

CRIST: This date is September 4, 1968. Mrs. Evans where were you born?

EVANS: 1029 East Noble Street.

CRIST: Here in Alliance.

REMINISCENCES

EVANS: Here in Alliance.

OF

CRIST: What year was ELLEN EVANS

EVANS: March 4, 1885

Evans, Ellen A.

CRIST: Who was President then?

EVANS: Grover Cleveland. I remember that because my father wanted to call me Ruth after his daughter and my mother said no. "She has to be called Ellen after my sister."

CRIST: You had others in the family?

EVANS: After her sister.
Interview by
Lyle M. Crist
September 4, 1968

CRIST: Oh, I see.

EVANS: After her sister.

CRIST: Now who were the others in your family though?

EVANS: Well, Benjamin next to me, and then a sister Carrie, and Robert.

CRIST: Any still with you?

EVANS: Prepared by the Rodman Public Library
for the Oral History Project, Alliance, Ohio.

CRIST: I see. What was Alliance like in 1885 or in those early years?

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Mrs. Ellen Evans
September 4, 1968

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EVANS: 1029 East Noble Street. I went to school at Frank-

CRIST: Here in Alliance?

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CRIST: What year was that?

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CRIST: Who was President then?

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CRIST: You had others in the family?

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CRIST: Oh, I see.

EVANS: After her sister.

CRIST: Now who were the others in your family though?

EVANS: Well, Benjamin next to me, and then a sister Carrie, and Robert.

CRIST: Any still with you?

EVANS: They all lived here, they're all gone now.

CRIST: I see. What was Alliance like in 1885 or in those early years?

EVANS: Well, I, of course, couldn't remember back that far. But as I remember it we children were not allowed to rove around so I didn't know too much about Main Street. I had learned a lot about it since working here at the museum. But, we were kept pretty close home. I went to school at Franklin School; a small building then. Which was enlarged later.

CRIST: But it is the same building.

EVANS: Part of it is the same building. And teachers well known in Alliance, Mame Farley and Mary Hazen and Virgil Mills was the principal. And the seventh grade - then we had to walk up to the high school building.

CRIST: You had six grades at Franklin.

EVANS: For the eighth grade.

CRIST: Oh, I see.

EVANS: Under Elizabeth Fетters.

CRIST: Was the high school located where it is now?

EVANS: Yes. Yes. It had been the Christian College, you know: and closed and the Board of Education bought the building for almost nothing.

CRIST: Tell me about the Christian College.

EVANS: Oh, well, it was a three story building and at that time the high school was only three years. You went from the eighth grade into the first high school, and that was Charles Betts. And Miss Leek was one of the teachers. And there was three high schools. Well 1873 was the panic in the

country and I always had the impression that closed the college. But not entirely. There was a little financial difficulty. Oh, it was used: the Salvation Army used it and they had different things there. Then the school board rented a couple of rooms and then later bought the building.

CRIST: Well was this, when it was the Christian College was this under any church auspices?

EVANS: Disciple, Christian Church or Disciple.

CRIST: I see.

EVANS: A. B. Ways started it and collected his money from the Disciple Churches in other states. And it seemed to be going to be a success but it closed. We have a picture of the faculty here in the museum.

CRIST: When did it start? The Christian College.

EVANS: 1867.

CRIST: Well, let's go back to where you were born on Noble. Do you recall any of the other people who lived in that area, anything about their homes and their families.

EVANS: Well, right on the corner of Franklin and Noble next to the school building was a gray brick and John McConnell, Mayor of Alliance, lived there. And then down on Noble was Emmett Morgan; he was an official at the Council, but I can't remember just exactly what. But of course all of those people are gone, there was Grooneys and Grooners.

CRIST: When you were growing up in the late 1880's and 1890's

did you have: well, I'm thinking of the youngsters today and all the toys that they have and all of the equipment that they have to play with and so on. What do you recall.

EVANS: No. No, we didn't have. No one seemed to have too much you know down in that section, well those early years they didn't. And I remember as a youngster the neighbors thought one Christmas, one of the young men was Santa Claus and he came to each house, rang his bell you could hear him coming. And I remember that I was so frightened that I crawled, I was tiny and I crawled under the chair my mother was sitting on. I remember that so well. And when Santa Claus asked what we wanted him to bring I was so scared I couldn't answer. I got a doll I remember that, but I didn't have the gift of gab - that I got since.

CRIST: What was the occupation of your father at this time?

EVANS: Carpenter. And that first house that he bought burned down when my younger brother Robert was just a couple of weeks old. And C. C. Davidson who was the early Superintendent of Schools was also a man that helped, loaned money. So my father being a carpenter he could build his own home through the help financially of C. C. Davidson. And that home is still standing down there, a colored family in there.

