and to get my idea in a shape to present it to them, and they'd see what they could do with it. So when I went to Colonel Berry, he told me that I'd have to have a sponsor, an official of the government. So I went to Mrs. John Trotwood Moore, who was the state librarian at that time; and she thought very favorably of the project, thought that it would be very helpful to a great many people. She became the sponsor to get the project started. So I had very little trouble doing that, because the people that talked to her about it, all viewed it favorably.

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Then the first thing that we did after we organized the project, we got the supervisors in each district of the state to go around and make a survey of the records in every courthouse, the early records, that we thought should be copied. That's the way we went about it; we made a survey the first thing, and a copy of that was given to Mrs. Moore; she kept it.

Williams: You say you set up districts in the state. How many districts were there?

Allen: Yes, we had five; we had upper East Tennessee, lower East Tennessee, a Cumberland one, and the Nashville one, and the Memphis, West Tennessee.

Williams: And each one of those districts would have had a supervisor.

Allen: Had a supervisor under me, and I was the state supervisor.

Williams: You were the state supervisor. Can you remember the names of those five area supervisors?

Allen: Yes, the first one, the upper East Tennessee was Mrs. James Richardson of Morristown. In the Chattanooga district at first I had two different ones; it started out with Miss

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(Allen): Thankful Everett, and then she went into another WPA project, and I had Mrs. John Kelso in lower East Tennessee. Up in the Cumberland region, I had Mrs. Ray Garrett; in Nashville, Miss Matilda Porter; and in West Tennessee, Miss Kathleen Carradine of Memphis. They were all good; I had very good help in my supervisors. Some of them had never worked before, had never
043 done any kind of work, but they soon caught on to do it. They were all capable people, and got along well with the people that we -- the idea of the project was to put people to work, and to plan the project so that they could go to work at once.

Williams: How did you go about selecting the people that would actually work?

Allen: Well, that was all done in the district offices of the WPA. They just assigned so many people to my project, and I took them. I didn't have anything to do with employing them.

Williams: They just selected the names?

Allen: Yes, they were all people who had applied at the different offices; there was an office in each district of the state.

Williams: How many people would work for each district? How many workers did each district get?

Allen: Oh, I don't know; they would just give me so many. We had
054 books to copy. We made a survey of what needed to be copied, and then they would give me people to copy, as many as they wanted to put to work. Sometimes we had one, two, or five, no more than six at one place.

It was copied in longhand because we didn't always have typists in the places where the records were made. It was harder to get typists than it was to get copiers. So we would take it to the district office and have it typed there. We were fortunate in having a good many people who could type. The local supervisor in the districts would take it to their district office and have it typed. It was typed in four copies; the original went to Mrs. Moore, one for the county if they wanted it, one to the DAR, and one for the office that they used to keep up with the project.

Williams: Tell me about the actual processes that they went through, the kind of people you had doing the copying.

Allen: We had all kinds of people. There were people who needed work, and everybody needed work during the WPA because it followed immediately the Depression. We had many excellent
072 people; then we had some that didn't know so much, didn't

(Allen): know how to go about it -- that depended on the local office. We had to put to work the people that they gave us.

076 In one of the projects we had a woman that went to work for me that was a butcher; she had run a butcher shop in the town where she lived. She needed work, so she came up just at that time, so we put her to work. We had people who had written books; we had people who had been preachers. We had a good many people who were well educated; we had some who were not. The work was very uneven in that way.

Williams: You said yesterday, I believe, that some of the people, even though they knew how to read and write, all of them did, but some of them even had trouble with the alphabet.

Allen: Yes, we found many of the books were not indexed. So in order to make it serviceable, we thought everything should be indexed. After we had copied it and typed it, we wanted an index to it. But I found many, many people who didn't know their ABCs; that is, they knew the letters of the alphabet, but they didn't know their sequence. So we had to teach them. We had to start from the bottom up to teach them how to make an index; we had to teach them first the ABCs.

Williams: Well, after these people got into the project, did they have a sense that they were doing good work, that they were making a contribution?

Allen: Yes, they did; they all liked it, and we were very fortunate in that the people in the offices who gave us the labor gave us very good people. We had very few, very few that soldiered on the project.

Williams: What year did this project start?

Allen: I think it started in December 1934. At the very last of December, I went to Nashville and talked to Mrs. Moore, and that was in 1934. In 1935 we got well started.

Williams: And it lasted probably until when?

Allen: About 1945, before we finally closed it out.

Williams: Was most of this work done, or was all of this work done in the area of courthouse records, or were there other aspects?

Allen: We did the courthouse records, and then we copied a good many of the records in the cemeteries and bibles, where we could find them and where the people could get to them. We had to furnish our own transportation, and that's where we had trouble.

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- (Allen): If a person had a car, we could get them to use the car. The worker had to donate the car, had to get his own transportation. No, we had no transportation furnished us at all except for the supervisors.
- Williams: And the government made no allocation for reimbursement of gasoline?
- Allen: No, not to the workers.
- Williams: This was in the days, I know, before air conditioning and modern conveniences. What were some of the working conditions in the courthouses?
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- Allen: Some of them were very, very bad, and then some of them were in good order. It depended on the courthouse clerk. We went to courthouses where I had been previously, and the records would be in good shape; then we'd go there, and they'd be just piled up in a closet. We'd have to get them out and sort them and put them in series before we would copy them. We tried to get some order in it before we started to work, but that depended, and there were all kinds.
- Williams: As you went around from courthouse to courthouse, were some of the officials more cooperative than others?
- Allen: Oh, much more, some of them liked us, made it very pleasant. It was an imposition on the courthouses where they had little room in the county court clerk's office; for instance, where we copied the wills and the court minutes and the marriages, in some of them it was quite an inconvenience, and some of the judges didn't like it. We had one old man in -- I won't mention the county where it was --
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- Williams: Why don't you mention the county? It's a long time ago.
- Allen: It was in Maury County at Columbia. He didn't -- the judge -- I think his name was Whitthorne.
- Williams: Whitthorne?
- Allen: Yes. It inconvenienced him and he didn't like it. Another place we had trouble with space was Rhea County. The county court clerk's office there, you know how small it is, and their records were all piled up in a closet behind the office, piled clear to the ceiling. We had to get them down, no place to put them; we had to take them out in the hall and sort them. But the workers didn't mind; they were glad to have the work because it was at a time when people didn't have anything. They were very glad to have it.
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Williams: In some families these may have been the only family members that were working at all.

Allen: Yes, that's true, that's true. We've copied cemeteries, and
142 bibles, if they could find bibles -- diaries; we did a number of very interesting diaries, some that -- oh, I was trying to think of the man at the University of Georgia, Confederate diaries that he took and copied to use down there in his work -- what is -- Coulter.

Williams: E. Merton Coulter?

Allen: Yes.

Williams: I've read several things by him. I guess as you were going into the project and after you got through, you probably realized that some of the records you copied may have been destroyed even after your copy work, so you probably saved --

Allen: We've got the only thing, yes, there were a lot of them had been stored in barns up in Sumner County. In Gallatin they had taken a lot of records there and stored them out in the barns. We got those and sent them down to Mrs. Moore, and she found any number of Andrew Jackson's signatures in the records that we sent to her office, found a number where he had tried cases up at Gallatin. The things that turned up were very interesting; it was a very interesting project.

158 We had a man here in Chattanooga, in this area, he was a minister that worked for us. He loved to go out and copy the cemetery records and he did it on his own. He'd find a cemetery and that's how we got all the ones that are in the -- we made a copy for the Chattanooga Public Library and then a copy for Nashville, and for the DAR in Washington.

Williams: Do you remember that minister's name?

Allen: No, I can't think of it right now, let me see, Mr. -- no I can't think of it. He enjoyed the work and he worked all the time at it; he thought up things to do or where he'd find records. I don't think he's still living, I believe he's dead.

Williams: He was a Chattanooga man?

Allen: Yes.

Williams: Do you remember what denomination he was?

Allen: No, I don't.

Williams: Not only in the area of official records then did you all pre-
170 serve things, but no doubt some of the diaries you found and
some of the bibles you found are no longer in existence.

Allen: We found some very interesting diaries that some Confederate --
in Knoxville they found one of -- I'm trying to think of the
woman that had -- she was a big suffragette, she worked for
suffrage and she did a lot of woman's work there -- was, I
think, president of one of the Ossoli Circles which was a
woman's organization.

Williams: What circle was that?

Allen: Ossoli, O-S-S-O-L-I, that's what they called it, Ossoli Cir-
cle.

Williams: I never heard of that one.

Allen: Didn't you?

Williams: No.

Allen: It's a woman's organization in Knoxville, been there for years;
my mother-in-law belonged to it.

Williams: In your capacity as state supervisor, did you get involved in
any of the detail work, or most of your time was spent --

Allen: Most of my time was spent traveling from place to place. You
185 see, we had to get the labor from the general WPA organiza-
tion; it was getting labor and supplying it for the project,
and being sure that we had enough records, the proper records
for the proper place because it wasn't -- they could copy some
place, and other places they could type, and we'd have to get
these that had been done in longhand to a typist some way, and
it might be some distance. Of course, we had to furnish all
of our transportation; there wasn't any transportation fur-
nished. It was for the supervisor, for me and for Mrs. Rich-
ardson, Miss Carradine. Miss Tillie Porter was one of the
best supervisors I had; she was in Nashville, she was wonder-
ful, and never had worked a day before in her life.

Williams: Is that right? What kind of transportation did you have?
You didn't have your own car, did you rent a car?

