Jean Anderson (JA): The Chambers house in Hillsborough is interesting to me because back in the ‘70s I was unemployed and I spent a lot of my time with friends going around on back roads looking for family cemeteries and old houses. Old houses have always been a passion of mine right from my youth, and I think it stems from the fact that my father gave me a dolls’ house when I was quite young and I loved that best of any toy I ever had. So I became aware of houses and how they looked and I particularly loved old houses. Well in one of these sorties, with a friend named Hilda Brod, who was an animal rescue person—she has spent her life devoted to animals—and I understand that the Person County, no Caswell County, pound, if you can call it that, is dedicated to her because when she first moved to Caswell County, they had only a bare concrete slab with a fence around it, no shelter for any stray animal that happened to come into their care. She worked tirelessly to improve the lot of animals wherever she’s lived. Anyway, Hilda and I were looking at this particular time for what might have been the Camerons’ location in Person County. They owned I think about 6000 acres in Person and we knew that the overseer had lived up there and there had been a store there and a mill; so in looking for this place, we came upon a wonderful old house that looked to me, could have been eighteenth century and there was nobody around. It was built cheek by jowl with a modern brick box that people were living in and the old house stood empty and open and we went in; there was a pile of corn stalks in one corner, cobs maybe, and it was obviously just being used as extra storage. And there was nobody to ask about this place, but we did eventually find out later that it belonged to a family then named Chambers. She and I felt that this place was in danger and needed rescuing and I introduced the topic to the Historical Society in Hillsborough, which I was then a board member of, and they weren’t interested. I had thought that if these people [the Chambers] would be willing to sell it, it could be moved it to someplace in Hillsborough and then find somebody who would restore it. Well as things turned out, though the Historical Society dropped the subject, the then chairman of that same society named Alexander Gregg,
who lived at Burnside then, got interested and all on his own arranged with these people to buy it and move it to a piece of property that belonged to Burnside at that time down on the flood plain by the river. He restored it and eventually it was sold and now is owned by Rich Shaw and Holly Reed, graduates of Duke. I don’t whether they were there about the time you were there.

JW: I was there in the late sixties. Rich Shaw is very familiar.

00:05:37

JA: He is now working for the county, Orange County, and he’s in charge of buying up land for preservation and getting covenants from other owners for preservation. And Holly has recently been head of the Eno River Association, but I don’t think she’s currently in that position. Anyway, they were very fond of the house and added a very large room to it on the back. I should say that the house was the Quaker plan of one large room on one side of the house and two small ones on the other with--let’s see how this was...yes that’s right, a chimney on each side of the house and on the side with the two rooms they shared the same chimney. I think I’ve got this right, and then there was originally a room that had been added, I guess you’d call it a shed room across the back, which had been used for a kitchen and there’s an upstairs with a similar plan. Was there an upstairs? Yes, there was, and the house had those wonderful molded sills that you see at Stagville, which seemed to me marked it from the same vintage of the late 18th century.... Holly and Rich have since made connections with people who lived there a very long time and they have written up the history of that house. That I felt was a real coup to have saved that house, not through any real effort of ours, but only by having discovered it. And so I love going there and visiting them and seeing what they’ve done with it. They love it, too. And it’s in a very nice location; and the stable, the Cameron stable that is very close to it, has now been sold, too, as a separate piece of property and Holly’s parents live in it.

JW: The Chambers house, did you find it had a connection with the Camerons?

00:08:50

JA: No; if it had it was not proved. I don’t remember how far back they were able to trace it, but the Cameron name did not turn up, nor that of the overseer. And then while I am talking about houses that got moved, I remember the old Johnston farmhouse that sat on Johnston Mill Road, is that right? No. It's not the Johnson Mill Road that is up in Durham County. This is in Orange County. No, it was on Turkey Farm Road. One of John Cabe’s daughters, Lydia, had married this man [Charles W. Johnston] and lived in the old house. The old house was very plainly visible from Turkey Farm Road that runs between Whitfield Road and Mt. Sinai. Can you visualize that? Have you seen pictures of that house?

JW: Yes. No, I have not.

00:10:30

JA: Well in Johnston, that other Johnson photographer, who co-authored that big book on North Carolina architecture back in the 1940s, included a picture of the house as it then was. Well, this house was threatened when Fiber Industries wanted to build a factory right off that road and they would have torn that house down. And so it was in jeopardy along with New Hope Creek; the house was very close
to the creek and the mill was on the creek. Then the James Comans came along and rescued it. You probably remember Bill Coman; well, his brother James and his wife, Billie, her name was, James, I guess it was, ran the lumber company here. They bought it and arranged to move it and they moved it to the corner of Hillsborough Road—70—and what’s the name of that road? Lawrence. It’s just the stoplight before you get into Hillsborough if you are going on 70. But it doesn’t look at all the way the farmhouse looked. They put dormer windows in it, and they added a couple of rooms to it, and changed somewhat the rooms inside, though when I was in it, after they restored it, you could see very well which were the old parts of the house and it was a lovely old house. It had what they called the birthing room—I don’t know whether it was or wasn’t. But that house is now placed up on a rather steep slope above Lawrence Road on that corner with a lot of very nice planting around it to screen it. But as it was on the old Turkey Farm Road, it was on a level piece of land with a lot of open land around it, so you could see it very well. And it was quite plain, maybe three rooms across, and there were no dormers; there must have been a second floor. That picture anyway, in the Johnston book, will show what it looked like. So that house got saved but changed.