CRIST: You mentioned some others in the area there. What were some of their occupations?

EVANS: Well, I just don't....

CRIST: All right. Well the shops were very active in Alliance at that time weren't they?

EVANS: Yes. Railroaders, Engineers, Brakemen, Conductors everywhere. And I remember a lot of us, oh he's a railroader he's got a lot of money. They seemed to make more money than anybody else at that time.

CRIST: Now when you mention the railroad I think of the old station that used to be here. What was the name of that, where they had the boarding house and so on.

EVANS: Well, Sourbeck House, is that the one you mean?

CRIST: Yes.

EVANS: We have the pictures of all of the depots. And the depot for this track is right down here standing. That was a grocery store. But the Sourbeck House was north of the tracks a frame building, very fancy. And that's where Lincoln got off the train and ate and gave a talk when he was on his way to be inaugurated. That burned down, and then they built the big one, on the south side of the tracks. And that's the one that was torn down a few years ago.

CRIST: For the present....

EVANS: Yes, and very famous that Sourbeck House became that famous all over the country. At one time Sheridan, Sherman came, they came out of their way to get to this famous eating place.

CRIST: Oh, is that so. Do you ever eat there?

EVANS: And the Prince of Wales.

CRIST: Prince of Wales ate there?

EVANS: Yes.

CRIST: Did Ellen Evans ever eat there? thing north of vine

EVANS: No. We kidders kept pretty clost to home. Didn't get to run around. But I know Mrs. Rosenberg waited on tables in that famous dining room. And we have a finger bowl that was....

CRIST: From the Sourbeck House? Here in the museum?

EVANS: Yes. We have it here somewhere but I don't know

CRIST: Tell me about this museum. And how the Historical Society came to have it, and it's belongings. the Historical

EVANS: Well, Mabel Hartzell, it's through Mabel Hartzell. She was born in Sagana, Michigan. And her mother had taught school and she, of course, passed away and the father had the three girls; Mabel, Gwendolen and Maggie and broke up his home. Well Early's had built this building in 1867 and they had no children by 1884. So they asked if they might have Mabel and she came here in November of 1884. We have the dress and the coat; her mother had made her a plaid alpaca dress that will never wear out I guess. And because Alpaca doesn't I guess.... And crocheted a coat and she wore those when she come and Mabel being historical minded kept them. In April of 1886, 1885 I mean, they adopted her and permitted her to keep her own name. And she went through high school - 1895. 1905 she come out of Mount Union College and taught here then she retired for thirteen years, took care of her foster parents, and then went back to college, come out of Ohio State, and taught. And everything they had was left to

Mabel. And Mabel eventually gave everything north of Vine to the river for oh, the Early Park.

CRIST: That's known as Early Park.

EVANS: Yes, with the understanding that it carried the name Early.

CRIST: When was that? Do you know when that would be?

EVANS: No. We have it here somewhere but I don't know that date. It's in some of our records. She with Mrs. Dorothy Donaldson and Mrs. Vanwinkle organized the Historical Society in 1939. And the articles that were given to them for the museum were kept in their attics. And then they kept hoping for a home.

CRIST: You had a Historical Society but you had no museum at that time.

EVANS: No. And they kept the things in their attics and hoping for a gift of a home. And of course they didn't receive any and when Mabel's will was read, this much land from Vine back to the alley was left to the Historical Society to house the Alliance History; all of it if we could get it. The pioneers, their history and their antiques. And we have tried very hard to carry out Mabel's wish.

CRIST: I want to go back to this time prior to 1900 again. Are there any scenes that you recall personally, well now you said you didn't get up to Main Street very often but surely you were there sometime.

Oh, 1885. I was pretty small. It would be about probably before and I don't remember that. But I know

EVANS: Yes. quite small.

CRIST: What do you recall, can you describe any of the stores?

EVANS: I can't describe the buildings. I remember that they; it was this way. The one side you went up and the other side you went down. And I remember we had to go after our mail, and the Post Office was the building torn down there at Seneca and Main. And I did get that far because I had to go for the mail, and my chin just reached the ledge there, you know. And I remember once, only, but that was so stilled in my mind I've never been able to get rid of it. My father was quite elderly when he was married and I reached my chin up there and asked for the mail and she said, "well your grandfather was just in and got it." And I never forgotten that. And when I told my father he wasn't very happy. Oh dear.

CRIST: That's the kind of anecdotes you remember through all the years. Well now, what we call the square now that was there?

EVANS: Yes, the square was there and our father took we children to the fairs. They had the fair, Alliance Fair on the square. stick, each one of us.