Allen: No, I had my car. My brother was stationed in Nashville at
that time, and he took me around from place to place. Then
199 when I'd get on a project, the supervisor on the project took
me; they all had cars. Most of the time, like in upper East
Tennessee with Mrs. Richardson, or in Nashville with Miss

- (Allen): Tillie, up in Carthage with Mrs. Ray Garrett, or in Memphis with Miss Carradine, they'd take me to the different places. Miss Carradine would take me up to Jackson; we had a project up there, a very good one, and we'd have to go up there and check on them to see how they were doing. She generally had one person that acted kind of like a foreman in charge of the project on the spot. There was always one or two people that were quite capable in the group, and she'd go around with the supervisor and would soon size it up.
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- Williams: Let's talk about the project as it was in Chattanooga and the county courthouse here. How many people were working here in Chattanooga and some of the names?
- Allen: It was a different number; sometimes it would be, I think, never less than about four or five, sometimes eight or ten; it would vary according to the amount of labor that they had. See, the whole project was uneven; you couldn't say we'd have five people because you didn't know whether you would have five people that would fit into your category that they'd give you from the general employment office. We had to work what they'd give us; sometimes they'd give us people when we didn't expect them. They'd say, "We've got two people that we want you to put to work," and we would have to enlarge our -- but we always had a stock of copied manuscripts from the counties around that we'd brought in to be typed here in Chattanooga. In that way we tried to keep ahead of it.
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- Williams: What are any names you can remember of people associated with it here in Chattanooga?
- Allen: Miss Thankful Everett and Mrs. John Kelso were two of the supervisors here, and then there was a Mrs. Eagan that worked on the project, and I'm trying to think of the man that --
- Williams: I got some names last night off of one of these WPA project documents that I have at home, and three of the names were Miss Mary Rowles --
- Allen: Oh yes, Miss Mary Rowles. She brought in some of the most interesting records that we had to copy, were records that she had inherited because she was a Hooke descendant. Robert Hooke was her ancestor, and Judge Rowles was her grandfather, and they were all people of prominence in the early history of the county. Miss Mary brought us any number of valuable records that we copied that were not only of county, but state-wide, interest. Yes, she was one of our most --
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- We had another woman like that in the Morristown office, Mrs. Armstrong from Rogersville. The Armstrong family up

(Allen): there was one of the old families in Rogersville, and she brought us a lot of records from up there.

In Memphis, Miss Carradine got some from the -- she got a diary over there, I'm trying to think of the woman that she got it from that was so interesting. One of them was a Confederate dairy of a woman that had lived in Knoxville during the Civil War, and her experience in living in Knoxville -- Crozier, Crozier diary was what it was. We had Miss Mary Crozier and Miss -- I'm trying to think of her sister; there were two sisters that lived together, Miss Mary was one. She got that diary in Memphis, a niece in Memphis had it.

259 Of all the people that we had, we didn't have anybody that wasn't interested in doing the work of the project; they all enjoyed it, all liked it.

Williams: Another name on this document was Miss Stella Grider as a copyist. Do you remember her?

Allen: No, I don't remember her.

Williams: The other name was Mrs. Ike Smith.

Allen: Was she here?

Williams: A copyist, yes.

Allen: No, I don't remember them.

Williams: You talked about the field work and copying the tombstone records in the cemeteries; were there any amusing incidents that you can recall?

Allen: I'm trying to think. Since we copied the one out at Concord [Baptist] Church [Hamilton County], those people out there said that's the only record they have of a lot of the tombstones in their church.

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End Tape 1, Side 1
Begin Tape 1, Side 2

Williams: You were talking about the Concord Church, and the fact that they say that your record of their cemetery is the only one that they have now.

Allen: Yes, this secretary out there talked to a friend of mine, and she told her that these churches send their inquiries to the WPA or to the library, to go down there and get the WPA records and see what they did. I've had that happen to me several

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(Allen): times; they told me at the library and [places] like Concord Church -- they send them down to the library to look at the record we made. It's the only record that they have of the tombstones in the cemetery out there.

013 We have had several other churches, we had several up in, I think it was, Gallatin; it was under the Nashville project, but I think it was the Gallatin Church. Then there was a church out east of Nashville on the main road coming here. We had another burial up in Grundy County, down in the valley after you get across the mountain, that we copied. It was out in a field, and they copied the tombstones, these big box tombs; nobody knew anything about it, but they were all out there. I believe it was the old Hoard Cemetery.

Williams: Hord, H-O-R-D?

Allen: H-O-A-R-D, I believe. I think it's a corruption of the name Howard, but they called it Hoard. It was the Hoard family.

Williams: There's another thing I wonder about. As you went to those county courthouses, and those people themselves had to see the shape that their own records were in, it probably made a
030 lot of them more aware of the records and made them --

Allen: Some of them, it did, and some of them didn't want to be bothered with it -- the politicians didn't want to be bothered with it. We would offer copies to any county; you see, we had no supplies. Mrs. Moore furnished hers; the state library furnished the material, the paper, and we used the very best rag paper and the carbon paper to copy it with. They were offered a copy if they wanted to furnish the supplies, but many of them didn't want it.

Williams: Many of the counties?

Allen: No, we went to every judge; that's what the supervisor was supposed to do, and I'd check behind them. They went to every judge and asked them if they wanted a copy. If they would furnish the material, they could have a copy, but the WPA wouldn't furnish the material for it. Some of them took it, some of them didn't; some of them took one and didn't take them all.

045 The DAR got a copy of the earlier ones, but after we had run for a while, the state regents changed in the DAR, and the successor of the one that was in office when I started didn't want to spend that money for that particular project, so she cut it off. In Washington at the DAR library they've got as many as the first regent took, state regent, but when her

(Allen): 054 successor cut the project off, we didn't continue because they had to furnish the material.

Williams: So how many records do you think that you left undone, that had to be left undone because of the state regents.

Allen: We started from the earliest record in every county -- that would be hard to -- I don't know -- there were a number that were copied in longhand that weren't typed. I don't know what they did with them; they were left in Nashville. Somebody told me one time that they took them out to a warehouse they had out on the Charlotte Pike and put them all in files out there. I've been told that; I don't know what they did with them.

Williams: They may still be there today.

Allen: They were in the office in Nashville when I left the project, that's all I know. They took from the district offices, the one in Chattanooga, the person who was in charge -- you see, there was another project, the Historical Records Survey that was a national project. Well, we started independently and we operated for about three years before they were organized. Then it was the national project, and we were put under that, but they allowed my project to run on just as it had before; 073 the Copy and Transcription Unit, it was called.

Williams: Copy and Transcription Unit.

Allen: It was the Transcription Unit, the way they called it. We called it "copying" to make it plain as to what we were doing.

Williams: As you went to Rhea County, you know, I've always heard about Mr. [George D.] Barnes and the records. Was this prior to Mr. Barnes' interest in the county records?

Allen: Oh no, it was after. When Mr. Barnes got the records that he got there, they were all packed up in dress boxes or scattered in the basement. The sheriff -- somewhere they had a change in officials there, and somebody told the janitor to clean the place up, and he loaded them all on the wagon and was going down the street with them. Mr. Barnes had a museum up over the bank, and he saw this man going down there. He went down and asked him what he had on there, and when he saw it, 088 he said, "Well I want those. I'll take them."

I think he gave him five dollars for the wagon full of things, and then when he got them, he saw they were just everything, just gathered up and put in there, all kinds of records. His sister lived across the street from me, and he

(Allen): and I were friends. He brought them down and asked me what to do with them, and I said, "Well I'll sort them out for you," so I did. He found there were Justice of the Peace records, peace warrants, I guess you'd call them.

Williams: Bonds, peace warrants.

Allen: Bonds, and he had enough for -- they were signatures -- and he made a frieze around his office of governors of the state starting with William Blount and all the way past the Civil War, up to the 1880's. He put them in succession around his office there over the bank. He just happened on to them; he didn't know anything about it until the man was going down the street with them loaded on the wagon. The sheriff ordered them taken out of there and cleaned up. It should have been cleaned up, but not the way it was done.

Williams: What shape do you think that the Hamilton County records were in as compared to Rhea County when you got to them? Where were they? Were they all in the courthouse when you got there?

Allen: When we started I think they were, I'm not sure they were all in the courthouse; they had a warehouse over across the ridge, you know, down there before you get to Valdeau.

Williams: I know they have it today. I didn't know they had it then.

Allen: Yes, they had it then, and there were a lot of things that were over there that we had to send over there and get. We had trouble getting them, but we did, I mean some that we wanted to copy because the early Hamilton records are in worse shape than a lot of other counties that we had. We had some [counties' records] where their series in each department was good, and we could follow it right along, but Hamilton -- there'd be a chancery book here, and a circuit court book of minutes there, and so -- nothing in series.

Williams: So none of your people actually went across the river into the warehouse to get the records. You sent for them and --

Allen: Yes, we had to send somebody over there with the county; they made us send somebody that would take -- they generally took the work over there, and the worker would get what they --

Williams: So it's possible that you didn't get all the records that were in that warehouse that you really should have gotten, because whoever went to get them just didn't see them or --

Allen: Of course, that we'll never know, but I think they did. I

(Allen): think the workers knew pretty well what they were doing. You see, they had copied records from other counties where they had the series, where it was more complete. They had done records here for Rhea or for Roane; for McMinn we had pretty good records up there. None of them in this district were as good as they were up in the First District. Up in Washington County they had better, older records and more complete. Williamson County had good records, and they'd always kept their records in pretty good shape in Greene County; they had their marriages and their minutes, wills, all in books.

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Williams: How would you characterize the support that you got from the very top officials in the state? Were they completely cooperative and supportive of you in this project?

Allen: Well, I think that Mrs. -- we were under Mrs. -- oh what was the name -- under Mrs. Betty Luck who was the assistant to Mrs. -- the woman that was the assistant to Colonel Berry, she had charge of all the women's work -- Coppedge, Elizabeth Coppedge from Memphis, was her name. We were under her, but we didn't see her very much; she didn't know much about this type, or nothing about this type of work. She was entertained with the top officials; she was the social representative.

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Williams: Well, somebody has to do that too.

Allen: Yes, that's right.

Williams: And sometimes that's a pretty important --

Allen: It takes all kinds to make the show go.

Williams: At the time this WPA project was going in Tennessee, did they have a similar project in surrounding states, or was Tennessee the leader?

Allen: It was one of the first to organize this type. The project that I supervised was organized at least, maybe, two years before the national historic survey. When they organized it, they put us under that, but they didn't change my operation, the way we operated. They had another one here, the Historical Records Survey that Arch Faidley was the supervisor of. Young Arch, he was Arch, junior, I believe.