00:13:55

JW: So when, when is this that you were involved with the Chambers house?

JA: In the seventies, yeah, all this happened before I began to work. I was idle and just enjoying myself. But it [the house] became an issue with the Eno River Association because they jumped into that fray, I think, maybe the sixties, Jim; I think it must have been the sixties because they were defeated on a water issue that I guess the county, Orange County, raised. And so Fiber Industries then came over to Durham County and, am I right about this?...Are they the ones that wanted to establish their industry up there where West Point on the Eno now is? What was the name of that company?

JW: It was somebody out of Charlotte.

JA: Was it? It may not have been Fiber Industries. I associate the two, but it may be just coincidence.

JW: You were involved in the Eno River group early on? How did that come about?

00:15:33

JA: Right from the start, yes, because...well, that came about because we moved out there in ‘65. The Nygards, whom we knew very well because Holger Nygard and Carl Anderson were in the same department—the English department, both were of Scandinavian origin, and their children and our children were the same ages, had bought the place on Cole Mill Road, the Sparger place, just a year or two before we bought the Brame, the old Charles Brame place at Cabe Ford. In ‘66 when the newspaper announced that the city was going to dam the Eno River for water supply, Margaret Nygard became instantly alarmed because she was passionate about that place they lived on and had worked so hard to get it. It had been after Sparger’s death, I guess; maybe his heirs it was put the place up for auction, public auction. And she and Holger went to that auction, but they didn’t get the bid and Margaret was so devastated, she just could not get over that loss. Holger was able to dicker with the people who had bought it and arranged to buy it from them. So she had anyway worked so hard to get
that house, here she felt completely threatened by this dam that was going to be just downstream, and the water would have backed up. So immediately she called me. I wasn’t home; I’d gone to the dentist, and Carl was there, and she and Holger come over and anguished with him, and then they went downtown and met with Wade Brown, who was head of the water department at that time. And from that moment on Margaret never stopped ‘till she had reached everyone she could possibly think of to call to a meeting, and we met the following week and tried to think what we could do, and the only thing we could come up with at that point was to go before the city council meeting and plead our case. Well, it was a purely selfish point of view. We just didn’t want to see our land flooded. We had got some other people like the Hills, Douglas and Frances Hill, who lived rather close to us, off Pleasant Green Road, and Sunderland, what was Sunderland’s name? [Ms. Elizabeth] Sunderland was a faculty member in the fine arts department, who lived on Willet Road off of Pleasant Green Road [had a river property], and Ann Zener on the opposite bank, and the Bernheims who lived, who had property, the old Cabe Mill property, next to the Zeners. And I think they were the core of the original meeting. And Dennis, what was Dennis’s first name? Steven? Not Steven, Sam…Sam Dennis lived opposite the Nygards also on the river, but across Cole Mill Road, and he was in the same position as the Nygards, expecting to see his land flooded. He was a native, he was the only native in the group. We were all interlopers from Duke. Oh, the Rhines too, were brought into it, because they had property on the river, but it would not have been impacted by the dam, but they did come to the meeting. And we went to the city council and several people spoke and made a pathetic case for ourselves. But we realized this wasn’t going to go very far with the city council….And so Margaret kept right at it, and the next thing that was profitable about our meetings, we met with someone from The Nature Conservancy. The Nature Conservancy had just opened an office in North Carolina and gave us very good advice. The representative said you’ve got to have an issue that is bigger than just pleading your own case. And they were very much interested in helping us because they were just beginning in the state and wanted to get a toehold. And what happened was they bought a tract of land called Red Mountain, no Red Hill, Red Hill off Highway 70 that had originally been James Southgate’s hideaway up on top of a very high hill, and they bought this and traded it for a piece of property on the Eno and held that. I’m not sure now which piece that was, but in talking to him [the Nature Conservancy representative] the solution was reached by Margaret that our aim had got to be a state park if we wanted to save the land and river. So she made contact with Tom Ellis, who was then head of the State Parks and Recreation. He was very sympathetic. And other people, George Miller, who was our representative in the General Assembly, and I’m not sure who else. She met with many, many people and learned very much, all about what was then evidence for fighting this kind of battle, and she became a very shrewd politician in the process. And you probably remember that it went on for a very long time with the city and our protests, and during that time, we thought of all the ways we could get popular support for the cause and had the rafting trips and the flower hikes and the calendar and the newsletter, and the slide show Duncan Heron put together with music— it was lovely. And eventually of course, all the land that the city in the meantime was buying along the river to give them the land they needed for the dam and the impoundment was accumulating, but eventually the state and the city did come to an agreement and it was all because Amick…? What was Amick’s first name? Amick, he was a city employee, don’t think he worked for the water department, not sure which department he worked for, maybe finance. It occurred to him that the Teer quarry would hold more water than their proposed dam on the Eno and it
would be extinct by the time the city needed to impound water, and so the city was able to save face by acquiring the quarry rights and selling or giving, I’m not sure what the arrangement was—the land that they had bought—probably sold—to the state, and that was the beginning of the state park. At that point I backed out of chauffeuring Margaret and contacting people and going to meetings endlessly and doing flower hikes, and my son was doing rafting trips and I was writing for the journal, doing the calendar. I wanted to do local history and I got off the board. I felt since the state had won the battle and the park was a reality that it was no longer necessary for us to be so diligent, but that was not Margaret’s view, and her view certainly prevailed and was right, and they’ve become watchdogs for the river ever since, for every issue that’s arisen. Roads and the like, sewage.

