



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Alice Winchester,
1993 September 17-1995 June 29

Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

Contact Information

Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/askus

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Alice Winchester between September 17, 1993 and June 29, 1995. The interview took place in Danbury, CT, and was conducted by Robert F. Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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

This is tape number one.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This is an interview with Alice Winchester in Danbury, Connecticut, and the date is September 17th, isn't it, 1993.

ALICE WINCHESTER: I guess so. There's a newspaper around here somewhere. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: OK.

[Audio break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: I thought maybe we could just start with some of your earliest memories. Uh, what was your family background? You're from Connecticut. Your family is a Connecticut family.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Not quite, no. Um, well, how far back do you want me to go? My—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well—[inaudible]—ancestry, but also particularly things you—people you remember and—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. I personally was born in Chicago, and my family were living in Winnetka at the time. And my father was a minister all of his professional life, and at that time he was the minister of the Congregational church in Winnetka. It has a special name, but I can't think of it right now. It doesn't matter. But while I was still little more than a baby, they moved to—he gave up that church and was offered the job of—oh, dear. It was more of an office job in the head office of the Congregational Church, which was in Boston.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Boston. Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: And he was secretary of something. Um, I think it was a newly created job, and he was very pleased, and it was a considerable challenge to him, um, because he worked out of an office in Boston and, um, was in touch with all—the whole Congregational Church scattered around the countryside, especially New England, of course, since that's where he was. [00:02:17] And so the family at that time consisted of my mother and father and three older sisters and myself, and we moved to Concord, Mass. And that's where my earliest memories are from, I think, though even—well, yes, I was only about two when we got there, so I don't remember Winnetka, but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And that's where you lived while your father held the administrative post in Boston.

ALICE WINCHESTER: In Co—yes, in Concord.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible]—in Concord.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And, um, we were there—well, let me see. I think my parents were very happy there, and Daddy enjoyed his new work very much. And I was the baby of the family, and I kind of enjoyed being treated as the, you know—a little special. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was the family's routine different than that of your—of other people because your father was a minister, or were—[inaudible]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, I don't know. Um, I was always very much aware that, yes, we—we were—I think, uh, Mother more than he used to make it clear to us that we should set an example for our little milieus, which—each one of us. [00:04:03] And there were things, of course, we were—we were certainly taught the difference between good and bad and what was appropriate to do and what you must never do and that sort of thing. But that's—that was just the way children were brought up at the time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. There wasn't much questioning. Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: No. And, um, my memories of those Concord years are probably very largely from the rest of the family. I was—what did I tell you? I think I was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: About two when you got there.

ALICE WINCHESTER: About two when we got there, and we left there for New Haven, I think, um, maybe around 1914. I used to connect these personal dates with world affairs, and I don't anymore. [Laughs.] Anyway, I was still a child, and, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But your early schooling had been in Concord, or had you gone to school?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Yes, I had a delightful school. There was a friend of the parents who, uh—a couple of friends, Mr. and Mrs. Jones, a distinguished name. They were awfully nice people, and the two couples enjoyed each other's company very much. And Mrs. Jones—they had a son who was a little older than I, not by very much, but she decided to have a little private school for her children. I'm not sure whether she had more than one son. Excuse me. [00:06:00] But she was interested in this, and she may have been a teacher before she married. I don't know. I don't remember now, but they had a very nice farm. Oh, I can't think of the name of it, and it doesn't matter. But, anyway, she introduced this little kindergarten school, and I think there were half a dozen children. And she did a good deal—Mrs. Jones did a good deal of the teaching, and I think there must have been another teacher, too. But, anyway, we were—it was kindergarten. It wasn't really first grade or anything like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That was a time of, uh—what sort of things would you do, lots of play or—[inaudible]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, make things, yes, make little paper things and make—do things with our hands and play games together and learn to play together and that sort of thing. It was—I don't remember how and when and where I learned to read. I've been able to read ever since I can remember, and I know Mother was rather proud of seeing to it that her children read at an early age. My older—my next older sister, Polly, used to remind me that she learned to read when she was only four, and I think I was six. [They laugh.] But I've read a good deal since to make up for those two years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Reading and all that sort of thing wasn't probably what was parti—would have been particularly emphasized in the kindergarten—[inaudible].

