



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Anthony  
French Merrill, 1963 October 24

**Contact Information**

Reference Department  
Archives of American Art  
Smithsonian Institution  
Washington, D.C. 20560  
[www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions](http://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions)  
[www.aaa.si.edu/](http://www.aaa.si.edu/)

# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Anthony French Merrill in 1963. The interview was conducted by Harlan B. Phillips for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's New Deal and the Arts project.

In 2024 the Archives retranscribed the original audio and attempted to create a verbatim transcript. The original transcript was edited. Additional information from the original transcript has been added in brackets and given an -Ed. attribution. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

## Interview

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: This is an interview with Anthony F. Merrill, M-E-R-R-I-L-L. As I was indicating to you, I was able to get this list of federal-sponsored community art centers from the files of Jeffrey Norman and I thought that since we talked last time, in general, about the problems of the Federal Art Project and your association with it. And together with the background that you had had in Richmond prior to joining the Project, which had to do with the establishment of an arts center in Richmond. And you indicated that you were set out as one of the first tasks to deal with the South, which presented a different kind of picture and other areas at the time. So, I—you have a copy of this list, I have a copy. I thought maybe if we went down the list, the areas themselves may no longer obtain, but the people may suggest the names of the people and places may suggest something to you by way of background or some connection you had with her or some information you may have about its development, which would be useful. Because the first area is Alabama, which is Emma Roche.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, the Project was not too extensive in Alabama. Simply for lack of personnel but Ms. Roche was very interested and developed a—[inaudible] Henley [ph] school there, an art gallery which, as I recall was very successful in a limited way.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I mean, it—she used personnel [inaudible] as I recall doing some art teaching then exhibits.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible] very limited [inaudible] what we could do actually, in Alabama as a whole, is because of lack of personnel.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: You mentioned something as you were getting out of the car about the attitude, which I guess was general in the South about the—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, in a lot of the southern states you had a different attitude towards the people and [inaudible] social service, social workers in the WPA, the relief from which the people were drawn.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That they would—diminish that to discourage people like artists or white-collar people from applying for relief.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: You ever run up against that? Where people were destitute, and then food and house [ph] would take any work, but the scoring the right people in the relief areas for applying for relief.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And since our program basically was to help those on relief,

was not to run an art project or so forth, we had to first establish a—get people or establish a need for people in the area who want to participate and then put them to the best work possible. The town has tried to keep them in the field in which they had been working and had been trained for.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: And in Alabama, it was the absence of personnel on relief roles I gather, in part certainly that—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's right. We did some other work there. But I mean, it wasn't extensive.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I mean, the personnel just didn't exist.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: So, we were limited in what we could do.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. So, about Arizona, you've just shown me this Arizona highways of dated November 1963, which is the—deals with the art of Philip C. Curtis, but the second name on this list of sponsored community art centers in Arizona.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's right. Well, Phil was an artist working in the East at the time. And in the developing of the program in Arizona there's considerable interest in the development of an art center.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And we had—I don't recall the exact number of people employed in the state there, but there was a [inaudible] center and also in the Project. So, it was [inaudible] Philips Curtis was sent out there as director of the project.

[00:05:13]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: He was very good in design. He set up the galleries and carried on a most successful program, which I understand is still operating there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: How was the existence of this substantial support for an art center made known?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Just from the community.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: From the community?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: From the community.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. I mean, but how would you know it in Washington? How would you know that Phoenix, Arizona was a spot which was very much interested in the development of an art—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: As I recall in that work that we got the requests from the people in the area once the Project got underway—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Once it got—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —and learned of it in other areas, they wanted to develop one there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And so, to build up the Project there. So, we sent Curtis in because we knew he had—he was a good teacher and also a good designer.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And he went and later became the director for the art center. And I can't [inaudible] later also became director for the state as a whole.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Zeke [ph], was he suffering from arthritis then?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: To a certain extent, as I recall, yes. Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: So, it made the—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible] still, I mean, it was beneficial to him as a person. And it's also very beneficial to the community—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —to have somebody in because good artists is filled, and also one who was, I think, socially conscious and wanting to do something for the community itself.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: In any event, and this November 1963 issue of *Arizona Highways* would indicate that it's still alive and still functioning as a center.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah. Although Phil is no longer there. I think he's in Scottsdale.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Been painting for a number of years, but I mean, he's remained there. And I'm sure he still has a lot of interest in it.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. In any event, the Phoenix one had a vast request locally, which is one of the requirements for the establishment of an art center.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's right.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: That is the other kind—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, what— that's right and then in some instances, we stimulated requests.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I mean, and in certain areas. I mean, he had to let him know that that could be done.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And once you let know, certain people in the community are aware of the fact that [clears throat] they could enjoy the facilities of a center with community cooperation—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —and secure traveling exhibits and so forth. They became extremely interested.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm. Is the same—was there any difference in the Northern California, which is the third item in the Sacramento Art Center that had, according to this list, Beckford Young as its director.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah, I don't recall on that particular one, although I was in it a number of times after it was set up.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: But as I recall, it didn't function very well in the community.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: So, that was established later in the program, as I remember, when they got into the other centers in the country—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —being an operation.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Florida seems to have had quite a program in operation, at least from this list. It would indicate that for whatever reason, and I don't know the reason, Florida has a—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, I think Florida to a certain extent and others, always kind of art conscious—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —even in those times. And when the program came into being, there were quite a number of people there who were qualified—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —for the program from the relief standards who were maybe artists who had gone there because of health and different reasons like that.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Clears throat.] That were eligible for employment [clears throat] as a result, and Eve Floor [ph] who was the director down there. She was keenly interested and stimulated a lot of the size and worked with the different existing centers and colleges and established—no, we had quite a few.

[00:10:15]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I mean, there the main—main branches there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: But there's one in particular here, it says Key West Federal Art Center with a Mr. Morgan, Townsend Morgan.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Oh, he was one of the local artists down there as I recall—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —in there. In Key West or southern Florida. There's Alan Shaw [ph] was a director of the one up in St. Petersburg. Also, in Pensacola there was one main center in Ocala. And the William Bellwood [ph] was at the Miami federal gallery which was quite an active unit. And there's also an extension gallery in Jacksonville Negro college—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —at that time, which was worked from the Jacksonville gallery. Because all these galleries we're located right downtown. And the chief point was to reach the people in the area.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: People could drop in. Very few of our galleries, as I recall, were placed [inaudible] areas at all. I tried to get a store someplace downtown. Wherever it was possible that the people could drop-in, we could reach the people.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible] quite a few. Also, a number of little extension

galleries—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yes.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —throughout the state. Like down around the Pensacola area there, and Daytona and New Smyrna and Bradenton. Most of those were just—act as small exhibit galleries.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: The main galleries were concerned with lectures and teaching and other types of community activities.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. The climate then seems to have been most favorable in Florida for the development of this, for any number of reasons. Mainly, it was an attractive spot, which one retired in those days or for health reasons and so on. In any event, there were sufficient interest, awareness and so on in matters art to make for what appears certainly from this list to be an extensive program.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: It was.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: We were very extensive.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah, say you had a state director who was interested in that particular phase. And also, some cases of talent may have been limited there as to other types of projects, although they had easel and some mural painting as well.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: In—the next one is this Iowa Sioux City Federal Art Center with Roy Langley. I don't know what you got out there. Francis Robert White.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: What—was he the state director there?