JW: They are very well established in... (inaudible)

JA: Absolutely, Absolutely and it’s a real boon. People use that park wonderfully. And it’s saved other buildings that are in the park and made everybody much more interested in local history.

JW: So you wanted to do local history. Were you a historian by training?

JA: No, I am not. I spent six years in graduate school, doing English literature but I was always very interested in local history because my father was very interested in local history, and we lived in Philadelphia and every Sunday we went to see a different historic site, all through my youth. He had grown up in Philadelphia from the age of two and knew where everything had originally been. He was born in 1871, so from 1873 on he saw the city develop and rebuild and rebuild, so as we were going around the city he would say, this stood there and this stood there and this was originally that, and so I sort of took in, I guess, what local history was all about. When we moved down here I remember going to a cocktail party [one of the very first I went to—we came in 1955] and asking Dick Watson [a professor in the history department] if there was a history of Durham and he said that there had been an attempt made, and there was Boyd’s history, he told me, but that was some years ago and not very comprehensive. It was of the city, not the county, and he said that there was an attempt being made to write a history of the county and a number of people had been assigned to write different chapters and some of those chapters had been written—finance and something else, I don’t know now what it was, but it never came to any fruition because other people didn’t come through with what they had promised to write, and that was the end of that.

We lived on Chapel Hill Road, four houses from Anderson Street, right opposite the Methodist church on the hill there, and I used to walk up Anderson Street with my two-year-old son, and then with my daughter when she came along. It was unpaved at that time, yeah, it was unpaved from Chapel Hill Road to Morehead...Morehead? Yeah, Morehead. The block where the big houses are on Anderson was paved, and it was mostly woods. All the faculty housing hadn’t yet been built. It was a nice, nice country road to walk on. Anyway, I walked around a good bit, and on Chapel Hill Road in either direction I came on old cemeteries that were lost in vegetation of one sort or another, and when I would say to a neighbor, “When did Durham get started?” they’d always say it came after the Civil War—roughly correct. But the tombstones on these cemeteries were much older than that, so I knew there’d been
some prehistory that I was curious about. But I never did anything about this interest until we moved out to the country in Orange County and had a cemetery on our own land. We bought the Charles Brame house in 1964, November, and moved in in March of ’65. Right from the start I was curious about the Cabe families that were buried in our cemetery and was terribly lucky because the first and only babysitter we had for many years happened to have an uncle, Hugh Conway Browning, who had spent his retirement, and was still doing it, researching his ancestors, and he would go to the courthouse in Orange County and meticulously record the deeds and the transactions on all his lines. He was related to people who had originally lived in that area. All his lines, the Canes, the Breezes, the Claytons, the Walkers, oh, I can’t remember them all...Pipers. Anyway, here he had compiled in a terribly dry manner, just going from deed to deed, the history of each of these lines and the marriages that he could find and the wills that were in Orange County, but he was not a scholar by training and he did not know where else to look, and it was at that point when I discovered the manuscript room at Duke. Only because I was looking for information about the Eno River and the people who lived along the river that I discovered other manuscript rooms, too, and manuscript collections. So I picked up where he left off and read the entire Hillsborough Recorder from 1820 on, on microfilm. They had it at Duke. And I went to the Archives and looked at all the original records and other private collections and so forth and found a wealth of material on these families that he had worked on, and I was doing all of this all for my own entertainment, and that’s how I got interested in local history. But it became a profession when I was asked by a clerk of court in Person County whether I did this sort of thing professionally. I went up there so often, I guess he wondered. And I explained, “I didn’t, and I didn’t know anyone that did,” and he told me they got so many requests in courthouses from people who were searching their ancestors, and they needed people to answer these letters and give them the information they needed. So I came right back to Orange County and told them that if they got letters like that, I’d be delighted to take them on. And I was very soon deluged with customers (laughs). And that’s how I got into history; it was really through working for seven years, I guess, doing genealogy, and learning all the while about resources, historical resources.

JW: So is that what led you to the Camerons?

JA: That’s right; well, that was another piece of luck. Do you remember John Flowers?

JW: Oh yes.

00:36:14

JA: Well, John I first met over in Wilson Library when he worked in the Southern Historical Collection, and then he worked for Archives. And when I was over there, he approached me one day and said--don’t remember the department, historic sites maybe--was given the task of researching Stagville. The state had just been given it by the Durham Preservation Society. I had been at that ceremony, actually, at which Margaret Haywood received the key from, what’s his name, the head of Liggett and Myers at that time in Durham [Mulligan], to Stagville. I was not involved in any of the transactions between the Historic Preservation Society, which had just been started, and the state. But they turned it over to the state and the state accepted it, but they didn’t know anything about it. So John said to me, “Would you be interested in writing a report?” And I said, “I certainly would.” And so they said, “Well, we’ll give you...
three months and you go through the Cameron papers and write a report about Stagville,” which is what
I did, and then they said, “Would you like to do the same thing for the Camerons and Fairntosh? And
we’ll give you six months,” so (laughs) back I went and this time...was this the time, yes, it was this time
they gave me a truck, a state truck so I could keep it at home and go every day in the truck and have a
place to park, ‘cause parking was then an issue. This was in the seventies. And that was delightful.