ALICE WINCHESTER: No, but, uh—but it was a part of it, and I think the basics of arithmetic, too. I can't say for sure, but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But it was a happy time and a—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Very, and it was—sure, it was just kind of playing games together and great fun. [00:08:04] And it was only a little group. I don't think there were ever more than half a dozen. There may have been only three or four a good deal of the time. The parents were friends, and it was—so the children were, and I can't remember now who the others were, and it doesn't matter. But it was all very harmonious and interesting, and I know that my parents were very pleased with it as a way to get us and get me started in school. Polly was already going to, I guess, a public school, because I went alone to this, I remember.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you begin going to public school in Concord or—

ALICE WINCHESTER: No, in New Haven.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your father next had a position in New Haven?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Now, let's see. What did he do when we—oh, he taught at Yale in the, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The divinity—

ALICE WINCHESTER: —school of—that's it, divinity school. And, yes, that's why we moved. He had been very happy in his work in Boston, and it was not running a church, but it was administering a part of the whole church organi—the Congregational organization, which was, I suppose, countrywide at that time, though I think—

ROBERT F. BROWN: I think so.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, I think so too. He used to travel quite a lot and make speeches and so forth, and he'd get back, and we'd sit down to dinner. And he'd tell us all about his latest trip and whom he met and what he did and so on.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was his relation with you in your early years? Can you recall? Was he—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, I'm sorry I haven't—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Of course, he was away at the office or traveling. [00:10:00]

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, he was, and yet he spent a good deal of time with us. I don't have the feeling that I didn't know him as well as Mother, really, and I think they both made a great point where they enjoyed their children and they—and we enjoyed them. [Laughs.] And they set us pretty high standards, and there were certain things you should never even think of doing or saying and all that kind of thing. But it was just regulation growing up, I guess.

ROBERT F. BROWN: These were mostly things, though, that you could get along with other people better as you look back at things?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes. Yes, I think so. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, New Haven, was that a very different place than Concord?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, it was. Concord was much more—or where we lived, which was out—Elm Street, which was in those days really quite country, and there was a big woods next to us, and then New Haven was—we lived also—oh, let me see. I don't know what you'd call it, the northern part of the city, I guess, but we—oh, yes, we lived in a double house in New Haven. We had the upstairs, and we didn't have very much money. We understood that, but Daddy was a distinguished teacher and much deferred to and so on. We also understood that. [Laughs.] And that's where I began going to public school. I went to the Worthington Hooker School, and I think I started in about the third grade, something like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you started ahead of your age group.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, I was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or you had already begun.

ALICE WINCHESTER: No, I think I was put into a similar age group, and I—and this kind of private schooling that I'd had, this little group, was enough to get me into the—among my own contemporaries. [00:12:11] So I didn't feel any oddity about it. It was just—there were a lot more of them. It was a big class. That was the first time I ever was in a big class. I don't remember much about all of this, and I don't think you need to know, do you?

ROBERT F. BROWN: No, that's—was the schooling—as you look back, in public school, was it pretty good? Was it fairly rigorous?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think it was very good. I think it was very conventional, and you did things by rote, and you learned your multiplication tables, and you learned to spell and, obviously, all those things. But I learned them well. They came in handy for me. [Laughs.] And I—I think it was a good school.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When would you have begun languages? Did they introduce them fairly early, uh—

ALICE WINCHESTER: No. No. Let me see. Maybe—well, I began Latin in high school. I don't think we had any of that in grammar school, and I don't think I had any other language until I got to college—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALICE WINCHESTER: —where I did not take any more Latin, but I took a year of Greek or two, maybe. I thought Greek was great, and—oh, in high school we began French, and that's the only other language I was ever taught, I think.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was the high school, uh—did you—what were your special interests during your high school years?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And this was in New Haven as well? You were still in New Haven.