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That again, came up as a direct [inaudible] of the people themselves [inaudible]. As I recall [clears throat], the unions, women's clubs, all of a number of various civic groups participated in that. The union devoted time and helping to frame it to galleries and things like that. There was an— it was in a downtown location.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And it was very successful as a center. They did teaching, exhibits, lectures.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And were the locus for these touring exhibits and so on.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yes.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. And it's the Sioux City then itself had— or at least an awareness of what was available in the program and had local sponsorship and interest to the extent that it created certainly in Sioux City, this federal Art Center. Is this traceable in part to the kind of leadership that Francis White gave?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I think it would be very definitely, yes.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: You know anything about him at all background, and so on?

[00:15:01]

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I don't remember right now. Although Bob White was one of our lead directors, I think in that area.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I don't recall his background now. But he did quite a bit of traveling over the state. And in different types of programs, the Index and so forth.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: A great deal of the success of the Federal Project Number One was in the state director that was chosen, isn't it?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Oh, yes. Very definitely.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. Well, Maryland—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I mean because in regards of how you made a program for Washington, if you didn't have an aggressive state person in there. It was a—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Nothing.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Nothing.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. So, this is a man who could sense local interest, galvanized local interest, organize local interest, and direct it toward the—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I know in the formation of the Sioux City one myself, I was out there and met with the various groups.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: You did?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Prior to a tactical organization trying to work it out.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And soliciting funds. And there's extreme interest in wanting it, a desire for art. So, it was not too difficult one to actually develop—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —from that sense. And then, when you have a good person that can follow through too. Implement what ideas you can leave with the local groups.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: You can be on the road to success.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: The soliciting of funds was what? The deferment of rentals and so on, or no?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: No, that was mostly to get—they he had operating costs on that. All of which—I mean the WPA a lot of operating cost, couldn't be born with WPA.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: A lot of [inaudible]. I'd say very few. I mean, if you had to rent a place, or a lot of the actual—I mean there's certain cost. So, many people might be thrown into the general cost of a project.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: On something like this, the community project. We're tried to, I recall, at \$2,000 to \$2,500, which will help to go towards a running cost of the program to get underway.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I mean, on the case of Sioux City I know that the unions pitched in and donated their services and framing at the galleries. [Inaudible] you got to

building, you can't have pictures on the wall. And those galleries are all attracted to design, a lot of them.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: They weren't just taking over a store and putting in. A lot of false ceiling were put in, things like that. To really give it a nice atmosphere. That's the reason why it was an attraction of those galleries to the public.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm. But the deeper thing and I—from what I understand from you, is that the sponsorship was local.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: The sponsorship was local, yes.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yes. And to get union—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: We didn't go in and build galleries unless the community wanted it.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Right.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I [inaudible] set them up.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I mean, when we first saw there was a local interest. Had the local group form their own committees to participate in the development, raising what funds might be necessary. And try to set up where it would last on a permanent basis.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Because that program was designed to help the people who were needed at that time but also, we were trying to look far and go through building future opportunities for them in their area.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And as far as we were concerned on the art project, we were developing an interest. A broader interest in art too.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: But that was a byproduct to the employment.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yes.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Because first had to be the employment.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yes.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And I think that that's where under the leadership Holger Cahill, that the people working under him had a much broader vision than what you'd normally get in that type of program.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. This is then a seed bedtime, not only for the creation of work, but the planning of opportunities which can—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's right.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: —have continuity because of local interests and sponsorship. Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I think that's one of the important phases of that program.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: And it certainly worked out in Sioux City, Iowa.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: It's worked out in a whole lot of these places we went in, Big Stone Gap, Phoenix. Any number of places it still exists.



[00:20:07]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Well, in Maryland, there's a series of galleries. But is there—there wasn't any—doesn't appear on this list in anyway, but there had been an art center.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: It varies in many cases. Of course, if you had your Hagerstown County Museum and Baltimore Museum, and different groups in Maryland.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: These are more the smaller galleries, extension galleries, out in the area. They're actually the one the personnel that need to naturally exist for the establishment of an art center.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And that's really where the wire for the gallery. In which in a way all art centers do.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: But not in a more elaborate sense of Sioux City or Phoenix which were an active center for the arts and in their areas.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, were these in Maryland or the existing galleries or galleries which were—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: No, they were small galleries, which was—

[Cross talk.]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: —on this allocation and tour—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Allocation tour of words which are being done over the country.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, Mississippi seems to have had an art center.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Delta Art Center down in Greenville was a very good one. The state director in charge of that there again in Mississippi; its personnel was limited. It was small personnel. [Children playing sound.]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Another one of the most worthwhile projects we seen was set up in that area to utilize the personnel we had.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Different than size, say from Sioux City?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: No, there's just parts that are the same size I recall. I think Sioux City probably had more activity because they had more personnel there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: But it served a real purpose in Mississippi.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible.]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: And this, Frederick J. Whitman [ph], was he local person or someone who was sent in to—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I just don't recall that all well.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. But again, this was with local sponsorship.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: So, that all has local sponsorship.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Montana even had an art center.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: It did, yes.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. Well, you—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: So, that was developed by Stephens [inaudible]. I'm trying to remember who was the regional director on that. Don Vera [ph] was one of the regional directors. Don was a state director—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Colorado?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —in Colorado. He is also one of our regional directors and a very astute historian and museum man.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And he did quite a bit in that area once the program got underway in helping to [inaudible] develop right in the West there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: In other words, he was a visiting clinician to help—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And he was at the Denver Museum and went on later to the Santa Barbara Museum where he was—when he died 12 years ago. He was a person who was sincerely interested in American art and a great student of American art.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, Stevens [ph] was a local Montanan again —

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: As I recall, I think he was local in Montana.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, this is in the New Mexico.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible] Mexico your guiding force on the project there was Ryan Hunter [ph] [automobile sound] who did a lot in setting up a very fine Index of American Design project. That he was an artist himself.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And his [inaudible] was also in the art centers. And with the aid of the federal office and stuff, he developed the art centers there in New Mexico, the Roswell [inaudible] I think was given a real impetus in their development.