Some back and forth chat about parking.

00:38:45

JA: Anyway, I was terribly lucky because I could park right beside the library with a state license, and I
loved it. I guess those were the happiest six months I ever spent. I had a job and I was going every day
and doing what I loved best, reading other people’s mail. So then they asked me if I would make a book
out of this, and I said sure. I wrote Piedmont Plantation, but they wouldn’t publish it because it was too
long. They publish only 150-page manuscripts. But they didn’t tell me that ahead of time, and I was
unwilling to cut any of it. So it lay dormant for a number of years until Myra Markham became president
of the Historic Preservation Society and I happened to mention to her that I had written this manuscript
as a book and she said, “Well, we ought to publish that.” And she brought it about that they published it
and that’s how everything began for me. Was all serendipity and other people’s ideas. (laughs)

JW: Were you involved with getting the Preservation Society organized?

00:40:26

JA: A little. Not the charter part of it, no...I was...well, they called me a charter member because
everyone who joined when it had first started was a charter member, but I was not a member of the
group that Margaret got together and posed the idea to. I became the chairman of the Committee to
Collect Manuscripts, and I did collect some manuscripts. The McMannen papers and some other things
that people gave me for the Society and was very dismayed when I learned that at some point after
that, maybe three or four years later, they had disbanded the collection and had given papers that Duke
wanted to Duke and I’m not sure what happened to the other things, but I felt a responsibility, that they
should have consulted me about that and the people whose papers they were. Anyway the McMannen
papers are now at Duke. Duke wanted those, so that ended happily.

JW: Where did the Durham Recorder come from? Was that part of the manuscript effort?

JA: The Durham Recorder? What’s that?

JW: I think that was the name of it. I saw it on your resume.

00:42:16

JA: Oh, oh, we did one issue of that. That was when Bill--oh, you know who I mean--he was head of the
archives at Duke. Bill, um...King, Bill King was head of the committee for the Preservation Society on
publications. Well, they published a newsletter but nothing else up to that point, and then they did
Piedmont Plantation and then I guess in talking to Bill sometime, we came to the conclusion that they
ought to publish a newsletter or something more substantial like transactions that those organizations
used to publish. So we thought, well, we’ll publish one issue and see how it goes. So we asked for manuscripts and people turned them in and we put together that one issue, but it never went any further than that. I don’t know why. Maybe Bill resigned from the committee or something like that.

JW: I was always curious about that because there was just the one issue.

JA: Yeah, yeah, that’s right.

JA: I think it was the Durham Record, it was called. Yeah.

JW: Well, what was your impression of Durham in the fifties, in the first years you came down here? Had you been to visit?

00:44:08

JA: No, no. We were living in Vermont. Carl was teaching at Norwich University and had just the previous term finished his dissertation and then sent out a flurry of applications trying to get a job somewhere else. And he got the Duke job. So he came down, both to be interviewed and then to come down and find us a place to live, and he bought the house. I had not seen it and it turned out to be a very nice house. It had been built in that block of Picketts between Anderson and Vesson. That whole plot of land in there bounded by Anderson and Chapel Hill Road, Vesson triangle I guess, had been owned by Picketts and Hube Pickett, Hubert, built that nice, big, substantial brick house in that block, two-story house, bigger than anything else in the block, and then various relations had built the other houses. Well he’d first built the one beside him on the corner of Anderson and Chapel Hill Road, but then later built the brick house, but they kept those houses, those two houses in their ownership, and then our house and the house next to us, which was almost a duplicate, had been sold out of the family. But they were both houses built with one of those kits that Sears Roebuck sold back in the early days. They were carpenter built, but built to Sears plans. And you see that model everywhere in Durham, and even out in the country. Everywhere they built that model. It must have been terribly popular in 1926 or something like that. So we had Picketts to left of us and Picketts to right of us. Bob Pickett lived on the other end and he had built a rental house—duplex—next to ours. Bob Pickett was the one who owned the land at South Square, where South Square was ultimately built. And Hube Pickett, I don’t know, he owned a whole lot of real estate, but notably when we were living there he and his son-in-law named…it will come to me…[George Worthington] used to go every Saturday to town with produce. The back lot of Hubert Pickett’s house had a very large garden, which he tended, and he grew corn and okra and vegetables of other sorts, squashes, and he and his son-in-law would go every Saturday…and I imagine it was to the black sections of Durham, where he collected the rent on all these properties he owned and sold them vegetables in the bargain. (laughs)

JW: So did Durham strike you as something that would be interesting? Or was it just this strange place?