ALICE WINCHESTER: No. We moved again. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Ministers do, don't they?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, they do. [00:14:00] Let me see. Um, I—we were in New Haven only three years, and

that—I was in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, I think. And from there, uh, my father started being secretary, as I think I started to tell you, in the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, a distinguished, long title. And he traveled a lot. He went all over the country and worked with individual ministers in their churches. I really had very little idea just what he did. He sort of consulted, or they consulted him. He did—he probably did a lot of lecturing to groups of ministers or church workers of various kinds. He was very much interested in religious education, and that entered into this, too, somehow, though we didn't do much about it in the years that I knew him. He did that while he was—when he was an active minister running a church, um, seeing to it that the Sunday school amounted to something and that—whatever religious education the children got. Um, but, anyway, let me see.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So he was at the Yale Divinity School, and then he left after to do—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, and that was not a very long time either. Um, we—we lived in New Haven just three years. I'm quite sure, and they were sort of the school year, I think. [00:16:01] I remember it that way. Um, and from there we moved to Greenfield Hill, which is a part of Fairfield, Connecticut. And Daddy went back to being a minister, but this time he had to have some more money, more than they could afford to pay him. And he had—he was connected with—I don't know—Congregational headquarters in New York, and he commuted two or three days a week from Fairfield or Southport. Greenfield Hill was up near both of them and—to New York, and then he also ran the little country church. It was a small church, charming. It's still a very sweet little country church, and—architecturally, and it was a charming place to live. It was a really farming community, and the people lived on their farms. It had been that way since—since it was first settled. And the—it was still a village when we moved there. We lived there about five years, I think, possibly longer, and there I went to the local public school, which was a little country school. Oh, yes, it was founded by somebody famous. I may remember. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible]—wait a minute?

[Audio break.]

ALICE WINCHESTER: —Haven was Worthington Hooker, and then we got to Greenfield Hill. And the name of that was the—I can't say it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, well, we'll get that. [00:18:00]

ALICE WINCHESTER: I don't know if it matters. It's still—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[Inaudible.].

ALICE WINCHESTER: —just the local—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were in—this was in your early teens or late—early—preadolescence, something like that.

ALICE WINCHESTER: I had two—I still had two years of grammar school, and I was 11 and 12, I think. And it worked out very neatly because my birthday was in midsummer, and so, uh, the year that I was in the eighth grade I was 12. [Laughs.] And then—

ROBERT F. BROWN: I detect from your recollections that, already, the charm of the—of older places and the country and all was—existed for you even as a young person.

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think it did. It did, though I didn't say it to myself even, I think.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No. No.

ALICE WINCHESTER: I didn't fully realize it, but I was certainly exposed to it. And Mother—both our parents, I guess, had great respect for their ancestors and their immediate parents and their background. And they were interested in local history as well as national history and wanted us to be interested, too. And they didn't make a big thing of it, but we just absorbed it, and I think we all had a great—we were exposed to old things and old places and usually heard the traditions that went with them or the historical fact, whichever was the case, [laughs] or both. And—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was your mother likewise from a New England family?

ALICE WINCHESTER: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

ALICE WINCHESTER: She was from Kentucky.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh.

ALICE WINCHESTER: And that was a great distinction. She was born and bred in Kentucky, and she came east to college and went to Smith, graduated from there. [00:20:08] And then, there was the great event of my father studying—he got a fellowship—I'm going back now to their—before they were married. He had a—I don't remember whether I told you this, but he had a fellowship to study in Germany before he became a minister, and his father died—well, how far back shall I go? His—his parents lived in Middlebury, Vermont. That's where Daddy was born, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: He had gone where to college before, before Germany?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Williams.