[00:25:22]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: They have a very fine one there now. The other two centers were smaller. But all the people in this case, I think, were people in New Mexico. Because as you know, they had a number of artists who gravitated to New Mexico, you had quite a bit of talent there to develop.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Well, it's a sparsely settled state, in a way. And yet there are—it was apparently from this list—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, there's Albuquerque too. Of course, you had the university there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Sure.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And around Taos and Salem there were a lot of artists—Florence.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Well, there are three people here that are listed on this under New Mexico. They must also have been local people.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I think all three of those were local. I do remember.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. But as you say, there was sufficient interest to make for sponsorship of these art centers, which I gather included the teaching aspects to varying degrees and visiting lecturers—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible] the artist there too. And you had an interest in art in New Mexico as a whole.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: So, it wasn't too much of a problem to develop. And Roswell was—had a small unit there going as I recall. They wanted help and we moved in. They changed the name over to the Roswell Museum Art Center. It does exist now as the Roswell Museum. It's a very nice building and a very active program there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: So, it did—the seed that fell on fertile soil.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's right. Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. Now I don't know. Because New York City was a special problem of its own. But I've heard of the Harlem Community Art Center. But the—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: The Harlem was very active; I think and as I recall was when the first one started. It didn't have the need in New York City that you had in other countries.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: But there are other states but the same time when they started developing over the country-wide, they felt there was an interest there and the center started there and we were operating in New York, we were very popular.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Well, this would be the occasion for visiting tours and exhibits, as well as the museums that are in New York because I know the modern museum had a show of Federal Art Project show. The Whitney I think also had a—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah. Both the Whitney and the modern museum [Museum of Modern Art].

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: But the notion of bringing art to the community sponsored center would be indicated by this list, certainly, even—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's right, they're not in there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: —sophisticated a place perhaps as New York City might be.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. In any event, there's, I mean, Queens in Harlem and in Brooklyn. And there's, I guess, one in Manhattan itself and the—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Was that—oh, the one in Harlem was quite a bit of interest.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: In that I mean publicity I think is—as I remember work being done there. Then there was several out in New York State. Though it's more of a sort of extension galleries. Typically worked rather than full-fledged art centers.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. But in any event, the hunger for art of some kind, for exhibits [laughs], reflected in those two—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Oh, yes. Yes. That's right.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. Now the Raleigh Art Center.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: The Raleigh was one of the first started.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Because in leaving Washington at the very beginning of the Project, I went down to Virginia and North and South Carolina down and headed on West—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —and setting up the various state projects and, and found in talking with the people like Elizabeth Gilmore [ph] I think it was at the art department at—out at Duke and some of the other people in there of the interest and feeling that that was something that could be worked out there—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —with the personnel and with also with this state people.

There again is one of the very first ones to have Dan Devin Barton [ph] was the director there worked on this development.

[00:30:35]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: He was brought in. But he was there then. And then worked on that. And saying that when Dan had some good ideas, being there's an architectural background and being an architect and that's what those galleries were. Very attractive and sort of set a precedent for other ones being established too.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Later on in the program, I brought him up to Washington as one of the assistants, and he worked on various ones over the country too—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —in development. In fact, as you get further down the list [inaudible] that the [inaudible]. This is in Minneapolis at the Walker Art Center. If you hadn't existed museum there that development of that type of modern federal arts center. Dan got enough interest up there. He just became a director of that.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Well, he seems to have been the combination of teaching and academic interest in North Carolina. This Eleanor—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. What's her name? Eleanor Kimball [ph] was it? No, Gilmore.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Gilmore.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Gilmore, yeah. And this—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: It was Gilmore, yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Elizabeth Gilmore.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: So, that the North Carolina might, in this sense, differ because the interested parties were academic parties. I don't mean that she was a non-artist or non-

interested in art, but she was interested in art. She was tied into the universities—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yes, that's right.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Which helped create—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, I mean she was one. She was in going around and talking with some people—first one in the state and actually tried to list those in the art field in a state to serve in some kind of advisory capacity to the state body there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Particularly, in the formative months.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: We had no state director at that time, and I think she served in an official capacity as I remember. Let's see.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: On this list dated '39 as Jeanne Irwin [ph], as the director in North Carolina.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: But I think Gilmore in the very beginning was sort of a state advisory chairman—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —something for the Project and to get it started off.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: And do you—have known of her existence prior to going down there?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I beg your pardon?

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Had you known of her—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: No, no, no. These people are practically all of them. I had not known her, no.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: No?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I've known people in other areas and countrymen but not her.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: But how did you—you just what, visited the university?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I just inquired to find out which people were interested in any art or carrying on what effective program there are at the time.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Because those are the ones, we wanted to help out the Project.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Well, was the—once the North Carolina, this Raleigh Art Center. I don't know whether it became the beacon for the Wilmington Federal Art Center, or for the Sanford Art Center, which was also in North Carolina. These other people, Ethel Williams—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: One of the—they were all developed following.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah, that's what I meant. It became a beacon, and we can have one, too.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: And where there was local personnel and local sponsorship, there was no problem.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —we could do it, yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah, yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And even at the Raleigh, they had a number of small extension galleries.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Which they themselves took care of out of that particular center.

[00:35:02]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: It was a very active site there in Raleigh.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Teaching, lectures, different types of public programs would draw interest. There again, it was I think it was the downtown area.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Right in the center of things.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Oklahoma has a—had a federal program with a whole series of extension galleries.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible] to a very sympathetic assistant in the state administration there and who worked at the Oklahoma [inaudible]. There's a state director there was also, I think, in radio and television work editing, video working at the time at the University of Oklahoma.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: He was one of the assistants to the administrator who was working on the various culture projects. [Inaudible] talk with them. Well, he said, Well, the one person in the area who we should [inaudible] would be Nan Sheets.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: There, as I recall, she had a commercial gallery in Oklahoma City with arts, herself. And so, it just threw her interest in [inaudible] Dr. Sheet's [ph] husband, that the municipal federal arts center there was set up—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —which until then, she also worked on this stuff as a various extension, ones in the immediate area there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: She was a very active person. She listed quite a bit of community interest in that center and support—an extremely active program.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: He—here again—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: She [inaudible] again and then she had a good strong citizens advisory, another advisory committee, but committee for the thing as community participation which really made the programs a success.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: So, as far as you know, is this one still in operation?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: So, far as I know, yes.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. This had the kind of broad-based sponsorship which made for continuity.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. And again—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, wherever possible, we tried to do that. Since I've been out of the field for quite a few years now that I don't—12 years, I just don't know—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —how many are still functioning. I know I used to follow in that federation quite a bit—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —and correspond with the various ones. A lot of them took American Federation of Arts programs. And were members—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —to the programs. So, half of the projects were. The national project had been discontinued.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So, here again, in Oklahoma, the initial contact was at the university.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, it had to be. One of the people in the federal project was one of the—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: [Cross talk.]