00:48:24

JA: I don’t know. I never lived in a place like Durham. I was thrilled to come South. Absolutely thrilled because I had been raised on the Little Colonel series of books and the Elsie Dinsmore books and these were privileged girls in plantation families and I thought this seemed to be the height of, of
living(laughs). Well, Durham did not quite conform to my idea of the South. I had never been south of Virginia before that, and in Virginia I had seen plantations that conformed to my conception of the South, but North Carolina was a horse of another color. And I’ve grown to love it and appreciate it, but it wasn’t what I expected. It was still an extremely divided town between gown and town, and most of the town, except for those in banking and the professions, were mill workers, factory hands. And so the arts had not yet been cultivated. Nobody had enough leisure or extra money for those things. And we’ve seen in our day a tremendous transformation in every way because we’ve had the Research Triangle and the medical center and such an influx of populations from other places of people who were making very good salaries and could afford to pay for arts and had the interest and were accustomed to supporting the arts, and I think that has made all the difference. And of course they brought the food culture with them (laughs). And there certainly were no places to eat when we first came, that either we could afford or that we wanted. There was Hartman’s Steakhouse and there was the Washington Duke Hotel and there was Annamaria’s Pizza House and there might have been a fish place, and there would have been Bullock’s perhaps, but that was it.

JW: So it sounds like you consider the change has been a change for the better.

00:51:43

JA: Oh absolutely. Yeah, I do regret in the rural countryside how the farms have decreased, and I miss seeing the old farmhouses and I miss, I don’t care to see these developments in places that were forests, but that’s of course impeding change to have that point of view. And I think many of the developments have been carefully done and have been assets to Durham County, and I think also because of the rise in the 1970s, because of the federal government Preservation Act, preserving what we had has become a much more important issue and the desire of everyone, particularly now. Twenty years ago when the book, my book on Durham County first came out, I think there was much less popular interest in local history. And you I’m sure have found that during your career that people have taken much more interest in local history.

JW: Yes, they certainly have. It seems that that has all come about along with the influx of outsiders.

JA: Yeah, that’s right. They’re the ones that are curious--the ones that are from the outside.

JW: I think it usually works out that way.

JA: It does. And they are the ones that see what assets are there that the natives haven’t appreciated. Like the river.

JW: Exactly. So how did your writing the book come about?

JA: The Durham book?

JW: The Durham book--that was a massive, massive undertaking.

00:53:58
JA: Well, it had been one of Margaret Haywood’s ambitions to have a history of the county. Every other county had a history and I think she persuaded the board that this was what they needed, and they decided to do it. And they talked to a group of us that they got together. Syd Nathans was there, and I don’t remember who else. They were made up of board members who talked to us about our thoughts on the history and what it should contain. But they weren’t offering anything at that point. And then I was approached by Egbert Haywood to make a proposition to them that they would consider. So I did that and I got the job. And they were able to get financing from both the city and the county, and I guess funds they were able to raise themselves to pay me, and it took me seven years. But all the work that I had already done out of my own curiosity, working on those families in Orange County for both genealogy and for the Cabeys and their relatives, was all, was all foundation because in doing that other work I had become familiar with the crossroads villages in Orange and Durham County and the beginnings of Bahama and Rougemont and Red Mountain and South Lowell and had run into all of those names, so that I had in my mind a map of the county and where the families lived, so that was an enormous step up for me when I began to be more organized in writing the history.

JW: What did you find particularly intriguing in doing the research? Any people or events?

00:56:38

JA: Yeah, I loved finding out what hadn’t yet been discovered (laughs). That was the biggest thrill, and that of course happened entirely in the earlier part of the book, before the Civil War. People knew pretty well because of what Dr. Boyd had done and others and the various church histories that had been written and family histories, the sort of historical era of Durham was already there to discover, but the earlier part was an unknown territory, partly because it had been Orange County and Durham County not having begun till ’81, people were less interested in researching what was going on in Orange County and the eastern part of Orange County. So what I had read in the Hillsborough Recorder was all grist for the mill, and I guess the most fun I had was in tracking down the earlier history of Durham beginning with Dillard and then Pratt and then Durham, and finding out a little bit about them and their families and their scandals and what went on. And the Recorder would report, you know, on goings-on which were then part of Orange County, so I had a little bit of information from 1820 up to ’81 on what was taking place. And a newspaper is incomparable when you’re writing a history, absolutely you can’t beat it for chronology and, and for some sense of exactly when things happened. Even if they don’t get the date exactly right, it’s so proximate that it’s as good as the right date.

JW: What other resources besides the Recorder did you find for pre-Durham Durham?

00:59:15

JA: Well, court records, the court records of Orange County, court minutes I should say, and then estates papers, wills, tax records. Then there were various war records, Revolutionary and 1812. Duncan Cameron had kept a whole lot of records from the War of 1812 and lists of companies and who were in them and so forth.

JW: It all sounds like a lot more than seven years’ worth of research.
JA: Oh, it was. And then of course when I turned in my first draft to the Historical Preservation Society, they said it was too long, that nobody would publish it. And that opinion wasn’t theirs, it was Duke’s, Duke Press. So I spent a couple of years cutting it down and taking out what I felt I could, and I guess I decreased it by about 200 pages from the original manuscript and resubmitted it and this time the Press accepted it.

JW: Well, it certainly has proven to be an invaluable resource.

01:01:11

JA: Well, there’s so much more there, Jim, you know that, that hasn’t been used, and I just hope that people will read the footnotes and go back to the sources and, and write down what I wasn’t able to include because there’s so many untapped resources. I’m thinking of things that I didn’t tap either except just casually. The superior court records that have so many interesting cases, and they are so completely documented, and it was by accident in estate papers that I came across, like Bartlett Durham’s—the number of court cases that stemmed from his unsettled estate. The bastardy bonds and all the creditors, McMannen being one. You know he advertised in ’55, I think it was. 1855 he was selling lots to build a city, you know.