ROBERT F. BROWN: To Williams.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And after he graduated from Williams or about the time he was graduating, he got a job—this is another story, and I don't know whether you want me to go into it. Um, he—he had no—he hadn't even decided to be a minister, but he graduated from Williams and wanted to see some—uh, something beyond the immediate horizon, and naturally his eyes turned west, because, "Go west, young man." And he got a fellowship—no, he got a job teaching in Walla Walla, Washington. That's where he met my mother. She was a pupil of his.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How had she ended up there if she's from—had gone to Smith from Kentucky?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, I left out a chapter of her life. She didn't come directly from Kentucky. When she was still a child or a girl, her parents moved to, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:22:06] [Inaudible.]

ALICE WINCHESTER: —yeah, her father was a minister. He got a church in Walla Walla, and I think they lived in Seattle, too, at some time before that. I'm not sure of the sequence.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But that's when your father first met your mother.

ALICE WINCHESTER: And that's how it all happened. She was one of his pupils. She was about six years younger than he was, five, six, and he also—his father had died. My grandfather died just about the time Daddy got out of college, and his mother was left alone and pretty much dependent upon him. So she went to Washington with him, Washington State, and she lived with him and—after he was married, too, and as we all grew up. She died in Concord shortly before we left there, about 1914 or '15 at the age of 93. And it's her autobiography that I'm playing with now, but it has, uh, nothing to do with—

ROBERT F. BROWN: No. No.

ALICE WINCHESTER: —family heirlooms or anything. They didn't have enough heirlooms to matter. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Lots of air but—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah. [They laugh.] Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: So they—[inaudible]—in the west where the—your parents—

ALICE WINCHESTER: [00:24:00] Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —and then married there and came back? Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The way you've described, yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But your father, you said, had two years in Germany.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, and his mother went with him—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible]—to Germany as well.

ALICE WINCHESTER: —yeah, and I had the whole description of their travels and their—everything. I've been playing with that and, um—that she wrote many years—oh, she wrote it when she was my present age.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What would he have, uh, particularly studied in Germany? Did he—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Um.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —was he already studying theology?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, and, um, I asked my sister Margaret that just recently. I said, "What—uh, what did they call what he was taught?" And, um, she said, "The Bible."

ROBERT F. BROWN: Huh.

ALICE WINCHESTER: And I guess, probably, that was it. He must have been—he obviously had an aptitude for language. He went to a German university in Halle, and, um, all these things I was told and knew all my life. He'd talk about it and reminisce and all that kind of thing. He was very fond of Germany, made some good friends there, and he liked the German people that he knew here, too, and was especially interested in them because—anybody that happened to have any German connections because he loved it, and just the way I fell in love with France a generation later. [Laughs.] And, um, he—well, let's see. What am I about to say? What do you want to hear next?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, I just wanted to ask a moment—I asked about your mother and her family, and—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —you were in Fairfield for perhaps five or six years. [00:26:00] And you were charmed, as you look back on it, unwittingly, but you were charmed certainly by the then rural, small village quality.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Uh, were you there at the time you went to college, or did you go to—move to—did the family move to yet another place before you—[Inaudible.]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: They moved yet again. Um, I graduated from high school, and I think—in Fairfield, and I think that it was again a summer move and that they were settled in—oh, Daddy gave up the Greenfield Hill church, but I think he still continued his work in New York and was commuting. And they moved to Darien, and that's where they lived while I was in college. And I never—I was away from home and didn't get very well acquainted with Darien, but I would go there for vacations.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was it assumed that you—had your older sisters gone to college? It was assumed you—you all would go—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, it was assumed we all would go.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —because your mother was a college product as well.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, and Mother went to Smith, and it was assumed that my oldest sister, Margaret, would go to Smith because she was the class baby of Mother's class, which meant that she was the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Class baby. [Laughs.]