Williams: And that was another distinct project?

Allen: It was a historical records survey; they made a survey of all the records, and they surveyed each book. Well, we made a survey, we listed each book separately, and the title of the book, and the --

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- Williams: The period it covered.
- Allen: Yes, what we wanted to copy, but we didn't go into great detail about the size and all of that that they did.
- Williams: How did this project come to an end? Describe the ending of
189 it. Is it all of a sudden you get a letter, or did you wind it down?
- Allen: It was just scratched. I left before it was final. I turned over everything in my office here to Arch Faidley, the Historical Records Survey, and he put them in a truck and took them to Nashville, what was left, and that's the last I know of it. It was put under the girls that were operating on my project there; they wound it up. They didn't finish it up, they just cut it off to stop the work. They told me that they sent them down to this warehouse on the Charlotte Pike.
- Williams: One other thing I wonder about: the workers, for instance, the ones in Chattanooga, were they selected from the immediate area or did they go far afield to select workers?
- Allen: They were mostly from Chattanooga and Missionary Ridge. No, they didn't go -- no, they were all from here, Hamilton County. We had some of them that lived out on the ridge, lived out in the county some -- the project was county-wide. It was a
217 county project, not a Chattanooga project.
- Williams: Well, I don't want to get too personal, but do you remember any of the amounts of money that were paid to any of the workers, or what kind of salaries were involved, the details for payment?
- Allen: No, I'm not good on figures, and I don't remember. Let's see, I've got one or two slips or things that I could show you.
- Williams: They were just paid by the hour, is that the way it worked?
- Allen: I don't really remember whether it was paid by the hour or by the day or by the week. I don't know.
- Williams: Is there anything else about this project that we haven't covered? I can't think of any questions to ask about it any more.
- Allen: No, except that I had very strong backing from the DAR and
232 from the women's clubs in Tennessee. We had excellent cooperation from all the women. You see this was just the beginning; women were beginning to take part in public affairs and

- (Allen): things of that sort. Many of them found themselves out of work, with no money at home. You don't know what the Depression was like. Anybody that didn't have anything, it just
244 came on like that, and hit the country. Bad thing, I think --
[deleted] They pulled the country out of a bad jam when he
[President Roosevelt] organized this, or Mr. House, his assistant, who was, I think, his adviser.
- Williams: Well now, I'm going to leave that on the tape because I think that should be in it. I don't think there's anything wrong.
- Allen: I do think that he did pull the country out of a jam. The
260 country was in a bad -- nobody had anything, and no place to get it. The idea of the whole thing was wrong -- I mean I think they should've organized a plan of work and said, "The work's here, now anybody that wants work, come and get it." They put a lot of people to work; some of them worked and some of them didn't. A lot of them just stood on their shovels and didn't work at all; a lot of people boondoggled. We
271 had people that worked for me that [deleted]
- 283 Over in Sequatchie Valley, over in Pikeville, people couldn't get on the WPA who were deserving, who wanted to, because they didn't belong to the right branch of the Democratic party. They're all Democrats over there, and if they didn't belong to the right faction, they couldn't get on. I know that to be a fact; I know things that happened over there. We had a project over there; one man was killed -- [deleted]
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- Williams: I sure do hate to take that off the tape, but I will if you
298 want it off. I see why you wouldn't want the politics --
- Allen: No, I don't want anything about politics on it. I'm not in politics.
- Williams: Well, I'll take that off the tape because you do know that this is going to be an oral history project.
- Allen: No (laughs), I'm not an oral history project.
- Williams: Well no, but you're a part of it, but that I'll take off.
- Allen: I don't want to leave that on there. I'm a very opinionated person.
- Williams: Those are the best kind.
- Allen: No, I'm not sure they are.

Williams: I am; I'm opinionated too, and I know they're the best kind.

Allen: I'm opinionated but I had one -- this supervisor I had in
313 Nashville, Miss Tillie Porter -- Miss Sarah Berry, Colonel
Berry's sister was her best friend; that's how she got her
job. Miss Tillie had never done a day's work in her life,
but she was one of the nicest people; and the girls all just
adored her. One day one girl said to her, "Miss Tillie, we
love you because you have such nice manners," and she said,
"Do you know, Mary, my mother always said 'Good manners come
from good feelings'."

Williams: A good philosophy. I'm going to leave that on there; that's
important.

Allen: She had them; she was that kind of a person. She got along
328 with everybody. She never had worked any, never done any
kind of work! -- anything, except in high school she might
have dusted her rosewood furniture in her home which she had
plenty of, but she never had done anything. She came in there
and worked like anybody else, and I never knew a lovelier per-
son. The girls all just adored her.

Williams: You say "the girls." Were most of the workers girls?

Allen: Yes, most of them, we had a few men but not too many men.

Williams: Can you remember any of them, their names?

Allen: The men -- no I don't remember.

Williams: As this project wound to a close, what was the next thing,
what was your next thing in life?

Allen: My next operation?

Williams: Your next operation.

Allen: Let me see, what did I do next?

Williams: You said this lasted until about 1945.

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Allen: What did I do? I can't even think what I did then.

End Tape 1, Side 2
Begin Tape 2, Side 1

Allen: My earliest education was just spotted. I went to kindergarten in St. Elmo for a while. When my father got ready to really put me in school, he took me to town, and I spent my first year with my Aunt Helen Philips [Mrs. R. N., "Bob"] on [109 East] Sixth Street between Cherry and Walnut. I was about five years old, six, and I spent that whole winter with her. I started in the second grade at the old First District School up at McCallie Avenue and Douglas Street where the [Chattanooga Public] library later was. A Miss May Barr was my first teacher; she was afterwards Mrs. Farrington.

I was a country girl, I didn't know anybody and I was very shy. I didn't really take to school very easily because I'd run kind of wild in the country. Coming to town everything was new and foreign to me, but I soon got accustomed to it. I had one little friend who mothered me and took me under her arm; she came and put her arm around me and took me around in the room, and she remained my dear friend as long as she lived. Her name was Corinne Harris. We were chums together, went all through school together.

I liked school. I really enjoyed it. My first year I would walk up to the corner of Walnut Street from where my aunt lived, and my uncle's cousin, Gail Gillespie, lived up near the corner; she'd take my hand and take me to school every morning and bring me home.

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Williams: Where was that school?

Allen: It was the First District up at Douglas and McCallie Avenue, where the library was; it was up there, the old First District School. Professor [Benjamin F.] Hickman was the principal, and Miss May Barr was my teacher.

Williams: How long were you at that school?

Allen: I was there seven years, I went through the seventh grade. My second teacher was one of the best teachers I had in my whole life, Miss Lucy Holtzclaw, Mrs. McDonald. She was one of the best teachers that I ever had anywhere.

Williams: Lucy Holtzclaw?

Allen: She taught the third grade. Oh, I thought Miss Lucy was just the last word; she was such a good teacher. She had a big globe in the corner of the room that she had a carpenter come and make. [It] was on a pulley from the ceiling and it had all the continents on it. She was great on geography, and we had to know where everything was, and had to be able to go and point it out. She was great on demonstration. She started

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(Allen)
044 the class every morning with a verse from the Psalms or the Scriptures, generally from the Psalms. And now they don't want Bible in the schools; I think it's ridiculous, I think the Psalms never hurt anybody. You learn a lot you wouldn't learn later if you had to learn the best things they had in the school.

 She was a magnificent teacher. If she didn't teach me anything else, she taught me how to spell two words. I was never a very good speller, and I remember once I couldn't spell "separate." She kept me in after school and made me write it a hundred times, and she did the same with "violet." I can spell those two words if I can't spell anything else. (laughter) I wrote each one of them a hundred times over and over, and I missed the last car to St. Elmo, the one that I took ordinarily. I had to wait and go home with my father. She was thorough.

Williams: Who were some of the other teachers there, do you remember any of the other teachers?

Allen: Oh, I remember every teacher I had. Miss Lucy was in the third, and Miss Weir in the fourth --

Williams: Miss Weir?

Allen: Weir, Miss Nellie Weir, W-E-I-R. And then Miss [Nellie E.] Cooke was one, and when I got to the seventh grade, Miss Clara Wood; and the eighth grade, Miss Margaret Sharp, who was afterwards Mrs. Bob Williams.

Williams: I see, so you went through the eighth grade?

Allen: Went from the second through the eighth -- I went there seven years.

Williams: I see.

Allen: Then I went to City High.

Williams: Where was City High at that time?

Allen: When I started it was on the old McMillin home* over on Seventh Street.

Williams: About how far out was the McMillin home? I was trying to remember.

* Chattanooga City High School was located in the D. C. McMillin House, 411 Gilmer (now East Eighth Street) from 1897-1904.