JW: Yes, I’ve seen those ads.

JA: And it turned out he never paid for that land. He’d bought it from Durham, Bartlett Durham. He was one of the, he was one of the creditors that was listed—a long list of creditors. So what happened to that land took a good bit of piecing together, the fact that, I guess, it had been bought at auction by D. C. Parrish and that he came to the rescue of McMannen’s home place up in South Lowell, too. McMannen’s friends pitched in and saved that for him, and they saved some of the Durham land, too, I think—because McMannen Street later got developed on that land.

JW: What were some of the materials you had to cut out that you particularly regret?

01:03:33

JA: I don’t remember. It was mostly cutting down what I’d already written about each subject so that it was compressing sentences, compressing information, and there may have been topics, too, that I threw out, but it was mostly a compressing job. And unfortunately details that I felt that I just couldn’t include, personal details and sketches of people, because it’s the people that really make things interesting.

JW: Have you ever thought, well, the second edition of the book came out last year. How did you feel about the idea of going back after 20 years and adding on to what you’d done?

01:04:34

JA: Well, I was willing to do that, but the entire process of research was completely changed. I was no longer working with original documents and I don’t like that. I like to work from original documents and I was working entirely from things I could find already in print, partly because there were no manuscripts unpublished. I found one dissertation at Duke on the merger of the public school systems, county and
city when that merged, and that was a very helpful dissertation. But I expected that there would have been many more on that 20-year period, but there weren’t, at least at Duke, and I depended on newspaper clippings entirely that Sylvia Kerckhoff had collected. She was on the council even before she had become mayor, so it was maybe a nine-year period that she covered. And she had clipped everything about herself or the council decisions or arguments about them. So she was a jewel, and then also Becky Heron told me that the city, excuse me, the county, had systematically clipped newspaper articles about the commissioners and their decisions and their lawsuits and their hearings and so forth. And these had been typed up and made into volumes and kept in the clerk’s office, the county clerk. And so I went down there and systematically went through them. So for the political aspect of those 20 years I had a pretty complete record. Didn’t have to go to newspapers. Well, you know how long it takes reading newspaper articles on microfilm. It’s impossible.

JW: That is why I am so impressed with you having read the entire Hillsborough Recorder.

JA: Well, it was a four-page piece of paper, right?

JW: Even so.

01:07:32

JA: But I did read all the early Durham newspapers on microfilm and then when I got to the Sun, yeah, I read those, too, but Duke had original copies of the Herald and Sun, and maybe it was only the Herald, but I think it was the Sun, too, in great big bound volumes, in the newspaper room. I can’t tell you the time that saved me, because I would sit in the newspaper room on a high stool with this huge volume and just flip pages and you can see at a glance, just by reading the headlines, what you need to read, which you can’t do on microfilm. And so I got through 80 years of doing that, with the originals, and they still have them in boxes. They didn’t throw them out when they threw out so much else.

JW: Well that’s good.

01:09:10

JA: It is a marvelous resource. I am so afraid that somebody is going to throw them out. ‘Cause you can never go back and do all of this again. It’s too time consuming. And I made sheets. I had yellow pads and I wrote everything down on these yellow pads, year after year after year, and then I made cards from these notes and put them in boxes under various titles: entertainment, politics, families, whatever. I worked, in writing the history, I worked from those boxes and the cards were all in chronological order and separated by topic. So then I had the chronology on the pads so I could see what happened in each year. It was a time consuming system, but it was really helpful. I think I have all those pads, but I threw out all the cards.

JW: What are you planning to do with all the pads?

JA: I planned...they are down at the library.

JW: If you were to write a memoir, a personal history of Durham, where would you begin?
JA: Well, I guess I would begin with a description of the city as it was when we came and the rural countryside.

JW: What do you remember it as...if you were to describe it to me?

01:10:54

JA: Well, I remember liking the fact that there were a lot of brick buildings. Having grown up in Philadelphia I was very partial to brick cities. But I could not understand why there didn’t seem to be any residential old section, except those few houses on Dillard Street, and McMannen Street was lined with great big houses all the way down to University Drive, and this had been a very prosperous neighborhood of tobacco merchants and the like who had built these substantial Queen Anne and earlier houses from the ‘80s, ‘90s, including the McMannen House, and that was all that was really left. A few of the houses that are still standing, Holloway Street and Geer Street and so forth. What I expected to find was rows of brick houses, such as you’d see in Baltimore or Richmond or Philadelphia where people had lived, but when Durham developed, of course, it developed in a very different time and not with a conception of an industrial city, but sort of just as suburban houses maybe or what a country town would look like with one big house after another on its own lot. Not what I conceived of as a city. That surprised me and disappointed me because I love Philadelphia and I love old cities. I love London. That’s the epitome for everything that I love. But I grew to like those old houses and was very sorry when they were demolished. Fortunately we’ve got Trinity Park and Morehead Hill and a scattering of houses here and there on Chapel Hill Road. Just a few blocks beyond us was the Bartlett Mangum house which is now Four Square Restaurant, and that was a nice old house. Well, I guess it was the architecture I was interested in most when we moved to Durham. That’s the way I thought. Our lives were centered on activities at Duke. We had no intercourse with town organizations. One thing that astonished me was the accent. I remember going downtown one of the very first days we were here, looking for a department store and I stopped somebody on the pavement and asked them (we were down on Chapel Hill Street), and I asked them if there was a department store in town, and the name I got I would have spelled BAY-ELKS, Bayelks (laughs). And I could not make this out, nor could Carl. But I saw it finally in print, realized what it was they were trying to tell me, but we had the same problem when we went to get our stove activated. We went to Duke Power Company and we had to get the electricity turned on in the house and we could not understand the man we dealt with. It was just incomprehensible to us. It doesn’t seem likely now because I’ve heard that so often. It doesn’t seem strange any longer.