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, every class has a baby, the first one born to anyone in the class. So Margaret had that great distinction in—at that period. She—well, she was born in 1898, my sister. She's right across the road still. [00:28:00] And, um, so, of course, she had to go to Smith and did and loved it. And then, my sister Catherine [ph], who was two years younger than Margaret, also went to Smith. And then, Polly—Pauline her name was, but we always called her Polly—she was sort of the rebel of the family, and she didn't care about following along where everybody else had been. And she considered very seriously going to some other college. But when it finally came to it, she went to Smith too. So by the time my turn came, I thought, well, I certainly was going somewhere else. I thought I'd go to a Western college or at least Middle-Western, and I read a few catalogues. And finally, when it came to the showdown, I thought, "Well, everybody has a good time at Smith, and it's a nice tradition, and it's a good college. And that's where I'll go." [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Huh.

ALICE WINCHESTER: So I did, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was it what you expected?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Of course, you knew a good deal from—you could hear—listening to your sisters.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, yes, and Polly was still there. Polly was a senior while I was a freshman. She and I kind of fought our way, uh, growing up. We scrapped a great deal and, um—because she used to try to squelch me, and then she would turn around and say, "Why don't you do things?" And, you know, she—she brought me up, and, um, I really deliberated over whether I wanted to go to Smith while she was there. I thought I'd rather just go somewhere by myself, but I finally thought, "Well, I like that college, and I think I will." [00:30:00] We didn't live together, of course. We were in different classes, obviously, and different houses, but she suddenly turned out to be a darling big sister to me. And she—she was very thoughtful and kind and kind of steered me, not conspicuously at all, but just gave me a little moral support here and there. And our years of scrapping together were over, and my freshman year at college was delightful. And it was her last year, and everything worked out great. And then, I went on from there, I mean, through college.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, in college, did you have—go there thinking you might particularly wish to study one thing or another, or—or was that—

ALICE WINCHESTER: I didn't—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —expected in those days, at least of a young woman, when you went?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I don't think very many people had any preconceived—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Clear.

ALICE WINCHESTER: —aims. I don't know, not that I recall, and I certainly didn't. I just was interested in lots of things, and—and, uh, they had just recently introduced the junior year in France. There were only two classes ahead of mine that had been, had had that opportunity. And that was—I think that was really the deciding factor. That's why I decided I could put up with Polly because I was going to try to go to France.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And get away, at least.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah. [They laugh.] And so I took—I started in on French. I had had a little introduction in high school, terrible accents, terrible French. [Laughs.] And there were real French people teaching at Smith, and that was good. And I decided from the start, yes, indeed that's what I was going to do, and I did. [00:32:03] I was accepted, and I went, and I loved it and, uh, did extremely well, I may say.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was a—this would have been the third or junior year, right—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Inaudible.]

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you were then concentrating in French. Is that—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You went to, uh—where, to Paris, or where did you study? What were you affiliated with?

ALICE WINCHESTER: We went first—we had—we went early as compared with the college year here. We spent the month—I think the months of—oh, we went in August, and we spent the month of September. We went in the latter part of August, stopped off in Paris just sort of for a day or two, and then went to Grenoble, where we spent September and October and went to the University of Grenoble, which had a special, um, school for foreigners teaching the language. And, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you—how did you find it, that school?

ALICE WINCHESTER: We loved it. It was a university, and, uh, I—I loved the language from the beginning. I—I don't think I had a particular aptitude for language, and I, uh—there were others who had a much better accent than I did, although I worked on it and got pretty good. But, um—but I did love it, and I enjoyed, uh—I cultivated an interest in language if I didn't have an aptitude for it, and, um, I did very well. And after our two months of, uh, intensive work on just getting to be able to speak and to get a proper accent so that people could