- Allen: Well, it was back of the Interstate [Insurance building]. I've got a picture of it, I guess.
- Williams: Was that the same building that was later called Dickinson?
- Allen: Yes, it was called -- I don't know whether they called --
- Williams: Dickinson Junior High, later.
- Allen: They called it Dickinson -- they tore the wooden house down
067 and built a brick building and called that Dickinson. It wasn't Dickinson when I went there; it was just called City High School.
- Williams: What do you remember about your first experience at City High School, the principal, the first teacher?
- Allen: Well, I was in Miss Grace McCallie's room; she was my room teacher. Fred [H.] Phillips [,Jr.] taught us meteorology; he'd take us on the roof and teach us that; he was one of the men teachers there. Professor [Henry D.] Wyatt was the principal; he taught us singing. "Beautiful Blue Danube," we'd have every commencement.
- Williams: He was also the commissioner, wasn't he, Commissioner of Education?
- Allen: No, that was Professor [Albert T.] Barrett; he was the superintendent of public schools. Miss Daisy Barrett was his secretary, his daughter. But Professor Wyatt was principal at
079 the high school when I -- I was there three years; they had the three-year high school when I went there. You know you graduated after three years. Then I went to Chicago a year for school, to Miss Starrett's School for Girls, before I could get into an accredited college.
- Williams: Was that the reason for going to Starrett, to prepare you for college?
- Allen: Yes, see, you couldn't go with three years to an accredited college, you were required four years of high school work, and I'd only had three.
- Williams: Why did you decide not to go the fourth year at City?
- Allen: They didn't have four years. I think they had put in something of the fourth year, but it was voluntary, and it was not a regular -- it didn't prepare you for college; you had to have four years of Latin and four years of history and
088 four years of English, and let me see, two years of foreign

- (Allen): language. I didn't have the foreign language; I'd had three years of Latin, all they had. I had to take another year of Latin; I had four years of Latin before I went to college, and two after I went to college.
- Williams: Was the Starrett School a good school?
- Allen: Oh yes, it's one of the best girls' schools.
- Williams: Did you enjoy it?
- Allen: Yes, it's an excellent girls' school.
- Williams: Did you enjoy being away from home?
- Allen: I had an aunt that lived in Chicago, and I went there to stay
094 with her and went to school.
- Williams: What was her name?
- Allen: She was Mrs. Bob Philips; she was the same one that I lived with when I was in the second grade.
- Williams: I see. Okay, then you left the Starrett School and went to college. Tell us about that.
- Allen: Yes, I went to Western College at Oxford, Ohio. It's now part of Miami University; it's been made a part of Miami.
- Williams: Western?
- Allen: Western College at Oxford, Ohio.
- Williams: How long were you there?
- Allen: I was there three years -- till my father died. That was the reason I left, I didn't graduate. I've often wished that I had taken a course and graduated from college; I should have gotten my degree, I should have done that.
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- Williams: I saw something in the paper about you spending some time abroad.
- Allen: My father had made arrangements for me to go abroad with a party the year he died. In 1908 I spent that summer abroad, was there four months. I went with a small party [which included] a teacher at the school, my Latin teacher that was a very good friend of mine.
- Williams: What are some of the things that you saw in Europe?

Allen: Oh I saw everything from Gibraltar clear through to -- We
108 landed at Gibraltar. We went on the White Star [Line], got
a picture of the boat that I went on, the White Star's
Canopic.

Williams: How do you spell that?

Allen: C-A-N-O-P-I-C.

Williams: Tell me about that trip, where you started and things --

Allen: We started in New York, then we went to Boston, and then we
sailed from there. We spent a day in the Azores; and then
went from there to Gibraltar, and spent a day at Gibraltar,
got off the boat and went to a bull fight at Gibraltar. We
went over to a Spanish town and went all through the caves on
the rock, saw all of that. Then we went from there to Naples
[Italy], and that's where we really started the European trip.
We went to Pompeii and Sorrento and Capri; I've seen the Isle
of Capri and the caves and the divers that always dived for
coins. Then we went up on top of Capri, clear up to where
Nero had his palace. That was one of the most delightful days;
I remember everything that I did that day, and that's been a
long time ago. [noise in background from nursing home]

Williams: How long did that trip last?

Allen: About four months. Let me see -- I think it was the first
127 of June, the very first part of June, and I was gone four
months. Coming back we sailed from Liverpool up the Irish
Sea and had a terrific storm that night. We went to bed and
when we got in the berth everything was all right and quiet,
and the storm came up. When we got up the next morning,
everything was in the floor of the room -- we hadn't strapped
things down. We didn't know the storm was coming up and it
was awful.

Williams: Did you get seasick?

Allen: Seasick, oh mercy! I get seasick if I look at the water.
The most seasick I ever was, was crossing the English Chan-
nel, oh boy!

Williams: When you got back to the United States, where did you land?

Allen: We landed in Montreal and came down the Hudson River. I was
140 with this teacher of mine, and she lived at Point Pleasant,
New Jersey; her sister lived there. I had visited her there
before, the summer before, so we went down there. Then I
came on home.

- Williams: How did you get home? Describe the trip.
- Allen: We came by train from Montreal down to New York City and then went down to Point Pleasant, New Jersey, which is on the coast, just almost to Atlantic City. Then I took the train and went back to Chattanooga. My mother had gotten me a job to teach, see my father had died that spring, so I went to teaching. I taught at North St. Elmo a year, almost a year, not quite a year.
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- Williams: Did your college prepare you for the teaching profession?
- Allen: Anybody could teach.
- Williams: Describe that experience.
- Allen: I think every woman ought to teach a year before they get married. You'd learn a lot.
- Williams: Did your mother just get the job? She just decided that she should?
- Allen: Yes, she went to Mr. John A. Patten and told him that I was coming home and that I needed a job. He said, "Well, I can put her in a place at North St. Elmo." He had control of all that politics down there, and so he got me a job there.
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- Williams: Describe your first [job] -- did you face it with trepidation? Were you looking forward to it, or what?
- Allen: Well, I didn't mind; I've never been the shiftless sort. I mean I didn't mind going to teach. I had some very unruly [students], then I had some very good pupils in my room. I had Lorena Bates, Creed Bates' sister, she was a pupil of mine. Mrs. Squire Bates, Lafayette Bates, was my homeroom teacher. They were just organizing -- what is it they called -- where the mothers all --
- Williams: PTA.
- Allen: PTA -- She was one of the earliest ones to organize it in Hamilton County. *
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- Williams: Now this was --
- Allen: Creed Bates' mother, Mrs. -- they always called her -- Squire

* She was one of the three founders of the Chattanooga branch of the PTA in 1904.

(Allen): Bates. He was Lafayette, I think Lafayette Bates.
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Williams: You started to say you had some unruly students too.

Allen: Yes, I had the worst boy in the school, and I used to have to take him [to the office of] Stacy Nelson; did you ever know him?

Williams: Seems I've heard of him.

Allen: At Central -- he was principal of Central; he was my principal when I taught there, and I had to take this boy to Stacy Nelson every day. He just could not behave; he just was obstreperous, and he talked back and talked ugly, and I don't like ugly. I can stand bad action more than I can bad conversation. Oh, he was impudent and I don't like impudence; I just can't tolerate it. I used to take him to Stacy Nelson every day.

Williams: What would Mr. Nelson do with him?

Allen: Keep him in his office until time to go. He didn't have time to teach and he'd just make him sit there, but he could forcefully make him sit there.
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Williams: As a teacher, did you specialize, or did a teacher in those days teach every subject?

Allen: No, I taught the -- what is it -- the fourth and fifth grades, I taught two grades. It was a small county school, you know.

Williams: What size classes, how many pupils?

Allen: I had about thirty-four children in each class. I had a big roomful.

Williams: And so you just taught all subjects to the same?

Allen: Everything.

Williams: Do you think you were a good teacher?

Allen: No, I don't know whether I was good or not. I made them learn the things -- I tried to teach them like I had been taught, and I had some good teachers. I had Miss Lucy Holtzclaw and Miss Tommie Duffy and Miss Grace McCallie; I had all those people for my teachers, and they were good teachers. Miss Lucy was the best. When I think over my whole life, I think she was the best teacher I ever had. She made you get interested
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(Allen): in your subject and want to know more about it. She created an interest, and that's what you have got to do; you can't just teach a person. You can learn a page of something, and then you forget it the next day; but if you create an interest in that thing, it'll stay with you.

Williams: Can you remember the names of any of the other of your students?
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Allen: Yes, I had two -- I had Lorena Bates and I had the two Dillard girls and I had Dora Turner (she's Mrs. Marvin Lamb, she's still living in St. Elmo now). Her husband worked in the post office out there. Let me see who else I had -- I don't remember any of the boys, but this boy's name was Clark something; I know his first name was Clark. I had a little Turner boy in there; I can think of him, can't think of his first name. I had Dora, his sister, and then I had the little Turner boy; one was in the fourth, the other was in the fifth grade. See, I had two grades to teach, and I never taught any more.

Williams: You just taught there one year?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Williams: Well did you get a better deal somewhere else?

Allen: No, I got married.

Williams: And your husband's name --

Allen: Sam Allen. He was from Knoxville. I'd been going with Sam though for a long time.

Williams: He was from Knoxville, but you met him here in Chattanooga?

Allen: No, I met him in Knoxville. I had kin that I visited up there, and I went up there to meet them. They're the ones that had Hope's clock, the clock that was out in front of Hope's Jewelry Store [Hope Brothers and Company]. They had one like the one that's Fischer's clock [W. F. Fischer and Brothers Company, Chattanooga]. My cousin was clerking in a haberdashery store next door. Jim Hall [J. S. Hall's Sons] was the name of a store there in Knoxville. Sam was clerking in there, and Cousin Willie and I were walking down the street, and we stopped to look in Hope's window, and he came out for some reason. She said, "Come here, Sammy, I've got a girl that I want you to meet." She introduced me to him.

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Williams: Then you left, and you went to live in Knoxville?

- Allen: Yes, after I married I went to live in Knoxville.
- Williams: And you lived there for how long? I knew that at some point you all were at Tate Springs [Grainger County, Tennessee]. I'd like to know about Tate Springs.
- Allen: 223 I lived in Knoxville; I lived with my in-laws. We went to live with Sam's family, and then we built a little house, a one-story house, on a lot that we bought down there below near this Ed Kennedy, who was Gus Aston's sister. Sam met a man that owned a farm out on Black Oak Ridge, out between Inskip -- do you know where Inskip is [Knox County, Tennessee]? -- and Fountain City, about halfway between the two. He [Sam] wanted to build a house out there; it went back up on Black Oak Ridge and down in the back, and we went out there to live. We built a house out there and lived out there for about a year; oh, let me see, a year or two years. My child was born out there; she was born on Black Oak Ridge.
- Williams: How did you all get to Tate Springs?
- Allen: 237 Well, Sam was a great organizer, he liked to organize things. We had gone to Tate Springs, everybody in Knoxville would go up there, and it was a very fashionable and a very popular resort for people in the Knoxville area. They'd go up there every weekend to dances and drink the water just because it was a place to go. Sam had the idea that -- the Tomlinson family had owned it since the Civil War. They bought it from the Tate family. He organized this company in Knoxville to buy the Springs and take it over and manage it. He wanted to be the manager. He went up there; he was manager for the company that he organized. That's how we went up there. His father was in the furniture business in Knoxville; his grandfather had been in the furniture business there, had it for years.
- Williams: How was life in Tate Springs? I've never been to Tate Springs.
- Allen: 257 It was just lovely. The easiest time I ever had in my whole life was at Tate Springs. It was a very fashionable summer resort, but I liked it in the winter better than I did in the summer, because we had horses to ride and plenty of places to go. I mean the country, I like country, I'm a country girl. I like in the country better than I do town.
- Williams: At Tate Springs what were your main duties? You didn't have any duties, I imagine.
- Allen: Yes, I did; I ran a hotel. I can run a hotel.
- Williams: What were some of the things that you did?