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —university there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: But [inaudible] we tried to reach the people and call in the people who had expressed some interest and were working locally—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [inaudible] might have been. It might have been a chairman of a woman's club.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: If that's all existed in the community itself.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Or if it's the art department. It had an art department or public school or something like that, which is very active, and teacher well thought out.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: All those people were called in on committees—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —to work. I've had some patron which was interested in art. It might have been—anyways small collectors, something like that. They were all drawn into it.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: In fact, and that was—that was more or less the standard was set at the time.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. How would people know? For example, that you and the group had worked in Richmond? That is how did this get broadcast? That is to say, why would you go to Oklahoma City? Was there some communique once the program was announced? Some inquiry from Heck [ph] or in—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Oh, no. I mean, why would I go to Oklahoma?

[00:40:01]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: No, I had to cross southern states to set up in.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Really?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: We set up the program in the 12 southern states. I went in to explore to see what town was available on a relief role that were eligible—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —and to try to set up a program—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —in those states.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: And your inquiry [cross talk].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And to good minute was some case [inaudible] project sometimes an easel project if we had good painters.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Later on, maybe in the Index like in Louisiana—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —and New Mexico where you had the material and that program got underway while the person that was transferred to that.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Now the problem was our program was to aid the artists who were eligible.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: And you knew—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And it wasn't just to put up paintings and doing any things like that.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: If they're qualified and it was a—they could do it. A lot of places wanted muralists. A lot of mural projects were set up.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. But you knew that in Oklahoma there were artists who were on the road.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, we'd get reports in, yes. Yeah, yeah, but when I left, I hit every state, all the 12 states before I even returned to Washington.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I went into state [inaudible] sat down and screened what they had available on the coordinate that records.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].



ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: You made inquiries to contact the people in the area if there were certain art interests like when somebody [inaudible] go to New Orleans. There's always been a lot of interest in New Orleans, contact was the Delgado Museum and different little art groups in the area.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: In the surrounding areas where we're known first. Found out from them if they knew that certain people were on our leave, artists on leave who maybe are on completely different programs.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And then because they had no art program quite often artists were working other things.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Art teachers worked on other things.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: They'd go, and they'd want a lead program had to work so they had to shuttle on all types of projects. So, in many cases, a case of screening the role and finding out.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Pulling the information together and creating the organization—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Setting up the organization for it, yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Right.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: So,—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: If we found enough people to do it [background noise starts] then we could employ a director of the program.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: I see.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And then let him care for it all.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So, the exploration led to a—certainly in Oklahoma to the [children playing sound] appointment of Heck as—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, he had, as I recall, he was sought out on the overall federal.

[Background noise starts.]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And they wanted to retain him as art director although he was an artist. Technically, Nan Sheets was a director there of the programs. She was attending, consulting.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Uh-huh [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And she was the one who actually did most of the program there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: While Heck was a normal administrative and a very sympathetic one.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: As I recall, he may have had some of the projects under his wing there because there weren't too many people involved, I think that may have had 15 or 17 people on together there on the program.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But there's enough to stimulate interest.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Not stimulate the interest, I mean—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —well, with using the creative facilities which you had in the larger centers—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —[background noise] New York, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, where we're getting a great [inaudible] put up paintings and sculptures and things like that.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: They could be used through this program—exhibit program to send around the country.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And help around the country to stimulate interest where our talent was—didn't have the creative talent you may have had in some of the larger centers.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Sure. But Nan Sheets in Oklahoma—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: But Nan Sheets was a painter, herself. I mean, so.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: But then these extension galleries must have been as a consequence some contact that she had for—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, [inaudible]our demand she had once and got underway, I mean. The personnel entered there in those areas. Of course, Tulsa we had—was a pretty. Tulsa was a little bit more than the director of [inaudible] galleries was [inaudible] between one of the major artists on this [inaudible] as I remember. Sort of the overseer for the other galleries over Nan Sheets.

[00:45:07]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. But I think it demonstrated—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Cross talk.]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible] already head out of the Oklahoma center, though.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. It demonstrates the radiation of interest. You know, where you can tap pockets of interest and develop along those lines for art appreciation from, well, a dynamic person like Nan Sheets who—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's right. She had a recommended a place in Utah. Some lectures and things like this.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. You know and Oklahoma seems to have had quite a program there in terms—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: They did. A very [inaudible] program.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Well, Oregon is, you know, a sale on the Federal Art Center and—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Was also one of the more common ones on the program. There again, I see the state director on Oregon was Burt Brown Barker. I remember he was an official of one of the universities there. We had quite a bit of talent in Oregon.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: In fact, the WPA itself was building Mount Hood there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That was all decorated by the Art Project. A lot of that furniture was designed in different hangs and things like that, all made by the Art Project on that Mount Hood— I'm trying to recall one person's name who was very active there too, and who was—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: The name listed here is Charles Val Clear.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, Charles Val Clear was the director of the center. [inaudible] He was sent to Oregon.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Oh, was he?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Think he was sent from Washington. Well, once we got that started, it was again a case of sending somebody in who we felt was competent to give the point of direction to help the local people. [Automobile sound starts.] I think that center is still going too, there—Federal Art Center. It gave a certain uniformed-in pattern—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —to the general program. Particularly we could get people in it was sympathetic what we're trying to do in that field and realize the limitation to what we were working. We weren't tapping to develop a pretentious program; all we were tapping to do is develop an interest in art in the community.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And trying to develop a clan [ph], which enable the people living in that community who were artists have to have a better living, that's all.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. And expand the interest.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Expand interest in art, yes.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Which is quite obvious that today the industry had over the country.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. That's one of the—certainly one of the consequences of the developments in the '30s.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Oh, it certainly—

[Cross talk.]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: But to be able to tap sympathetic background and organize it so that it can be used, you know, within the limits of the outline for the development of an art center that would come out of Washington. And to get the numbers started, that were started too. And in the varying areas, because I'm sure that the problems in Oregon while they met the minimum standard are different than those, let's say that we're confronted in Mississippi. It's a matter of personnel, people that you have, what you can do, how far you can carry it, or Oklahoma—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: For sure, you still had the question of working with the state administrations.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Some who was sympathetic others who were not sympathetic, which is only natural.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Some didn't think it could be done—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: —and didn't want to spend the time.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: What can you do with 8 or 10 people that are not developing?

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: The program won't mean anything. And of course, we, in some cases, when you start to suggest you bring in someone from another state. It's still got to be under the command or control of the state administrator.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I mean, the WPA administrator.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: There weren't a lot of—weren't too sympathetic on that. How can you get somebody in the state? [Coughs.]

[00:50:00]

Well, if you didn't have anyone on the state who had any experience along that line, it was timing [ph].