understand us and all that kind of thing, uh, we went to Paris. [00:34:03] And there, we were parceled out among families, and I had requested that I—and some—a lot of them went by twos in one family, and there was one little group that were good friends of mine where there were four that lived with one family and so on. But I and several others went just alone, to live alone in the family, purely so that I would have to talk French all the time, which I did. And I got so it came naturally, and I could dream in it and everything. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can you recall the family you lived with?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes, their name was Fuchs [ph], which was not a French name. They came from Alsace, and it's a German name, but they were French from way back. And Monsieur Fuchs was a doctor, and he worked in a hospital near the house where we lived. We had—they lived in an apartment right next to the, um—oh, dear, some famous monument on the Left Bank. And, uh—oh, it was all new and wonderful, and I was just thrilled. And we all—it was a very congenial group, and we were all terribly enthusiastic, and we were also in a way almost trailblazers, because this was only the third year that anybody had ever gone from Smith in a group. And Smith was one of the pioneers in this kind of planning, too, so it was a very exciting thing to do and very rewarding and really great all around and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, you did—in Paris, then, where you spent most of the year, you did—anything in addition to the languages? Did you have—did you attend classes and anything else?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes, we went to classes at the Sorbonne. [00:36:02] And we did—oh, we had a pretty thorough go-over of the history of France, um, the same thing that we would have had at—at Smith almost, history and literature, philosophy. That was pretty great, doing that in French. [They laugh.] I wish I could do it now.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You—you enjoyed it.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes, I loved it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was it—

ALICE WINCHESTER: I loved everything about it. I can't remember just what—there must have been another—I know we had—of course, we had teachers with us from Smith, a couple who were French, and they were from the French department of Smith. And they supervised us, and Madame saw to it that we behaved ourselves and that kind of thing, and Monsieur saw to it that we did our studies. And, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But did you find it, uh—because there is greater freedom in a European university, isn't there?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, indeed.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was that a problem there, I mean, because at Smith—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —things were—in those days, much more regimented by comparison?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Much more. Oh, there was one little *scandale*, of course. A girl was found out to have spent the night out with a man or something, and, uh, I don't think our group did anything very scandalous, actually. But I—either in our group or maybe in the one before some girl was sent home for not being properly discreet and so forth. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, do you—at those times, were you at all aware or did you get interested in what was going on, say, in literature or art at that time? [00:38:01]

ALICE WINCHESTER: Excuse me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were these things—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, we did a lot of museum-ing, lots of it, and lots of little trips out of Paris, big or little, but mostly, you know, a busload or something like that. And, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The aim of which was what, history and, uh, to see architecture and art?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, get the whole picture, uh, lots of art and history all along the way and, of course, architecture and the famous buildings and the things in them and so on. And then, uh, too, we were encouraged to—our families, I think, the families we lived in understood that they were to treat us like one of the family and

include us in parties and trips and nice little events and that kind of thing. So it really was like having another family, and practically all the families were very successful at making us—keeping us interested and teaching us how to behave and all that sort of thing. And, um, altogether I still believe in it very much. I think it's a fine idea. I think that, of course, times have changed, and maybe girls get just as good—just as much out of a summer trip to France or something. But, anyhow, I think it's a great invention, this junior year abroad, and I'm still for it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, you learned of people from another culture, and you—in some measure, you were forever affected by that, weren't you?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think so, yes. I think all of us, uh, took ourselves back to Europe on—as we were able and, uh, had much more of a feeling that they're—they're people, you know, and there's—and differences between nationalities aren't necessarily as great as they appear. [00:40:08]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, altogether I think it's a very successful effort. They're still doing it, and, of course, lots of other colleges do it now, and they do it in different ways, I guess. But I'm for it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was there a problem when you returned of what we might call reentry, I mean, getting reconciled to being back in Northampton for a year?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, it was different. We—of course, our best friends in the college were the ones who had been abroad with us. We were—we had a great sense of mutual understanding and liked each other and had these experiences together and so forth. And, um—well, we were kept pretty busy in our senior year. We had to get certain other kinds of—see that we had enough other, um, courses to graduate properly and so forth. So, no, I don't think there's any great difficulty about it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, also, you mentioned to me earlier that during that year in France the college president had come over.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This is President, uh, Neilson at that time.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Neilson. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: To look over—what was that like? Was there anything especially laid on for him or— [inaudible]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, yes, he was introduced to—oh, there was some kind of reception for him, and I think all the families that—our parents, our French parents, were invited and so on. And then, he went with us on a couple of little sightseeing trips, as I recall it. This is long ago. I don't know how I—how well I remember it truly or whether I'm making it up. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: It doesn't matter. [00:42:00]