JW: Or has the accent changed?

01:16:23

JA: Yes, could be. Yes. And another thing that astonished us was how friendly and polite everybody was. They’re extraordinarily gracious. And you’d buy something in a store...Bay-elks, and they would end the transaction by saying, “Where are you from?” and “We’d love to have you come to our church” or “What church do you go to?” (laughs) Well, this was a question that no one where we grew up would ever have asked anyone. They would no more ask you what church you went to as to ask you what
political party you belong to. They were off limits. It just wasn’t polite (laughs). But those were the main differences that I found in meeting people who had grown up in Durham.

JW: Did you find the town/gown relationship changing?

01:17:49

JA: Oh yes, very much so, but not immediately. I think it was only maybe when Sanford came in to the presidency [of Duke]. But...well, it would have been after the Research Triangle began to change things. And when the Preservation Society...that was really my first contact with people who had not been campus people. Our children went to the kindergarten on campus. Our entertainment was almost entirely on campus, the Duke film organization and the concerts, the Chamber Arts concerts, and the Duke Orchestra. That’s about all we did, and then there was a good bit of social entertaining within the department, and all that has completely gone. There’s very little collegiality in departments, at least in the English department, which is rather big. But there was a great deal and there was a lot of interdepartmental social gathering, too. There was the Campus Club for the faculty wives and the Newcomers Club faculty wives. And they were invaluable in becoming acquainted with people. But that’s how our acquaintance became limited.

JW: What became of the collegiality?

01:19:58

JA: I think that died because people became so busy. I think when wives had careers as well as husbands it took too much time to put on a dinner party and do all the things necessary, take care of the children, get the house in order, get out all the dishes and so forth. It’s a big job, giving a dinner party.

JW: I know, we’ve given a couple (laughs).

JA: And things were more formal then, too. You didn’t...entertaining has become much more informal, I find, and easier in many ways. Technologically, too, with blenders and the like, outdoor grills.

JW: Speaking of technology, what do you think of doing research now as opposed to when you started?

01:21:16

JA: Oh those were the good old days. Do you know H. G. Jones?

JW: Yes.

JA: Well, he has been lamenting to me in letters about the good old days of research because it’s not, it’s impossible, of course, to park now either at Duke or UNC where I did most of my looking. It’s easier at Archives because they have a nice big parking lot opposite them. But the rigamarole that you go through even in Archives is prohibitive. You have to have a photo ID, their photo ID. And you have to fill out all sorts of forms. I don’t know whether it’s that way now, but I’ve heard in other places that you put on gloves to look at the manuscripts and I know at UNC they give you paper and pencil. You can’t bring anything into the search room of your own. They no longer make copies right there on the floor for you. You have to write out a sheet of request and what each item is and what collection it belongs to and
then you turn that in and then half a week or more later you get these copies. It's not like taking the thing right up to the Xerox machine and doing it yourself. Well, just all those little security measures have made it so much more difficult.

JW: Do you use the internet?

01:23:08

JA: I use the internet, but I don’t find that satisfactory. I know for some things it can be very satisfactory, but I try to do genealogy on my own lines, and almost anything you want to dig into you have to go through Ancestry.com or Genealogy.com or some other agency that’s collecting money on original papers and putting them online and charging you to read them. And this is even a limited quantity. They don’t do estates papers, piece of paper by piece of paper, which is so invaluable. They only do things that are already compiled, like census records, wills, real estate records. That’s helpful. If you want to read the Durham real estate transactions, they’re all online and that’s a great help. And I think that may be true of Orange County, too. But they’re not the old ones. They don’t go back beyond a certain date and I find that, too, in the Herald-Sun indexes. They don’t go back beyond a certain point. Maybe someday all these things will be, but I feel they should be free. They are public documents and it’s the obligation, I think, of the city or county or government agency to put these things online so that people can access them without a middle man. I resent that. I won’t pay it.

JW: You were speaking of the development of the interest in local history. Now we have a movement for a historic museum of some kind. Is that something you think will be a boon?

01:25:36

Approximately 3 minutes redacted until July 12, 2062

Well from my point of view, one of the most important things that needs to be done is a collection for papers, historical documents. The numbers of businesses that we have and their records, the old records of Liggett and Meyers and American Tobacco. Who knows where those papers are? And all the other organizations of the town and the people who’ve lived here and their family papers. Nobody saves any family papers anymore. They chuck them out because there’s no place to put them. And that’s why I wanted my papers downtown in the County Library where people can use them, and they’re not valuable in the way a native record of a family would be, but there are miscellaneous facts about various things related to Durham, and I would love to see the library with a really good Durham collection with security and more people helping Lynn and more use of what they have. They have a wonderful photographic collection and the things they have are invaluable. So I’d put my money, if I were the city or the county, in developing these resources, on historic sites [particularly Leigh Farm, which is completely undeveloped], and a place for family papers, a repository for all kinds of papers, not just family.