- Allen: 262 Well, don't you know what the housekeeper of a hotel does? She goes around and sees that the servants, the maids, clean up the rooms, and they lay out the linen, and you do all of that.
- Williams: You've worked all your life, haven't you?
- Allen: Well, I like to work, I like to work. I think there's nothing as unrewarding as idleness. If I don't do one thing, I'm doing something else.
- Williams: At Tate Springs did you become involved in any kind of genealogical or historical work?
- Allen: 274 Yes, I used to do a lot; see, a lot of my ancestors came from Grainger County; I've got five revolutionary ancestors buried in the county, and I've been to every grave of everyone of them. Yes, I looked up a lot of my relatives, people I knew were related that I had never seen. One day -- one week it was -- my sister and I took a horse and buggy and we drove all over the county and went to see people that were related to my great-grandmother. She was born in Grainger County, at Buffalo. Do you know where Buffalo Springs is?
- Williams: Yes, what was her name?
- Allen: Her name was Mary Massengale; she was a Massengale. Massengale's Mill up there is all hers.
- Williams: What was her husband's name?
- Allen: Colonel James A. Whiteside; she was his first wife. She was in school in Nashville, and he was in the legislature and he met her in Nashville, but he married her in Grainger County. The marriage license is up there; I've seen it.
- Williams: When you came away from Tate Springs, what was the next thing in life?
- Allen: The next thing in life was the war came on then -- World War I -- and things were clouding up and getting very bad, and the hotel business fell off; there wasn't anything to do. They had to close the [Tate Springs] hotel. My husband had a friend who had recently bought a place in Virginia, down on James River. He said to my husband, "Would you like to go down there and run the place for me?" Sam said, "Yes, until we find something else, it would suit us fine." So we went down there.
- Williams: 294 Was it a farm?
- Allen: Yes, small, very small, about fifteen acres; it was right on

(Allen): James River, river shore, at the east end of Jamestown Island.

Williams: Then at some point you became involved in war work. How did you get from the farm?

Allen: Well, the war came on; all the men went to war, and there was nobody left but women. DuPont started this big plant over at Penniman, which is across from the peninsula from James River, over on the York River. I guess it's about thirty or forty miles across there. Everybody that was left at home went over there to work. There wasn't anything to do; you could go over there and work if you wanted to. In fact, they were hollering for people to come over there.

Williams: So you just went to the plant and applied for a job.

Allen: Went to the employment office. Of course, I had had enough education, and they wanted me to work in the office, and I said, "I don't want to work in the office; I want to work on the line." So they put me on the [line] -- filling large-caliber shells.

Williams: Explain how that worked. What did you actually do?

Allen: In the large-caliber area we loaded these 9.2s, they called them, and 10-inch gun shells. The shells were shipped there from Combustion [Engineering] here in Chattanooga, but the shells had to be cleaned. They came in boxcars or flatcars, and we had to clean them and load them, all but the booster, which is put on on the battlefield. I was the supervisor; I wasn't there long until I was made assistant to the supervisor on the line.

319 The man that was the supervisor was from Michigan, and he didn't know a thing about Virginia or how to get along with those people up there at all, and I was his buffer. I'd lived there long enough, and I knew a lot of them, and I knew how to get along with the natives up there, and he didn't. He had to have somebody to stand between him and the native Virginians.

Williams: An interpreter.

Allen: And I was it, an interpreter. One day one of the most interesting people that I ever had work for me came. They sent him over there from the employment office -- he was completely deaf. He was stone deaf. Mr. Slade called me to come in and look at the card he handed him. Guess what his name was -- 333 Peyton Page -- and I looked at him and I said, "Are you from across the river?" Ambassador Thomas Nelson Page [1853-1922] lived right across the river from us, and he was his nephew.

(Allen): I said, "Well, we'll find something for you to do."

Williams: We ought to have something for an ambassador's nephew.

Allen: Yes, I did. He couldn't hear thunder; it was pitiful in a way. You had to write everything and you had to show him everything, but he was one of the best people that I have ever known because you could depend on him. If you told him to do anything, he'd do it exactly like you told him to. If you showed him once what to do, he caught it like that, quick. So I took him as my personal --

Williams: Project --

Allen: And I did all I could for him. It was a very sad case, that's the reason he wasn't at the front. He had two brothers; one was Mann Page, and the other was Nelson Page.

Williams: Mann Page?

Allen: That's the name of the Pages, you know, Mann Page.

Williams: How long were you at that factory, that plant?

Allen: I was there nearly a year. Let's see, I must have gone in about March, and I was there until I closed the line; they all left but me. I had to dispose of the last governmental thing they had there, close it up. Mr. Slade went on up to Washington. I closed the thing up.

361 Then I went to Washington and got a job. My sister was working in the Quartermaster's Department; they were filing all the bills for all the transportation of everything that had been used during the war. My sister, Helen, the one that lives in Columbus, was working down there; so she got me a job, and I went to work with her, filing bills; I didn't file very long. Those bills had numbers that would run this long, you know. The invoices for every screw, every gun, every box of rations, and everything that they ever [shipped]. We had all these invoices. All they did -- they'd bring you a tissue paper; they were stacked this high, and you had to file them all day long -- the most boring thing I ever did.

Williams: What did you do after that?

Allen: I told the man in charge of it, Major Powell; he was related to the man that went down the Colorado River.

Williams: The one-armed Major Powell, yes.

Allen: I said, "Mr. Powell, these people can't work all day doing that; they've got to have a break from this." He said, "Well, you get some kind of entertainment for them." So I got to be head of the entertainment committee. (laughter)

Williams: What kind of entertainment did you put on?

Allen: I made them think it up. I'd offer some kind of little prize, something that they could do if they'd come in with a good idea for amusement for ten or fifteen minutes, give them a coffee break. They worked a lot better; they did a lot more work. He thought it was a good idea. He was an awfully nice fellow, awfully nice. I had a good time there and I enjoyed it. Then I came on back home from there.

Williams: How long were you there at that job?

Allen: Let's see, I went to work there in January, and I worked there until the following July. I came down in July and went to work for the News.

Williams: The Chattanooga News?

Allen: Uh-huh, Mr. [George Fort, Jr.] Milton.

Williams: How did you get that job? Did you just walk in to it?

Allen: No, Mr. Milton had been a friend of Colonel [Tomlinson] Fort that bought the paper from Mr. Milton. [Colonel Fort] was my grandmother and grandfather's lawyer. No, my mama went to see Mr. Milton and said, "I want a job for Nell." He said, "Well, send her down."

Williams: She was a pretty good agent for you, wasn't she?

Allen: Yeah, oh my mother could do anything. But anyhow, I had been at Tate Springs; I knew all of the society people from every town in the South. You know I could write a social column, that's nothing.

Williams: So was that the first thing you did at the paper as a society editor?

Allen: Society editor, uh-huh.

Williams: Well explain your --

Allen: Then they made me -- I did that for a while and then I got to be a court reporter, and then they put out a magazine and I edited the magazine. I liked the politics; I liked the

(Allen): courthouse. Of course, I knew everybody up there. Papa had worked up there sixteen years. I knew every official in the courthouse at that time. Judge Cummings was the judge, you know; I knew Judge -- I can't think of my good friend's name -- was before Will Cummings, before he was judge.

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Williams: I've forgotten, I used to know.

Allen: I'm trying to think what his name was. [Seth M. Walker]

Williams: McConnell?

Allen: No, [Thomas M.] McConnell was chancellor; I knew him. Queenie McConnell was in my room at school. His daughter was one of my schoolmates. No, I knew the McConnells -- Miss Annie, Mrs. Erwin -- Mrs. Sam Erwin -- she was his daughter; I knew them, knew McConnell Erwin and all of them. No, I knew Judge McConnell. Mrs. McConnell was distantly related to me.

Williams: What were his daughters' names? There was Judge McConnell, and then who were his daughters?

Allen: His oldest daughter was Mrs. Sam Erwin, she was Miss Annie; and then he had a daughter named -- there was one that played the violin, now what was her name? Then there was Maydie, and then Queenie was the youngest. Queenie was the one in my room. There was one girl that was educated away from here; she played the violin so beautifully. She married a man named Chunn from over near Fayetteville. I can't think what her first name was.

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Williams: How long were you at the News?

Allen: I was there I think four or five years. I ran for the legislature, didn't you know that?

Williams: Yeah. Did you go from the job at the paper into that?

Allen: No, Mrs. Milton [Abby Crawford, Mrs. George Fort, Sr.] was a great suffragette. She was an admirer of Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt; Mrs. Catt came here to visit her before the Tennessee [legislature] ratified suffrage.* She was the head [National President] of the suffrage [movement], you know. She was from Boston, I think; she came here from Boston. She came down here when the 19th Amendment was before the state legislature.

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* Carrie Chapman Catt, 1859-1947, was a national leader in the movement for women's suffrage. Tennessee passed the decisive vote for ratification on August 26, 1920.