CRIST: Was this a yearly affair of some sort.

EVANS: Yes. Yearly. quite an event. Because there wasn't

CRIST: What would you have at a fair then? You said this was around 1900? this was the time that we referred to as the

EVANS: Oh, 1885. I was pretty small. It would be about 1900 probably before and I don't remember that. But I know

that I was quite small.

CRIST: Well, what was at the fair? Well, it was on the square now.

EVANS: Well, vegetables and things like that on the small scale. It finally got large and they went to Rockhill Park.

CRIST: Was it something like a carnival?

EVANS: Yes.

CRIST: But you could also purchase groceries and household items?

EVANS: No, it was like the fair at Canton or Columbus.

CRIST: The County Fair.

EVANS: The County fair, only the City Fair it would be.

CRIST: I see. Well then we don't have that now.

EVANS: No.

CRIST: When did that stop?

EVANS: Oh, I don't know. It was out at Rockhill and it finally disappeared. But our father always took us. And they had this taffy, this white taffy, vanilla taffy. And we always got a stick, each one of us.

CRIST: That was the big event, was it?

EVANS: Yes. That was quite an event. Because there wasn't too much money flowing around.

CRIST: Well now this was the time that we referred to now as the Gay Nineties.

EVANS: Yes. there pictures?

CRIST: Do you remember anything gay about it? the coming to-

EVANS: We have pictures here of the square at that time; the old fashioned City Hall and ladies with their bustles and their dresses clear down to the ground and hats. And the men with silk hats; stove pipe hats we called them.

CRIST: Were there any theaters then in Alliance? will war

EVANS: Oh yes. everyone wanted to have a part. Let's

CRIST: Vaudeville. 1912 I think it was that they tried to

call them together. Well that wouldn't have been here be-

EVANS: Well, I was still a kid I guess and they had a picture show. I remember getting there.

CRIST: When did this town start? EVANS: It started in 1838 down here.

CRIST: What kind of a picture show, do you recall?

EVANS: I was trying to think the lady that sang was, she married a Stamp, Joe Stamp. I forget her name, I think it was Richardson, May Richardson or something.

CRIST: Yes. Early Hill.

EVANS: Oh, they had a singer, she sang at the piano, I don't know when that went out of existence. But it was on the north side of Main Street, I know that. The Post Office was at the southwest corner of Main and Freedom.

CRIST: Well, tell me, World War I, what do you recall about Alliance and the mobilization and the reaction and so on?

EVANS: Well, as far as Alliance goes they were active in every war that's ever been. That's one reason I've been proud of Alliance because they always took part.

CRIST: Were there parades?

EVANS: Of course there would be parades and the coming together of the soldiers.

CRIST: Well, do you recall any rallies or special events to inform the people of the activities of the war?

EVANS: There was plenty, I know in the beginning, I have the history here and have read that. It wasn't the Civil War because that one everyone wanted to have a part. Let's see that was 1861. 1812 I think it was that they tried to call them together. Well that wouldn't have been here because we weren't here.

CRIST: When did this town start?

EVANS: It started in 1838 down here.

CRIST: Right at, where?

EVANS: Right here in this part of town.

CRIST: At Early Hill.

EVANS: It was called Freedom; Mathias Hester had come in from Pennsylvania to New Lisbon it was called then and then into Salem and into Mount Union. And built a store on the corner where the Sohio is. Had a store there.

CRIST: At a corner in Mount Union you mean?

EVANS: Uh huh, and had a store and he built a home and he wanted a church. And there was taverns and not so much interest in the church. So he sold his outfit and bought the

CRIST: This was the dining room.

sixty acres down here and then his building was turned into a tavern. But anyway he bought the sixty acres down here and built a home. And they got a Baptist Church built right across the street from here. Right away quick.

CRIST: Where Early Hill is now?

EVANS: Uh huh. And the first cemetery was right there. And then later they had a little split and the Disciple Church started. Well he had given them the ground for that and then he gave them the other church ground over on Walnut and Wayne to build the First Disciple Church.

CRIST: This is Mathias Hester?

EVANS: Then he wrote a letter, he was on Council, Mathias Hester and he wrote a letter; we have that letter. Mr. Osborne has it now in a book up there. And to the effect, he was on council but he wrote the letter that it was time to find a new cemetery. The one over here. And he advised about two miles away from here. He wasn't visualizing yet the advance of Alliance. The funny part of it was he advised them to buy it at least two miles from here. Because when it rained there might be a disagreeable odor.

CRIST: Is that so. Well now tell me, getting back to this Historical Society now, we're in a room as we're recording here, we're in, I see a kitchen off here to the left, what was this room?