ALICE WINCHESTER: But, um—oh, he was a charming man himself, and everybody fell in love with him and thought he was wonderful. And he was brilliant, and he was amusing and delightful to have had a visit from. And he could scold us, and we loved it, and we loved whatever he did or said.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, really? He was that lovable.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Yes. [They laugh.] So, uh—well, he did it to good effect. And, um, so that was a distinction for us that he came while our group was there, because he didn't go every year by any means. That was his check-up year. And then, we felt that we really were acquainted with him during our senior year. And since—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, you would have come to—you had a certain bond there, didn't you?

ALICE WINCHESTER: —yeah, and—yeah, and since we had had pretty big classes in those days, it was very nice to feel on the inside.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You finished—graduated Smith in—well, I suppose the spring of, uh—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Twenty-nine.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —'29 knowing what you were going to do next or—

ALICE WINCHESTER: No, except that it was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[Inaudible.].

ALICE WINCHESTER: —up to me to get a job and support myself. And that was understood. I think we were all brought up, uh, to know that that was true without anybody ever spelling it out or anything. But we, um—and Daddy was a charming and, I think, quite innovative person and had, uh—did a lot of interesting things in connection with the Congregational Church as a national movement and so forth, and yet he was no good at making money. And, um, ministers never have been well paid as far as I ever heard. [00:44:04]

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

ALICE WINCHESTER: And we had this big family, and we were always kind of scratching and trying to get along on a little less than we'd like. And so, um, we all—also, Mother was also a very forward-looking person, and she had been to Smith herself and come east and gone to college and all that and Class of '95. That was not the usual thing for everybody, especially not from Washington State.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: So she was pretty enlightened, and she thought it was fine for women to go ahead and work and—and not just expect Daddy to take care of you. So we were all brought up with that, and, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had it been a problem now and then at Smith, because this is a—well, it's popularly known as the Roaring Twenties, and presumably some of the girls lived fairly high, wide, and handsome, didn't they?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, they did. Yes, but—oh, I—we all worked our way through, too. I mean, we got jobs.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had jobs.

ALICE WINCHESTER: I—oh, yes. At that time—I think there still are, but at that time, um, there were one or two houses where everybody in the house worked, and the one that I got into—you had to have good enough marks to get into them, and I did, and Polly did. We all did, I guess. Lawrence House was the house that I—that we lived in, and there everybody, every student—it was on campus, and it was one of the attractive bigger houses there. They didn't have more than 60 girls in a house, I think, maybe 40. [00:46:00] I don't know. Um, everybody, every girl, had a job. Some of them washed the dishes. Some of them prepared—I remember one year I prepared vegetables in the kitchen in the morning before—before I got to chapel. [Laughs.] I had to do that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Which was mandatory then, chapel.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah. Oh, yes, it was, and you'd clean your own room, and then you'd clean—there, certain jobs were cleaning the downstairs public rooms, you know, and so forth. And the housework, in other words, was all done by the students in these working houses, and there weren't very many of them, but there were one or two. And there was no opprobrium about being in it. It was rather remarkable.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: And, um, there were nice, bright girls and nice families, nice background, and, um, pleasant enough to work with. We all were in the same boat, and, um, you didn't feel, "Dear, I'm in this awful house, and I'm not—can't keep up with those girls across the way." There was none of that in my day. I don't know whether—

[END OF SIDE A.]