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Some were trained. Some we did, some people were that were in the state later on in the program did take over. But in the very beginning, quite often they'd have to send people in to work for a while.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible] I think that that was from Washington. I don't remember. You are going down to South Carolina you have a climate there is probably more receptive, but very weak in personnel. [car honking] Bobby Whitelaw was very active with our program down there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: He was the director of the Gibbes Gallery, which certainly has been—has always been an influence in Charleston life anyhow.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: It certainly has.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: A very active one. And Bob was very sympathetic in helping out a number of things.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Well, the director in South Carolina was listed as—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: The director at this time it wasn't the director always.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I forgot who the director was for—she was in the—I'm pretty sure this must be a [inaudible] in '39.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: In my list because I noticed in Illinois, that George Thorpe was

the state director, but I don't think George was in there until later on. I think he and Chris Robinson [ph] was—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —you know, the director and the regional director there in the early part of the program. I know there were quite a few changes, which weren't the first one too. So, this must be approximate '38 to '39 there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: The list has no dates, so it doesn't [laughs]—it can't tell if you're ready to find out, I guess, but you can check it back there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: When South Carolina presented the problem of interest without adequate personnel or although they seem to have developed.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, after that they developed some personnel. [Inaudible] but there again you were in the state which looked down upon relief.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible] upon the people who were on relief.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And as a result, you didn't have too many. [automobile sound] [inaudible] to qualify.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Well, were they able to develop? This was a stop you made in the early days. Were they able to develop community sponsorship? Apparently, they—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, they developed inside Greenville. They had a very active one. And then at Wilford there. It was a good program. It wasn't as active as it was in some of the other states, no.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: But I didn't think—because the interest was there, it was certainly well worth it. It was worth the effort. I mean, to accomplish a real program, you also in addition to have—to have the personnel—you had to have receptive climate there too.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [inaudible] I think while it was there—is a limit of interest in some of the smaller communities it would get more active area like Raleigh or someplace like that. Even Charleston.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Of course, there's no need of one in Charleston.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm. But the interesting distinction here is the use in North Carolina or the academic setting and background. And apparently none available in South Carolina.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, [inaudible] that may be true although we had the active support of the museum people there.

[00:55:11]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I think we had a more active community support in North Carolina.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Whether you get the distinction or not, I mean—

[Cross talk.]

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —the museum people had concern with preserving their own [inaudible] at the Charleston Museum, I mean and Whitelaw with his. I mean they've got their immediate problem. All of them would give assistance and help—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —did give very good assistance. I mean, you had to go to Greenville or over to something else. A lot of them just don't get around to it.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. Yeah. But then—then to as the nature of the Live Wire [ph] you—Elizabeth Gilmore, apparently was such a person who could—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's right.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: — who could seed the ground and make it rumble. Yeah. Yeah. But Tennessee seems to have used the university as part of the approach toward [inaudible] Arnold Bentine [ph], I guess—seems that survey 1939 seems to have been the state director.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah, the director there at one of the museums in Memphis was also very active in aiding in the program. [Inaudible] upon the existing art and educates [inaudible] Tennessee people—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —to help us out. And we were very helpful there. Carla Bentine [ph] also was a good one on the state director there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Active on—he'd go around, he would get the support and [inaudible] allow the small centers. Ed Sherill [ph] was in NARS [ph]. I'm not sure. I think we sent Edwin Sherill from New York City.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: He was a ceramicist. He went down there to NARS. That was sort of a Edwin NARS [inaudible] community.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: The TV—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Went into TV activity. And he had a very active group there. Then there's one over at the University of Chattanooga, which again was the—had the interest of the university there in setting that up. [Inaudible] at the time. And same at the LeMoyne-Owen College.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Aircraft sound starts.] [Inaudible] was sent down from New York—I just don't know right now—But with the assistance of the federal program, they had a very good active stimulating program there in Tennessee.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: They could take advantage of an opportunity and galvanize it in the interest.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Well, Utah's a pretty sparsely settled state. And yet it had an art center.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: A very active one, and still is.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: That's the interesting thing, a very active one.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Utah is a little different than some states. I mean, the Mormon church—the head of the Mormon church has always been interested to a certain extent in art. I mean, in fact, they subsidize a number of artists each year. And they did to give some subs and you have a state of art commission. The activities were rather limited in Utah because the appropriation a couple thousand dollars a year, I remember there in Utah to the state art commission which conducted itself an annual festival.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Gail Martin there was a critic on the paper there. She was chairman on one of the art things. Art committee, rather.

[01:00:00]

We went in there to set up the program. There were several good artists in Utah. There were two who were available [inaudible] to run the program. And we had a good Live Wire director [aircraft sound] that was [inaudible] himself was an artist there—a local artist.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: They started a program, and they became interested in an art center. In the early days, I went out there myself to discuss it with them and go into it and found just a terrific interest. As I recall I think they took over the whole undertaking establishment or something at the time.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: To setup the art center out there. They developed their own program. As far as I know that one is still running too.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: They developed very nice facilities there for art and a very active educational program teaching, lectures.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, is this Donald Goodall a local product?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: No again there, Donald was sent in from—I believe from Chicago.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I don't believe he was. [Inaudible] he was. He had been participating on one of the projects in Chicago. Was it Chicago? Or one of the other projects in the Northwest there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Sioux City. But he had been working with another group on our side. He had a good knowledge and—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: He knew his way around.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: He knew his way around.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And the effort was to capitalize on his wisdom and where there was enthusiastic support for such a program.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's right.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. And as you say, it developed into quite a program and a continuing one. Virginia is always a—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, northern Virginia you had a museum there, in Richmond.

You had a museum in Randolph-Macon and Lynchburg. Those people were all very active. Adele Clark [ph] was a state director there. Personally, he had always been interested in developing art there in Richmond and who I'd known personally when I was down there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: But there again we even sent in people into—despite the fact we had active support of the college at Randolph-Macon's [inaudible] down in that area. We set up a gallery in Lynchburg.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Which there again was right downtown area. Elizabeth Nottingham [ph] was sent down there as a director, and I forgot whether she was in Virginia or not. She was not. She had previously, I think, been down—sent her down to Big Stone Gap to get them started on the way down in there. Because I remember, she did work at both of them.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What was the range of interest at Big Stone Gap?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That stemmed through an interest of Bascom Slep who was for many years the head of the republicans down in the southside sections there which is predominantly Republican. Now, he wrote into the WPA in Washington or rather Richmond. [Coughs.] [Inaudible] the next one established a gallery in Big Stone Gap.