- (Allen): See, Tennessee was the thirty-sixth -- whatever state it was -- to ratify the suffrage [bill], to make it a constitutional amendment. We all went over; Mr. Milton took a floor [at the hotel] over there, and we all went over there -- Mr. and Mrs. Milton and James Massey and Fred Snyder and Nellie Kenyon and myself -- and stayed over there for three weeks in Nashville, when Tennessee ratified suffrage, working for the suffrage. He wanted a person to run for the legislature --
- 461
- Williams: Mr. Milton did?
- Allen: Mrs. Milton and Mr. Milton; so they asked me if I would run, and I said, "Yes, I'll do it." But, of course, I lost it in the primary [May 1922], lost to French Grubb. Mrs. Bush who was -- her husband [was] Sheriff [Nick P.] Bush -- she said that they outcounted me. She counted the votes that came out of the box, and she said they changed it to give it to Mr. Bass -- John Bass, not Mayor [Edward David] Bass. I talked to Mr. -- oh, what is the man's name? -- he was a friend of Papa's, and I said that Mrs. Bush told me they didn't count it right. He said, "Well, Mrs. Allen, you understand this, we couldn't send a blind man," -- Mr. [David Mabry] Coleman was running [he was blind] -- "who was new and didn't know straight up about the politics, and a woman over there. We had to have somebody on that delegation that could manage it." I said, "Yes, I can see your point." Yes, I can.
- 476
- Williams: As far as campaigning, what were some of your experiences? I know that you must have gone around and talked and drummed up votes.
- Allen: I did. It was that summer I spoke at every "peach-picking" they had in Soddy, up there at Sale Creek --
- Williams: Downeys?
- Allen: Downeys, yes, I went up there, and out to Hinch's Switch; all around, I've been there.
- Williams: Where is Hinch's Switch?
- Allen: It's on the main line of the Southern at Ooltewah, just beyond the gap. It's a Republican stronghold.
- Williams: How did the people accept a woman campaigner?
- Allen: They were always very pleasant to me; they always shook my hand and came up and said, "I'm going to vote for you." If everybody had voted for me that told me they were going to, I'd have been elected way beyond -- you can't believe anybody.
- 496

Williams: Well, did you kiss any babies?

Allen: Yes, I kissed them, as many as they brought around, and many of them brought their babies to the gathering.

Williams: How did you campaign, by automobile, or did you use a train?

Allen: 504 Mostly by automobile. I had a good friend, Mrs. Joe [Joseph W.] Clift was a very good friend of mine. You know Joe worked in the city treasurer's office for a long time -- her husband did -- and they are kin of Dave Gray. Bella [Isabella] Clift, she was Bella Burgess. Mrs. [Elizabeth, Mrs. J. B.] Lauderbach was her sister, she was county agent for UT, you know, the demonstration agent. What did they call that department at UT? Mrs. Lauderbach for a long time represented UT down here. Bella Clift took me around so much. She had been active in that -- what did they call it? -- it was a club [Pro Re Bona Day Nursery] that did a lot for the babies. They had a babies' fund; they used to put out little milk bottles and collect pennies for the babies. She had been active in that, and she knew a great many women that were interested in club work, and she took me around.

Williams: Who were some of the other Hamilton County women who were active in the suffragette movement?

Allen: Well, Mrs. Clift was, and Mrs. Lauderbach was; Mrs. Milton was very active in it. Now, wait there was a girl here -- Mae Bryan, she worked on the Hamilton County Herald, and Cecile Camp that worked on the [Herald, too]. She's that Camp girl that has the horses down there at Flintstone, [Georgia].

Williams: I don't know her.

Allen: 536 She's got a horse place down there and raises -- what is her name? Anyway, she's one of those Camps from Chickamauga. They were all active in it.

Williams: Did you have much opposition as far as opposition to the suffrage [movement]?

Allen: 549 The men didn't take it too very seriously, but they were always nice to me. I never did have any unpleasant, never had any unpleasant experiences about it. Sometimes they'd kind of laugh at you and tease you about it. They didn't take it too seriously.

Williams: I see, well, too bad isn't it; they missed a good chance. (laughter)

- Allen: Well, you know, I'm not one, the older I get I'm not one; I'm not a feminist. I don't believe the men and women are equal.
556 I believe in equal pay for equal work, but I don't think that a woman can do a man's job, and I don't think a man can do a woman's job. Men and women are different, and they ought to know it; the women ought to know it. I don't follow these feminists that --
- Williams: But equal pay for equal work, that's just common sense I think.
- Allen: Yes, if you do the job it doesn't make any difference what your sex is. I don't believe in putting so much emphasis on sex. If you've got a job to do and you can get somebody to do it, get that person to do it who can do it. I think they put entirely too much emphasis on sex. I'm sick of sex; maybe I'm too old, but anyway they run it in the ground. It's all right in its place, but when anything gets out of hand or when you blow it up too big, why it bursts.
572
- Williams: Yeah. Well what about after the election? Did you come back to the Chattanooga News or what was your next stepping stone?
- Allen: My next endeavor? (laughter)
- Williams: Yeah.
- Allen: You're laughing at me.
- Williams: No, no. I think you've had a marvelous -- you know, it's a unique career.
- Allen: You're making fun of me. (laughter)
- Williams: No, no way, no way.
- Allen: You say, "I've gotten an old woman ninety-five years old here."
- Williams: You've had one of the most varied careers of man or woman.
- Allen: I can tell you this: nobody has had a more interesting life than I have. I've enjoyed it. I like to do the things I've done; I've never had a job I didn't like. I couldn't work at a job I didn't like. If I've had a job to do, I've always found something interesting in it to do.
596
- Williams: And learn something from it.
- Allen: Yes, I've tried to learn how to do it. If I go into anything I want to know all about it, just like General Sherman -- he's my favorite character. Have I told you about General Sherman?

Williams: No, go ahead.

Allen: I haven't told you about General [William Tecumseh] Sherman?
609 You don't know about General Sherman?

Williams: Well I don't know --

Allen: He's a large man in my life.

Williams: Oh, tell me about him.

Allen: Well, you know my mother was born in Quincy, Illinois, and whenever Mama would go to any kind of a meeting, people would have to get up and tell where and when they were born. She'd always get up and say, "I was born in Quincy by order of General Sherman." Since I've been here, I've got to thinking about it, and I thought that I don't know anything about the man that made Mama so unhappy all her life. Mama just hated -- General Sherman was the last of everything. I wanted to know about the person that had caused her so much misery, so I got to inquiring about General Sherman.

I went up to Mr. Crabtree [Crabtree's Booksellers, Signal Mountain, Tennessee], and I found some books about General Sherman, and I read them all. The more I read, the better I liked General Sherman and found out the fellow he got to be, till he got to be the number one character in my life. I think he's one of the greatest people that I ever read about. He was well-balanced; he had a happy home life; his wife adored him. He was a very satisfactory person to read about, and he was a very thorough person. He had a job to do and he did it, did it the best he knew how. Now what more could a man do than that?
644

Williams: Not much.

Allen: When somebody asked him, I think, about

End Tape 2, Side 1
Begin Tape 2, Side 2

Williams: About General Sherman -- you said that his comment about his march to the sea was that he was there to win the war.

Allen: Yes, he was in there to fight a war, and the quicker he could do it, the less casualties there would be. He was in there not only to fight a war, but to win the war. If he didn't
005 want to win it, he was on the wrong side.

Williams: Well, let's get back now to the Chattanooga News. What

(Williams): happened after the election? Did you go back to work [at the News]?

Allen: No, I went to do publicity work for Lincoln Memorial University up at [Harrogate, Tennessee]. Jennie Burks had been a friend of mine; she lived at Cumberland Gap, and they had something to do with the D A R. I can't just exactly [remember], but I know we went up to Cumberland Gap, went up to Lincoln Memorial, and then we took a trip all up -- it had to do with the D A R -- went to Washington, and all out in western Pennsylvania doing publicity work for Mrs. -- I'm trying to think of the name of the woman that was running for president-general of the D A R. I was doing publicity for her. She won it and we came back to Washington. What did I do next after that? I'm trying to think what I did.

Williams: How long were you at Lincoln Memorial?

Allen: I didn't stay there very long. We traveled all over western Pennsylvania, went out to see Mrs. -- I can't think of that woman's name -- she was elected president-general of the D A R, and she came down to Chattanooga, had a big reception here for her. She was the president-general. She was from near Pittsburgh out there, and we went out there to her house. I can't think what I did then.

Williams: Did you go to the Times at that point? At some point you went to The Chattanooga Times.

Allen: I started writing those "Leaves From the Family Tree." [genealogical columns] I think the first one was written in December 1934.

Williams: Was that about your next job, though, after the News and after this publicity work; is that about the time you went to the Times?

Allen: Yes, yes, I started writing that "Leaves From the Family Tree" for them, and I wrote that until -- I'm trying to think what I did then -- what did I do then? -- I can't think of it.

Williams: Let's go back and talk about the Chattanooga Medicine Company. When did you go to work for them -- did your mother get that job for you, too?

Allen: No -- well, she did in a way -- I went to them from the News. The man who was the head of the advertising department of the Chattanooga Medicine Company lived next door to my mother, lived in the old Johnson house; he rented it from my aunt. They were my mother's neighbors, and she was very fond of both

(Allen): Mr. and Mrs. [E. Alvin] Wheatley; they liked my mother very
045 much.

Williams: Was that about 1923 when you went to work for the Medicine
Company? Is that approximately the date?

Allen: Yes, I was working for them in 1923 because I was in Texas out
there then, I know that; I remember being in Texas out there
then. I was working for them then.

Williams: Who hired you at the Chattanooga Medicine Company?

Allen: I don't know whether Mr. Wheatley hired me or George Fontaine.
I worked immediately under George when Mr. Wheatley was head
of the department, and he was the one that was a friend to
Mama and lived next door to us.

Williams: And what was the name of the department?

Allen: Advertising department.

Williams: Advertising, and your job was -- ?

Allen: I checked the advertising. They'd give me a list of dealers
and they were checking those -- see, they printed all their
058 different forms, the calendar, the almanac, a news sheet that
they gave to us, and several different things. Mr. [William S.]
Griscom was the head of the printing department; he was Minnie
Everett's father-in-law, my cousin's father-in-law. Mrs. [Emma]
Griscom was my mother's dear friend for years. They were just
all people we've known; I had known them all my life.