JW: In the time you’ve lived in Durham, were there any particular people or events that stand out to you? I was asking if you wrote a personal history.

01:31:15
Approximately 5 minutes redacted until July 12, 2062

JW: Is there anything else on our list?

01:36:17

JA: Oh, there are lots of things on our list. Jim, this is going to take ages to go through. When you’re tired you tell me. We’ve talked about the Eno River Association. I could talk about the Cabe family. I was interested in the Cables, of course, because we were on their land, and that is a most interesting history. We had 21 acres, but when William Cabe died, he had over 1000 acres along that stretch of Eno River where Pleasant Green Road is. And when Barnaby Cabe settled there, he bought 320 acres or 330 from William Few, the Quaker, and Few, the year before had bought a rather large tract, 640 acres, on both sides of the river, and he was willing to sell to Barnaby Cabe, the first Cabe in Orange County. He bought 330 acres on the east side of the Eno. The river runs north and south there, and Few kept the land on the other side and had a mill where Few’s Ford is. Well, Barnaby later moved to Hillsborough and owned the corner of King Street and Cameron, opposite the Visitors Center where Seven Hearths House is. And the earliest part of that house they attribute to Barnaby. I don’t know. There’s no proof of that. But they do know that he owned that lot. And he also owned lot, forgotten which number it is, on Margaret Lane, that he left to his son John. John owned that. But his son William got the lot along where we were and William eventually had over 1000 acres, as I said. Barnaby had land in different sections of Orange County, but I don’t think it was all of one stretch. And William lived there all his life and married a Piper, Jemima Piper, whose father owned the land just to the north of their land. And Cabe was the overseer of the road over Cabe’s Ford and by his own plantation, as far as Cates’s Creek outside of Hillsborough. William and John also contributed money to the founding of the university. I have a drawer that long with Cabe information, and when I got finished doing the Cabe genealogy with all Conway Browning's information on it, plus what I found out, I put it on a piece of butcher paper. It’s at least 20 feet long. I still have that. I don’t know what to do with the Cabe papers. I have so many of the different families—Sims, Herbert Sims that owned West Point Mill, the Johnston connection, the Patterson, Mann Patterson that owned Patterson’s Mill. These were all husbands of John Cabe daughters. John had nine daughters, William had eight, and so there were all these other names that came into their genealogy. John had no sons, William had two. I was going to tell you, one of those, William’s…two…and two daughters—three of William’s children married into a Brown family. One was John, who married a Maryanne Brown and she died early. But the two Brown brothers who married two Cabe sisters moved to the West. They moved to Arkansas and they founded a lumber company there and in the twentieth century their descendants sold that lumber company to a company in Texas for $144 million. The remnant moved to Texas with the company. So I was in correspondence with a Jean Brown I think. But anyway, she was a descendant of all that and was very interested in her Orange County ancestry.

01:42:39

JA: But it was interesting that Few came into that location. If you’ve talked to...oh, what’s his first name, first names keep going, Southern, not Michael Southern, Dave Southern, who has done the earliest research on that plot of land. He has done remarkable things. He’s discovered a 1739 explorer’s diary, a surveyor for one of the royal governors, who came through that very lot and describes Buckwater Creek
and the Eno. Gabriel Johnston owned that tract first—much more than what Few owned. He owned 1000 acres, I think, in a square there. But this earlier manuscript has what is certainly the earliest description of that part of Orange County and Dave has done an awful lot on the early roads around there. And there are several other people working on those roads. You know Herbert Englishman? He seems to work for the park and is interested in tracking the old roads that are in the park and the old buildings that are in the park. And someone else doing that is Tom, Tom Magnuson, of course. And so Dave and Tom and Herbert are all working on the same area. But the Cabes, the Cabe descendants for the most part moved away, to the West, at least William’s family. John’s family, more of them stayed around. One married the miller on the Turkey Farm Road and one as I said, Herbert Sims, and he was Rachel Cabe’s second husband, first husband was McCown, with McCown’s Mill. And then the descendants of the McCowns and the Simses and the Johnstons and the Pattersons all stayed around here. His daughters also married Strayhorns and they stayed around and another daughter married another Orange County man…Latta? And they stayed around. So John Cabe’s descendants are myriad around here.

01:46:07

JA: But Hugh Conway Browning was one of William’s descendants. And that was my mentor. And the head of the Orange County High School when we first moved to Orange County was also a descendant, Claytor was his name.

JW: What else would you like to talk about?

JA: You have more time? Ok, we’ve ticked off the first two. I should say in connection with the Cabes and John Cabe particularly, Alpha Woolen Mills comes under that of course and that was in that stretch of river land just north of the McCown Mill, and there’s a great deal of court information about the Alpha Woolen Mills because it was started by a Shields descendent of John. One of his daughters married William T. Shields and owned that mill.

Jean Anderson takes a phone call.

End of Interview