[01:05:00]

So, I was—they asked me to go down since they felt it was a good request. In fact, it was [inaudible] through the state administrator one time. That was in Richmond. I was about to go down and see him. Which I did. Found he [Inaudible] sister had interested him through the collection of early Americana. [Inaudible] which assisted collected that southwest Virginia.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Primarily what he was interested in was getting the WPA to do something about building a building for it. He had the current building that's over [inaudible] there which he had set up and transformed into sort of a small gallery.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And in discussing with him he said, Well, nobody comes to see him. And so, of course, that gave me the lever I needed to start all my little song and dance [laughs]. They're trying to develop some community participation in the art and interest in cultured things, particularly those pertaining to the life of the community. So, he took them. He took a swing, took over the chairmanship of a local group. We set up a Big Stone Gap art center there, a federal art gallery. We sent in personnel. Ed Sherill went over for a while I think from the—from visiting from the one in Tennessee. Edwin Sherill. Had another girl, Mary [ph], who's now his wife. I think they're up at the university. I can't remember the last name. [Inaudible] didn't know her very well. Was sent down as a director down there and then also a little bit of Nottingham—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —was in there working with them. I mean, too, all very capable people. And they had several people in the community that worked with them.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That we could employ. And as a result of that were [inaudible] leave his collection down there to the community, I understand, there's a very nice center—a little art center down there now, and a collection [inaudible] in that area.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Is the man mentioned here, Saul Greer [ph], is the acting director a temporary thing or a local man or what?



ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: There was a local man later on that went in there. I think at the WPA projects. But I just don't recall.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I think he may have been one of the artists who were down there because Mary Charlotte [ph] was down for a long time. And Lytham Nottingham [ph] was over but—we used to have to change quite a bit on these.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: You did?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Particularly, [inaudible] stage and trying to get them [inaudible] started off in the right direction.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: There was a local person who was in, I think, after the projects were discontinued, he remained in there as a director. I think that's when I went to the gallery that [inaudible] had built down there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible.]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: There's a children's federal art gallery in Richmond. One of the listed among the extension galleries—it's the first—so designated that we run into on this list, namely a children's federal art gallery.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, we had—there was another one somewhere [inaudible].

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Right here in the District of Columbia.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah. We had several of those as primarily geared towards children.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Where we could work it in with the local groups. The one in the District was very active, as you probably know, from your research.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Oh, yes. But the one in Richmond was it also a teaching kind of institution? It must have been.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I'm sure it was, but I wouldn't say definitely.

[01:10:01]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I'm pretty sure it was. Most of them were designed to not only—were geared towards the interests of children and towards teaching projects, developing interests of children interested in art.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Well, did you run into Carl Morris?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Carl Morris was when the program of Spokane got on the way, Bruce Inverarity was our state director at the time. Bruce himself was particularly interested, and when we got that started, he got his program set up, well he wanted someone to come in, so Carl Morris was sent out of Chicago to head up that center [inaudible] once [inaudible] in the way.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: This was this Bruce Inverarity, who was the local state—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: He was the local state director, yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: And in this instance, the [inaudible] sparked the development of the Federal Art Center.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. And once in existence or where the possibilities of it being in existence, the director was sent off from Chicago—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah. Well, he felt he didn't have [clears throat] someone out there who could give it a spark he wanted and asked us to send someone. And Carl Morris was sent out. Carl, still, I think, is in the northwest. He's one of the better-known abstract painters right now.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. Interesting guy.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Huh?

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: An interesting guy.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Very, yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: This—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: To also send out with Carl, as I recall, Hilda Dutch [ph]. I think who he later married.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: After I was [inaudible] the Project—after the Project, I think they were very well in Spokane I recall. Now, he was a very able artist and

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible] direction to that center out there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Now, Wyoming is another one of these sparse areas from the point of —

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Very sparse.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: —population.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Sure.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: And yet—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I think the total population at that time was 200,000. It was the whole state.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah, which is sparse—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: But you had the director there who realized they were limited in what personnel they could do so. They either [inaudible] the regional project and the national project. He set up a number of galleries throughout the state with the personnel they had, one or two people each place.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And just gave it a real program.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. Now, he operated again onto the University of Wyoming [inaudible] university setup. And would appear in terms of the number of extension galleries that were created that the number—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, that again was one [inaudible] was carried out [clears throat] with the University of Wyoming. Lara [ph], I think was also a—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: State director?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —state director there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And as I recall, he may have been head of the art department there at the university at that time. So, what we did in that particular case, supplemented the work of the university, but it also enabling them really to serve the state the way they've never been able to—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: —before.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —before.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. Yes, it would appear that even with the sparse population they had, there was an opportunity for traveling shows and exhibits on—well, there's two—there are six art galleries listed here in six different centers. Probably all sparked by the—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —the university.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Straight from the university and straight from the Project with the association [inaudible].

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: It's just liked the rest of the programs. We tried to develop as much as possible a collaborative program with the people in the community.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Primarily, our job was to give employment to those qualified and those who are eligible in the long-range program, I think. And there again, I go back to Cahill as the one who gave the overall direction of something like this.

[01:15:08]

You had somebody else in who had an entirely different type of program.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Cahill had traveled through a lot of the communities. He knew people throughout the country, a lot of them. And I think he was conscious of the need.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: They're on the need of employment, but the need of trying to do something in the development of the whole art picture, something that really gives some life to a national development in art. And unknown through my association with him, that's what I felt his interest was. And my own interest was the same so—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: No problems.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: There'd been no problem at all.

[They laugh.]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yes. What is, I think, of interest is that while artists on relief were given an opportunity to earn funds really doing what it is they like to do, wanted to do, paint, the development of art centers and extension galleries and federal galleries was the opportunity to show and therefore share.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, that's right.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. And when you when you sit in Washington as a director, as Cahill did, its—the first part of the job is to get him—get them to work—

[Cross talk.]

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —get them set up, get the organization.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah, yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And trying to work out some working arrangement with the state because we were still [inaudible] in the very beginning.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Nothing like this ever existed before.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And it's always been a state's rights issue. They have money coming down the states from the federal government, well that's come down to be spent locally as the boys [ph] locally want to spend it. So, we had a selling job both with the—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —a lot of cases with state administrators of the program.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: They didn't kill the program, a good many states did.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: We never had the program in Texas we should have had, just because of the state administrator.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Who was [inaudible] unsympathetic. And just felt an intrusion of Washington, something he didn't want. Now, despite the fact that we had the interest of the museum directors there, Jimmy Chillman in Houston and Jerry Bywaters in San Antonio, and [inaudible] the Whitney Museum San Antonio [ph]. We still couldn't get the program going like it should have gone.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: With the resources. Because there are quite a few artists in Texas.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: With the resources we had there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: And this was the—prevented by the philosophical disposition of the state administrator?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's right.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Unsympathetic.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible] unsympathetic.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: We never did get across the—I've forgotten who he was, now, but. I don't even see a state director on here for Texas.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. No.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: We had some program down there, but I mean, the Texas at that time could have given us a real boost on the whole national program.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Because they had qualified people down there. They had museums in existence.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: My God you have from San Antonio to Dallas to Houston. There are still wide spaces even then.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And a lot of communities that could have been helped then. Certainly, the artists in those three places could have been dealt with more sympathetically than they were.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Well, there is no director of the Federal Art Project listed for Texas.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: No. No. That's what I was saying.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: But the administrator was a fella named Drought, I guess.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah, Drought. Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: H.P. Drought.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah. I never could understand because his daughter or sister, I think that was [inaudible] interested in the Whitney Museum as I recall. Which we could never get underway there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: I'll be darned. That's because there's a space here on—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I know I've cooled my heels [inaudible] office trying to navigate in and—

[01:20:02]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: He wouldn't give you the time of day.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Just wouldn't give me the time of day, no.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And then of course it stems down [inaudible]. That attitude stems down all the way down through your administrative people particularly, I think.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Well, Vermont had a program under Pierre [ph]—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah, Vermont had a good program up there. And again, they had been quite active on the Index. New England on the art centers didn't do as much as some of the other states. I mean, partly because of the museum's existing—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. Facility?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —educational museums in that area.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: West Virginia didn't have a director of the Federal Art Project.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: No, there was very little in West Virginia. In fact, Russ Parr [ph], who was a regional director, I think, sort of supervised it.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible.]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Again—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Who was state administrator on it, do you have that?