Let me see, I went to them really after I came back from
Lincoln Memorial. I was working for the advertising depart-
ment of the News for Mr. Walter Johnson, and Mr. Wheatley of-
fered me a job, and I went out there to work for them. That's
how I got it; I don't know whether Mama had anything [to do
with it or not] -- she could have.

Williams: How long did you check ads? Because, at some point you changed
jobs there. You started traveling, right? -- for the Chatta-
nooga Medicine Company.

Allen: I checked their advertising with the dealers in the places
that they -- they'd give me a list of places in Texas or
072 Mississippi or maybe Alabama, wherever they were putting out
these different forms of advertising like their almanac and
their -- this kind of a news sheet that they published -- dif-
ferent things. I had to go to the dealer and find out whether
they were getting any results from the form of advertising

(Allen): that they were using. They'd give me so many dealers to go
077 and see and talk to about it, [to decide] whether it could
be improved.

Williams: What were the other states besides Texas? Where did you travel?

Allen: Oh, I went all over the Southeast. I went to every state --
Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, wherever they sold Black
Draught*, I went. I didn't go to the far West; I never went
to California, but I went as far west as Lubbock, Texas, up
on the plains; I've been to all of east Texas. They did a big
business in Texas, but they also did in Mississippi. I've
been all over Mississippi, every county seat in it; Alabama --

Williams: What about Louisiana? Did you travel there?

Allen: Yes, I've been to a good many places in Louisiana, the hottest
086 place that I know. Shreveport -- I can't imagine a hotter
place than Shreveport.

Williams: I was born in Shreveport.

Allen: Well, it's the hottest place on earth.

Williams: Yeah, it sure is. In your travels who are some of the most
interesting people you met? I know you had a job to do and
you did your job, and that the most important --

Allen: I always did my job the first thing, but I had a lot of spare
time when I'd have to wait on the person, you know. They
didn't want to talk or they weren't in, or [they said,] "Come
back." One of the most interesting things to me [was to] go
to the library. Books -- if there was an old book dealer in
the town, I'd go to see what he had and what he'd do.

098 One of the best friends I ever had was old Mr. Green in
Fort Worth who ran an old book store out there. I've got a
little paint pot that he gave me. [It was] the way Indians
kept paint, inside this rock. I wouldn't take anything for
it. I had a beautiful tomahawk that he gave me. He knew
all about the Western Indians; well, he knew about the East-
ern ones, [too].

* In 1879 the Chattanooga Medicine Company bought a
business which was begun about 1835, whose product was known
as Dr. A. Q. Simmons' Liver Regulator. Its name was changed
to M. A. Thetford and Company's Liver Medicine or Black-
Draught, usually known as Thetford's Black-Draught.

- (Allen): I never met anybody in Texas that didn't have at least one grandfather that came from Tennessee, and they always wanted to talk about Tennessee. Everybody had a grandfather that came out there from here. I knew a lot of people in different places that were related to people that I knew here. Sometimes I'd look them up, sometimes I didn't.
- 102
- Williams: And you met [J.] Marvin Hunter a time or two? [Author of several books and editor of Frontier Times, a magazine]
- Allen: Yes, I went up there to see him, but, see, he carried the advertising in his paper. I met him through them; I mean, he'd carry ads of Black Draught in his paper, and I'd go up there.
- Williams: Is that the same way you met Dr. [Emmet] Starr? Traveling?
- Allen: No, I looked up Dr. Starr. I knew who he was, and I had been interested in the Cherokees, and I knew that he was at -- no, I knew about Dr. Starr from Miss Alice Roberson. She was the one that told me -- you know I'm a great believer in providence; I think the Lord takes care of you.
- One time I was in Claremore, Oklahoma. I had to go there on business, and I stayed at the Will Rogers Hotel. They had the baths there, and after I got through my work, I had to wait until the next day for the trains to get out of town. So I took one of the hot baths that they give you there. They put you on a cot and roll you up to the top floor in the sun, you know, the sun, and who would I be next to but Miss Alice Roberson! So we got to talking, and she said she was a granddaughter of [Dr. Samuel] Worcester, you know, at --
- 118
- Williams: Brainerd Mission [Chattanooga].
- Allen: Yes, so she wanted to talk to me, and we had a very interesting conversation. She told me all about Dr. Starr. She said he galloped all over this country out here; he had a little calico pony, and he used to gallop all over the plains gathering material for his history. She told me a lot about him. So the next time I was in St. Louis, the first thing I did was look up Dr. Starr.
- Williams: Describe his physical appearance.
- Allen: He was small and very dark, very "Indiandy." He was very nice, he was so nice to me. I think that the people that have belittled his historical work don't know what they are talking about. He did more to preserve Cherokee history than anybody because he got to it first, and he got the roots of it.
- 129
- Williams: And knew the value of it.

Allen: Yes, he knew the value of it, and he was just devoted to it. He was on a different -- I was a Ross inheritor, and he was a Ridge man or a Bell; he had one Hooly Bell that he used to talk about all the time. Hooly Bell was a Ridge, but we never
136 fell out about it; we never had any argument about it.

Williams: How many times did you meet Dr. Starr?

Allen: I went to see him every time I went to St. Louis. I've gone to his apartment and stayed until midnight to talk to him. I stayed at that big hotel downtown, and I'd get on the streetcar and ride out to where he lived; he lived about half a block from the streetcar. I went out there and spent many an evening with him because he knew what I wanted to know, and I knew what he wanted to know. He had never been back East. He wanted to talk to somebody that knew where these people that he was interested in lived. We just had a picnic.

Williams: What was his profession?

Allen: He was a M.D. doctor, but I don't think he followed it too much in the last part of it. I think he just wrote history.

Williams: Did you know him when he was an older man?

Allen: Yes, he was an old, old man when I knew him.

Williams: I see.

Allen: I knew him in the 1920s, 1923 and 1924. Miss Alice is the
150 one that told me how to find him. I think the Lord directs you.

Williams: Sure. He sure was busy with you, wasn't he?

Allen: Yes he was, yes he was. It was a question of who would ask the most questions. He wanted to know about this one, and where they lived, and when they went to that place, and how far it was apart, and where back East it was, because he had never been back here, unfortunately. I said, "Dr. Starr, you ought to come back here. You ought to come back and see the
159 country." But it would be like Mr. Robert Ross when he came back here, * and Senator [Newell] Sanders took him all around. He looked all around and he said, "Well, we got the best of it when we moved to Oklahoma, didn't we?" (laughter) He went home satisfied.

* Visited Chattanooga in March 1930 for unveiling of marker at Ross' Landing.

- Williams: Tell me something about Elsworth Brown; you knew him at Chattanooga Medicine Company.
- Allen: Yes, I knew Elsworth; he was kin to me.
- Williams: He was? I didn't know that.
- Allen: Yes, Elsworth was -- he's kin to the Lane family, not close,
165 but I've known the Browns always.
- Williams: What was his job at Chattanooga Medicine Company?
- Allen: He was in the advertising department. He read all the copy -- the best copy-reader I've ever known. He could catch a comma if you left it out of place.
- Williams: You told me once that he knew more about herbs than --
- Allen: He did, [more than] anybody that I've ever talked to.
- Williams: And was evidently self-educated in that field.
- Allen: Yes, and he read Latin like a Roman. If he liked anything, he would go to the bottom of it; he was very thorough and very meticulous. He was very, very meticulous about everything -- had to be "just so."
- Williams: Who else was there at Chattanooga Medicine Company that you --
- Allen: George Fontaine and Joe -- well, there's another man out there
178 I used to see; he worked in the department there. When I first went to work there, I worked in the advertising department. Mr. George Patten was in St. Louis when I went there to work, then he came there to work. Mr. George wasn't nearly as nice as Mr. "Bome." Mr. Bome [Zeboim Charles, Jr.] Patten was a fine fellow, just nice as he could be, just so considerate and pleasant to work with. Mr. George was kind of gruff. He never was really unpleasant to me, but he wasn't the person Mr. Bome was, or Mr. John A. [Patten] either. Mr. John A. was nice; of course, he wasn't living [died 1915] when I went there to work. He got me my job teaching, see, but he had died when I went up there to work.
- Williams: What year did you finish at the Chattanooga Medicine Company? You worked there from the early 1920s, maybe 1922 or 1923.
- Allen: I worked there until the depression in 1929 -- till they closed
196 down. They closed down when the stock market crashed. There were a lot of them that worked there that had to find jobs, and that's when Mr. [Adolph S.] Ochs found me the job down at

- (Allen): Chickamauga Park. I went down there to work for Mr. Landru. [Mr. Landau] He was the park superintendent [historian]; he was there before Mr. [Charles S.] Dunn.
- Williams: I see. Did you conduct any tours or do lectures or what?
- Allen: No, they were just building that museum when I went down there; it was in the process of being built. I've got some newspapers down there I gave them for that place. Mr. [Charles E.] Fuller gave them that collection, you know, for down there.
203
- Williams: [A collection of] guns. What was your actual job there, though; did you conduct tours or did you give lectures?
- Allen: They didn't have any tours when I was there. I just did publicity. People that came in there, they'd show them around. I don't remember much of what I did do --
- Williams: Let's talk for a minute then about your life in Chattanooga as a young person, and the places that the young people congregated or the entertainments that they had.
- Allen: Well the place we congregated when I was young was Jo Anderson's drug store.
- Williams: Jo Anderson's drug store.
- Allen: Oh my goodness, yes.
- Williams: Where was it?
- Allen: It was on the northwest corner of Eighth and Market. It had been across the street, you know, where Schwartz's Shoe Store was, across from Lovemans -- was on the northeast corner, and they moved over to the northwest corner. All the time that I was going there -- Jean Anderson was the age of the group that I went with, and he worked in the soda fountain there. We'd all go in and talk to Jean. Then the one that I liked in there so much was Caruthers Anderson; he's Mary Chapel Quinn, Mrs. Carl Quinn['s] father. Caruthers was my confidant; I used to go in there and tell him all my love affairs. He was about six or eight years older than I was, and he'd advise me as to what to do and how to deal with the situation. I liked him very much.
221
- Williams: Was he Jo Anderson's son?
- Allen: His brother, they were all there. There was Jean and Jo and, let me see, and Dr. Anderson was their brother. They had another brother; then they had one that had charge of that