EVANS: Dining room.

CRIST: This was the dining room.

EVANS: We sometimes wonder if perhaps that room was built on afterward. But I guess not, because of the cupboard and the dry sink and everything it must of been built when the house was built, 1867.

CRIST: Aren't any secret passageways in here, are there?

EVANS: Any what?

CRIST: Secret passageways, you know, hidden stairways.

EVANS: No, no, the school children have asked that question many time; if there was an attic or basement they could get into. The basement of course was cleaned out from unnecessary things. And the attic has never been used, I guess. It has no floor. But we have a room up over here that we store in.

CRIST: Now the rooms are furnished with items that have been given to the Historical Society but the attempt is to have the rooms appear pretty much as they would have been in the last century.

EVANS: Yes, now at first I think a good many people didn't bother to come. They thought it was Mabel's home as she left it. And that isn't exactly true, because there were no glassware, no china, no silverware, no linens. A lot of those things were not here. But the carpet and curtains and as the curtains wear out, we have workers, all of us together that have curtains in the attic and bring those and put them up. And most rooms, now the parlor has the bookcase and the big piano, that came in but the one bedroom that was the early

bedroom and has the real old bedroom suite is as it was. But all of the antiques that have come in from the very beginning, the first settlers in Lexington in 1805, we have accumulated up there articles through Mrs. Brechner of Sebring. She's the third generation of the Feltz family. A good bit, all the china, silver and glassware has come in from the early pioneers.

CRIST: Now do you think it's a good thing for the young people of Alliance to come down here and see all of these items?

EVANS: And they do. All the scouts they have to come through the museum to get a medal. And all of the scouts that takes in the whole group. And before that back a ways for about five years we had the fifth and eighth graders touring the city and the museum and then writing essays and getting prizes. Writing essays and then built models. They did a wonderful piece of work. But we finally stopped it, the essays were getting so good that I couldn't get judges. The children knew more than the judges did.

CRIST: Is there anything in the museum that is particularly special to you or anything that is particularly important?

EVANS: Yes, well copies. We have a letter of Abe Lincoln it's in the bank but the copy is hanging here and Sandwork had the same copy in his books. And that came through when the Civil War was on and the churches were helping all they could and the Methodists were sending quite a delegation down

to let Lincoln know that they were behind him. And the committee set up a letter that they were going to give him and someone on the committee sent him a copy. So Lincoln was prepared and had his copy ready, that is his answer and he received them. Now that was, the name will come to me, a minister went with them from Welby. And this minister said, "Oh, I'd love to have a copy of that." And Lincoln said, "Sit down, I can write it right away." And he did, signed it Abe Lincoln and this minister had that, eventually gave the letter, it was to the effect that they had so many nurses and so many soldiers and Lincoln answered it by saying that he knew they had, but other churches had as many as they could have according to their size you know. But anyway they sat down, he got a copy; he had it, he finally gave it to his grandson and his grandson was Mayor of Alliance, he married James Amerman's sister; Margaret Amerman. And they have it and Gay and James said that Alliance should have that here.

CRIST: You know a lot of people, don't you? You just give these names, you know all of these names through all of these years. That's a wonderful memory. Tell me this as I'm talking to you I see a top hat over there on the wall and of course you know as I think to myself, I'd like to put on that top hat. Now what do you think about fashions today compared to the fashions when you were growing up in Alliance, turn of the century and the men were wearing those fancy hats and the ladies were wearing their bustles and so on.

EVANS: Well, as far as hats are concerned down through the

years they've always been lovely. Always lovely. And we had some very lovely hats here that go way back but when it comes to dresses that's different. I don't care too much for the style now. And we have wedding dresses here from way, way back. Nobody can wear them for the ladies aren't built that way now. And then they don't have stays in everything and they had somebody lace them up. They live more naturally and I think they are healthier.

CRIST: Well I think I would have to say you're just about the healthiest specimen I've ever seen for all of these years, 1885. We're going to conclude this now on the fourth of September 1968 an interview with Mrs. Ellen Evans of the Alliance Historical Society, reminiscing about Alliance and is there anything else you'd like to add for this record?

EVANS: I just would invite folks to come and see the museum. They had the impression that it would be just like Mabel left it which is a mistake. We have tried, all the folks working here have tried to keep it as Mabel requested.

CRIST: As a museum.

EVANS: And we have. And everybody that comes is surprised.

CRIST: Pleasantly surprised.

EVANS: Pleasantly.

CRIST: Well fine, thank you.

EVANS: And we get the folks from all over, out of the country and from all over the country.

CRIST: That's a fine record. Thank you very much Mrs.
Evans.

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