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Alderson, Joseph M Alderson [ph].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I don't recall. I know that's mostly lack of personnel there I think to really get something going in West Virginia. I don't see. Because Wick was—Pierre Wick [ph] was one in [inaudible]. Well, there again, there was, I recall, several very good artists on the program up there. It wasn't too active program they did in the Index; I think because Dick Morrison [ph], the regional director, interest in the Index, and also because historical things which could be utilized there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah, they've had, you know, the museums and libraries that they've had in New England would tend to be the locus of—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Oh, yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. There wasn't any absence of that. But North Dakota didn't have much either, apparently. That's a pretty sparsely—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Very, very sparsely [inaudible].

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I don't recall anything. If it, was it was probably handled by the regional director up there in that area. [Aircraft sound starts.]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: [Inaudible] was sparse.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Very.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. And there's unrepresentative when the art project—some of the music and theater projects didn't get off the ground in some states, also. I suspect for the same reason. Yeah. But—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: As a whole, we had a fairly good representation, I think.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Well, Mississippi didn't have an art director, although it did have according to [inaudible]—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, I'm not sure. Let's see. Fred Whiteman [ph] was an acting state director in Greenville.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: You know, well, and he was at the Delta Art Center. But this with his—what is it? An official directory of state administrative offices again March 1st—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, what date is that?

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: March 1, 1939. But it doesn't list him here. It may well be that he was, you know, had the dual post.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, you must realize too some of those dates, as I say, just like in—we worked on Texas and never did get actually underway there—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —except for the small Index project, which was practically run from the outside there, a few artists on. We never could get a local state set up despite the size and number of people.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: What was the problem in Indiana? Because there's no director of the Federal Art Project in Indiana, at least as of '39. The sparse personnel?

[01:25:05]

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: No, there was some art personnel there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm. But John K. Jennings [ph] was the administrator.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Hmm. I don't think it was very extensive. I think there's some program there. I don't think it was very extensive [inaudible].

[Cross talk.]

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Some of the programs in one or two instances were almost had to run under this state people. See, that mechanism with which was set up, but the funds were in a state, but they couldn't be used by the state administrator.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: You had to make certain compromises that tied to some of these people, just the same as we did in Dallas. I mean, in the Texas area.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: They ran an art project of sorts down there. Part of everything was tied in with the Index, but we never did get it into the federal picture as such.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: As such.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Quite a few of these, I think in the southern states would have never come in if it hadn't been for the art centers.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah, that's true. Georgia, for example, doesn't have a state administrator [inaudible] state—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, we did some work in Georgia. [Inaudible] remember particular down to the Atlanta Museum.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I worked with him on a number of things. But there in Kansas it was probably kind of a state-sponsored project rather than a federal-sponsored project.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. Well, there's a Ms. Shepardson [ph] was the state administrator.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: It may have presented something of a difficulty there.

[Background conversation.]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: The Arkansas is another one that didn't have—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Arkansas that was through the state administrator on that.

[Background conversation.]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Floyd Sharp [ph]?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Sharp, the admin. He was another what I'd call wasn't too sympathetic.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And if you had a sympathetic administrator, you could [inaudible] another people in the area.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: You had some training of talent if you were eligible for employment. And then working with the local people, you could develop a project.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. Well—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: You see?

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah, but who had control of the roles? The state administrator?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: The state administrator.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: They might not even let you look at the roles?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, I mean that's right, too. I mean some you couldn't get [inaudible] at all.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: In fact, in Oklahoma, you can never get into to see Kerr [ph] when he was state administrator, [inaudible].

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: He wasn't too much interested in the art.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: This despite the fact that Oklahoma set up a good—

[Cross talk.]

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: We did it through the people who were interested there.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Was an active person like Nan Sheets worked it out. There were some sympathetic people under Kerr. But Kerr himself, I don't think was ever too interested.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: So, you had a, you know—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Because you're going in the state. You have to see why [inaudible] you had these administrators who were big load of people to be employed on all types of activities and they get pressure from all communities who were putting in ditches and draining floodplains and all the engineering projects of all nature.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Which would get the pressure from the local community [inaudible] to him and his chief concern, not with the huge employment to be taken care of. I mean, what—his particular interests unless he was [inaudible] in a small group of 15, 20 people.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's what that came down to.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: [Laughs.] Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And they had, in most cases, go along with the art project regardless of whether they liked them or not because they couldn't spend the money for anything else.

[01:30:02]

They had the white-collar professional setup. They realized that people are trained to do office work and things like that. Your accountants had to work and stenographers had to be put to work. They could understand that.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: A lot of them just couldn't understand why we had to put artists and singers and musicians and actors to work.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: [Inaudible.]

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And naturally, this runs into a lot of resistance.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Not because they were opposed to it, but just the lack of