- (Allen): 234 chicken business up on -- what was his name? -- I never did know him so well. I knew Mr. Jo and Jean the best. Jean went with the group that I was with, boys and girls, you know. He clerked at the soda fountain and everybody would go in there and talk to him.
- Williams: Tell me about Vallambrossa; that was on Stringer's Ridge.
- Allen: It was a popular place to go. I remember we went over there on a picnic when I was in high school. Miss [Margaret] Buquo, who was a teacher in high school, took a group. We went up there and spent the day and had a picnic up there.
- Williams: What was her name?
- Allen: 248 Miss Buquo, B-U-Q-U-O, Buquo. She taught in school; she never did teach me anything, but we got her for a chaperone. I remember her taking us up there, and we spent the day up there, had a picnic up there.
- Williams: Well, how did you get there?
- Allen: We had to go to the end of the car line and then walk way up there; we had to walk.
- Williams: Where did the car line end?
- Allen: It ended down there at White Oak.
- Williams: At Signal Mountain Road?
- Allen: Yeah, uh-huh.
- Williams: It just went to the intersection of Signal Mountain Road and ended?
- Allen: I don't think it went as far as Signal Mountain Road. Well, it went right there at White Oak, right there at the -- you know where the White Oak Spring was.
- Williams: That's on past Signal Mountain Boulevard then.
- Allen: Yes.
- Williams: And then you walked?
- Allen: 258 We had to walk from there clear up to the place; it was a long walk, at least we thought so.
- Williams: Okay, you're talking about Morrison Springs, aren't you?

Allen: Yes.

Williams: I thought Vallambrossa was on top of Stringer's Ridge. *

Allen: On top of Stringer's Ridge? We didn't go up on top of the ridge. I guess we went to Morrison Springs, but that's what
264 they called it -- Vallambrossa.

Williams: It is?

Allen: Yes, I never heard of a Vallambrossa being up on the ridge. I thought it was down there where the car stopped.

Williams: What was at Morrison Springs? Just picnic area?

Allen: It was picnic area and springs, it was springs there. I remember Miss Buquo took a book. She read us The Sealed Bouquet; she read to us that day. We just had a picnic. Everybody took something for their lunch, and then we walked up there to the springs. The class, I remember, having that out there.

Williams: As a young person, did you ever go from Chattanooga up to Walden's Ridge or to any of those places up there?

Allen: No, I never did go up on the ridge much.

Williams: What about Lookout Mountain?

Allen: I used to go up the side of the mountain all the time. I had
277 relatives that lived up on top of the mountain. Aunt Helen Watkins lived up there right above Grandpa. See, Grandpa lived in the big house, and Aunt Helen lived on the east bluff next to Mrs. Garnett Andrews. They all lived there on the east bluff from the incline; I guess where Senator Sanders house, you know the big house, where Senator Sanders built up there. Then there's another house and I know the name of them. Is it Crowder, or somebody like that, has a house? There was another house, and then Mrs. Garnett Andrews had a house, and Aunt Helen Watkins had a house. Right across from Aunt Helen's house, Chester Watkins had built a house, a one-story stone house. I know that Chester used to get out in his backyard; he played a clarinet, and he'd play his clarinet up there, and Grandpa would get on the back porch down the street, and he'd answer him. They'd play back and forth.
296

Williams: They each played the clarinet?

* Vallambrossa was part of Hill City or North Chattanooga. See Hopkins' Atlas of the City of Chattanooga, 1889, plate 16, for location.

Allen: Yes, played to each other, you could hear them up there.
Up on the bluff you could hear them.

Williams: As a child did you ride the incline many times?

Allen: 300 Occasionally; we didn't ride, we hiked more than we [rode].
We'd often go to the Glen. We'd have a picnic up at the
Glen, you know; we used to go up there all the time for pic-
nics. Then there was a pretty little spring. They changed
that road and ruined it. There was a spring up there right
where the road goes around the Point and then goes down to
the Glen. When they cut that road, they ruined that spring.
The spring disappeared; they cut it off. Anyway, it must
come out down below somewhere because it used to be up on the
roadside there. Yes, we used to go up to the Glen and have
a picnic up there ever so often. The boys used to go up
there all the time. There was a swimming hole down there
below the Glen where they'd go swimming.

Williams: One facet that we haven't touched very much on is your work
as a genealogist. How did you actually get started and all
of a sudden decide that you were in it?

Allen: 318 I got started in my grandfather's lap when I was a little
girl about four or five years old. My grandfather [Thomas
Cleage] lived at that time, my mother's father.

Williams: Was he A. M. Johnson?

Allen: No, this is my grandfather Cleage. My mother's father lived
down below us in an old Johnson house that Tom [John T.,
4403 Alabama Avenue] Turner lives in now. That's the oldest
house in St. Elmo. Grandpa built it before the war. It was
up where the big brick house was, and then when they went to
build that house, he rolled it down there on rollers. My
grandfather Cleage lived in that house for several years, and
they were living there when I was about, oh I guess, four or
five years old.

334 He used to come up -- it was a short block in there --
and he'd take me on his lap and tell me tales about his
grandfather. I can remember climbing up in his lap and I'd
say, "Now, Grandpapa, please tell me about your grandfather
that was at King's Mountain." He used to tell me all about
this old man that he had -- a grandfather, a great-grandfather
that was the captain of a company of Washington County militia
that was in the battle of King's Mountain; his name was Cap-
tain George Russell.

After the battle this young soldier had performed so
well that he [Captain Russell] was so proud of him, he took

(Allen): off his coat and put it on the young fellow. He said, "Now I've got something at home better than that I'm going to give you." So he took him home and married him to his daughter. They were grandfather's grandparents. He used to tell me that tale, and I thought it was so interesting; that's what started
342 me on genealogy. He'd just tell me about his family from the time I was -- just from the time I can remember.

Williams: You actually did genealogical work for some people, didn't you?

Allen: Oh I've done a lot. Yes, I did for Mrs. Tom Preston, for Mrs. John L. Hutcheson; I did professional work for them.

Williams: In the course of that work you traveled quite a bit, didn't you?

Allen: Yes, I did. I traveled all over Georgia with Mrs. Charles Freeman. Her ancestors were all from down around Madison, Georgia; I've been to Madison -- that's the place that Sherman didn't burn. Her family was from down there, then the Pendergrasses that lived there. Mr. Freeman's family was from, I think they called it Lithonia [DeKalb County]. But my family are from Hall County, my grandfather's family were Georgia people.

Williams: Did you travel much? Did you go to Washington, D.C.?

Allen: Yes, for years I went every year. I had a brother that lived
361 there; my brother was in the Internal Revenue, I think, was with the Interstate Commerce Commission. My youngest brother was a lawyer; he was up there during the war and then he stayed up there. He ran for Congress from this district, but he was a Republican at the wrong time and he didn't get it.

Williams: Tell me how you met Opie [Percival] Read. [1852-1939]

Allen: I knew Mr. [John L. M.] French's brother-in-law, Mrs. Fred Frazier's father^{*}; lived there at the halfway station going up the incline. The Frenches lived right there. I didn't really know him, but I had read The Tennessee Judge and several of his other books and was so interested in them. He was a local person that -- Mr. French lived at Hiwassee Island; you know they owned an island, and I have always been
381 interested in that, all the different phases of its background and wanted to know all about it I can.

Williams: But you went to see Opie Read to get his autograph?

* Philo Dayton Benham, who was a brother-in-law of Opie Read.

- Allen: 386 Yes, when I saw in the paper he was coming here, I just gathered up all these books I'd collected in a basket this big. Peter Moore, my grandson's got them now; he wouldn't take anything for them.
- Williams: But you said Opie Read actually didn't remember writing some of them.
- Allen: 395 No, he'd say, "I didn't write this book." He'd pick them up and say, "I never wrote this book." And his name was printed right on it. Mr. French would say, "Oh yes, Opie, don't you remember we were living at the Widow So-and-so," -- and he'd call somebody's name in Chicago -- "when you wrote that. Don't you remember she said so-and-so and so-and-so." Mr. French would prompt him and he'd say, "Oh yes, I believe I do."
- Williams: Then he would sign it.
- Allen: Two or three times he'd say, "I didn't write this book. I didn't write this book." (laughter) It was interesting.
- Williams: Well, we've been talking now for two hours and fifteen minutes. Are you about talked out?
- Allen: You haven't learned a thing. (laughter)
- Williams: Oh yeah, I've learned plenty, but we don't want to overdo it on this first time. Okay, go ahead tell me about Mr. Slade.
- Allen: 414 Mr. Slade's profession was the fancy cheese game. When he was in Michigan before he came down to work in the shell-loading plant, he was in the fancy cheese game. (laughter) Oh, he was a character. He'd never been South before, and he couldn't understand the Virginia people when they spoke, I mean even the talking. He had to have a go-between, somebody to handle his problems.
- Williams: Well, I can understand.
- Allen: I was his buffer.
- Williams: I can understand. He was smart to get a buffer. Some people try to do it without.
- Allen: 428 He couldn't understand it, and he was a regular Michigander, was what he was. My sister worked for him for a while; she came down there from Buffalo. We had a cottage; they put up these temporary, just clapboard houses. Ours had four rooms, but it was right on York River.

Williams: It was right on the York River, you said?

Allen: Right on the York River, sit on the back porch and fish in the river. Throw the line right down into the river and fish right off the back porch; I had plenty of it. We'd have a lot of fun when we did shift work, you know; it was three
439 shifts to the day. On the midnight shift, come in and sleep part of the morning and then get up and fish. We had all the good fresh fish right off the back where the water was -- you could swim in it; it was that deep there.

Williams: Right at the porch.

Allen: Yes, right at the porch.

Williams: Well, let's cut this off because you've tired me out.

Allen: Are you worn out, worn out listening to me?

Williams: You've worn me out.

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END OF INTERVIEW

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