understanding of the problems involved.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm. This must-have led in a way that is—the anticipation of this must-have led in a way to naming this as a Federal Project Number One.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, that's what we—Hopkins set up that way.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's the very reason he said he set it up that way. He realized that if you left up to do the states, God knows what it would be.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: At least we'll have no point in rush it at all.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I mean, sure, you can set up certain types of engineering projects. Even they had to have their own standards—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —of work to be done. And not just leave it up to all the states doing anything they wanted to with the money going down. But once that— when it was allocated down to the states, the administrator on the other types of projects could shift from one project to another. Federal projects were probably the only ones that they couldn't do it.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: [Laughs.] Yeah. And this was, I would think a source of—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Of course, you had some resentment from that. In particular if you come in from Washington [coughs]. And regardless of the fact you had those [inaudible] apart, you had to do a lot of manipulating and working with the local people to stimulate an interest.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm. You went to the point of bypassing the unsympathetic attitude of a state administrator—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: It was difficult to do. He was completely unsympathetic, like a couple of them down in Dallas and a few in Texas.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [inaudible] there. Sure, he had some artists employed on certain projects. White-collar people had put them together themselves are working on—put them to work.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: But there was no definite—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: —plan or program.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Later on, we did get in, I think, with the Index down there and got ourselves a small Index project to make some contribution. But we can never get into the regular artist program.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: And this was his own one, state sovereignty views. Any Federal Project Number One could—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible] just completely unsympathetic with the arts.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: This feeling that artists and actors, musicians and so on place couldn't [inaudible] relief program, that's all.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: They think we signed a certain routine work for wanting to be on the relief program. Not recognizing that they have as much a right under that program as [inaudible] setup and trying to put the people in the fields in which they have been trained for—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —for it to work.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: And their problem was that this was in part putting federal thumbs on their eyeballs.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, in a sense you had a certain [inaudible] two or three people, or 10 people, or 15 people.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Hmm. Well, it's dollars and cents which they couldn't spend their way. If they could paint the courthouse or something like that, that might be construed in their judgment as art.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Oh, it could be.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Ms. Holetower [ph], for example, ran into this in St. Louis, the inability of local political people and administrators to think in terms of art. And thinking solely in terms of washing the windows, and painting the walls, and painting the woodwork.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's right, yes.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: And they would have used funds not expressly ticketed by the federal government for just that kind of purchase.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah, that's right.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Had it not been for the fact that the original establishment was for these artists to work within the—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —within the art fields, yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's right. Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: And it must have taken—well, part of the job certainly as a supervisor or a regional representative, or even a national representative was one of educating the state administrators as to the possibilities within the—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: State people too, yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. Gaining acceptance.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's the reason why it's so frustrating when I said a lot of people come in and try to take credit on the program.

[01:35:01]

A lot of people contribute to it. I mean—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —wouldn't say any one person did a lot of [inaudible].

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: But I think it's general overall direction of Cahill that gave it the direction it took.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: No question about this as far as I'm concerned. And I was there in the very beginning.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: How was he in dealing with or thinking about the tactics or strategy of dealing with an unsympathetic state administrator? Was he—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah, he was very good.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Was he?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: He was patient.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. He knew enough. But he was a reasonably well traveled man anyway, in new areas—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —he knew the areas.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: He had gone to [inaudible] and regardless of if you can go and talk to the administrator on his own ground.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's the main thing.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Or if need be, he could generate sufficient enthusiasm from the state administrators own state so that the state administrator might cop an ear at—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: But I didn't know any state administrator who had anything like that.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Sometimes you got to do that.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Talk that. Go in the back door, you know.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah [laughs].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: The damn thing is his idea. As long as it gets done, that's all right.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Inaudible] direction you want.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And quite obviously we'd plant the seed with several people in the area who we knew were influential with the state people.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's what they like to have.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: The first [inaudible] couple of weeks later on. And they'd been able to get in and create some entree to the people who could do something to help us on putting a project over.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. So, it didn't—it varied from place to place. Some disappointments as in Texas.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Oh, sure, yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: But by and large a kind of momentum for—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, a little later on as the projects really got underway and it started with having national exhibitions. [Inaudible] started flourishing.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: It had quite a bit of publicity within the state and outside of the state.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Sure.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: All of that. All of that helped.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And [inaudible] some of the people come say, well, why can't we do something like that?

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: You'd have that.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: What is surprising, I think, is the extended coverage of the art shows. Like the one that was put on here at the Duncan Phillips gallery [ph], was one of the ones later at the modern museum.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: The coverage of it, [aircraft sound starts] despite the criticism of federal art, let's say, from an aesthetic point of view and so on, in some of the critics. Nonetheless, it gave a glow to what had been done by showing it, you know?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: That's right. Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. And—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, you too—Ms. Roosevelt was very sympathetic. The president was most sympathetic. And Ed Bruce was a close friend of his. He got the [inaudible] when he first [inaudible] Public Works of Art Project. So, naturally, when they did that, Ed got appointed and ended up [inaudible] the division [inaudible] head of that. He had [inaudible] to the president.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Ms. Roosevelt was certainly keenly interested. Ms. Roosevelt was interested in the artists as people. And she was also very sympathetic towards their work.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I know because I'd took her through the New York show when that was—she visited that.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And you'd be surprised to know what artists she actually knew. The artist's work she would recognize and then make some comment about it.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I mean, it wasn't a superficial knowledge, it was a real knowledge.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Of the work that was going on.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I mean, some of the activities, she was so dead tired that she— I don't know how she—

[They laugh.]

—she'd been on the merry-go-round as usual.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I don't see how those people keep it up sometimes.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: No.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: But she was the most sympathetic person to the needs of the artists and the problem we were up against.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah, and this is good. I mean, this is like having two aces in the hole.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yes.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: With the president on one hand who was sympathetic personally toward Hopkins and toward the program of feeding people—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Yeah.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: —because of the context in which Ickes couldn't come up with a program somehow.

[01:40:00]

I'm not at all sure that the—Bruce and the theater, the Treasury Department project and Cahill and the WPA—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: They're two different programs.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Targeted programs.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah. But one, Bruce insisted upon what he regarded as standards. First, I'm not prepared to argue one way or another for the Treasury competition.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: [Coughs.] Well, I mean, without any other type of format set up prior to that time for the employment of artists.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: It was probably as good as any.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Hmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: The jury competition thing. And, of course, there was a lot of effort involved which no remuneration received by the artist—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Hmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: —to enter the competition. But at least it gave the artists a chance to participate in the federal buildings. A chance to get the works in a federal building. It was a start.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And along that line, I think it was good.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Because [inaudible] had nothing. And the money that had been spent would probably have been for a tie in the sculpture or some foreign arts. At least the money was going toward the American artists, a certain percent.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And I think my standpoint that Ed did a darn good job.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Of course, he tried to get certain standards set up like anyone, I think would give going in would ever do it. But when you get into standards there—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: That's so subjective.

[They laugh.]

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: In any event, the purpose of—

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And any two [inaudible] would come up with different standards—

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Oh, yeah, indeed. And then the purposes of the two projects were at variance. [Inaudible] to feed people.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Well, that's right. No, I mean you can't compare the two projects. I worked on both of them.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I'm familiar with both of them. I knew Bruce and Ed Ruin [ph] before I knew Holger Cahill.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And, in fact, I'd only met Eddie Cahill once.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Prior to the time I came to Washington. Probably [Inaudible.] Williamsburg. Starting up one, brought him up one Saturday or Sunday as I recall. When they done it with [inaudible]. This was prior to the advent of the arts project.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Yeah.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: Just up to Richmond to [inaudible] was going to be in, just to chat and talk and what we're doing up there. Ed had heard about it, and he was interested in what was going on.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm.

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: And I hadn't heard from Cahill until the time he come up to Washington.

HARLAN B. PHILLIPS: Mmm. But the two things are so separate I think, they cannot be compared. Right?

ANTHONY FRENCH MERRILL: I don't think so. I mean, I think that they're so widely separate, you just cannot say that—

[END OF TRACK AAA\_merril63\_268\_m.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]