winche93_1of3_cass_SideB_r

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:00:00] 1929, that summer, I believe, you had a job as a tutor in French.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: At—in the Adirondacks, and that—but it was just one—it was a Smith girl who didn't manage to pass her lang—foreign language exam in order to be a sophomore. I guess that was it. And I had a lovely summer in the Adirondacks at their summer—the home—summer home of her family. I can't even remember the name of the town now, but it was my first experience of living in the mountains, and I loved it, and it was charming. And one hour a day I would spend tutoring this girl, and the rest of the time they'd take me into the family and go riding or swimming or whatever. And I got paid for that besides. I think I made \$100 in the

summer besides room and board and very pleasant connections. [Laughs.] Well, that was my very first paid job, and, uh, it didn't really add much to my career, but it was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: By end of summer, did you—were you beginning to develop some thinking as to what you might want to do or might—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, I'd thought, of course, about what I might want to do and decided that it wasn't so much what I wanted as just what kind of a job could I get, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you then went to New York.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Then, I went straight to New York, and Polly and I had an apartment together, a little—it was in the, um, East—pardon me—on East 33rd Street near 3rd Avenue. [00:02:08] And it was called a garden apartment, [laughs] and it was kind of in the backyard of a small apartment hou—well, it was a—I don't think it was—I don't know. Maybe it was a built-over house. There were two or three apartments above ground.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Perhaps a townhouse. Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, that was it, I think. And this was our first experience of living in New York, and we lived together for the first two, three, four years, and, oh, it was exciting, I mean, thrilling, living in New York at—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And that was a nice district at the time, wasn't it—

ALICE WINCHESTER: It was. It—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —near the Morgan Library?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, it was very pleasant. Mother came down to see us, and she said, "I do feel so sorry for you girls living in a basement." [Laughs.] And we assured her that it was no basement. It was a terrace. It was a garden apartment. There was a little spot of green grass in the middle, and we loved it, of course. And Polly was—Polly was commuting back to Rye, where she had been teaching ever since she finished college, and she taught at the Rye Country Day School, children, little children, and commuted the—out of New York to Rye and back just for the fun of living in New York. Both of us were getting a great kick out of it, and we lived together several years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was it that was particularly appealing at that time to you two in the city—[inaudible]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, my. Well, of course, we began going to the theatre, and you could get a balcony seat for a dollar in those days, as I recall it. That was quite a piece out of our pay, but—but, um, we went to the theatre at least once a week. [00:04:04] And we had young friends, college friends, who were around town, and we'd sort of have—go to each other's apartments for dinner and that kind of thing, all—most of us living on a rather slim budget but enjoying it and being thrilled by the big city and learning our way around and what was where and what could you afford to do and what did you put out of your mind. [They laugh.] And, uh, I had several classmates living—who moved to New York, and they got various kinds of jobs. And, um, what I started on—I don't remember whether you've got all of this, but I—I had no kind of office training whatever. And, um, I went to employment agencies, and they'd say, "What can you do?" And I'd say, "Oh, I'll do anything." And they said, "Can you type?" "No." "Can you take dictation?" "No." And, um, so I soon became aware that I had better do some—learn some other—more skills, and—oh, my very first job was being a file clerk in the Chase National Bank, [laughs] the largest bank in the world at that time, and I was very proud of that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Though your association was rather modest. [They laugh.]

ALICE WINCHESTER: I may say it was, the lowest level. And, um, I very soon began going to night school and learning stenography. People had told me that I would have to, and I said, oh, I didn't think so. I was capable. I could do all kinds of things. I could learn on the job, and I soon discovered that it was ridiculous. I couldn't get any kind of job that I could live on if I didn't have stenography. [00:06:07] So I went to night school. I was—as a file clerk at the Chase, I got \$25 a week, and that was the usual starting for all kinds of things, I soon discovered. So—but I went to night school down there around Wall Street somewhere and, um, learned to type and take dictation with not very much effort. It's easy enough to learn. I was young and, uh, still able to learn, and so, by—I was telling myself—they had it in the form of a course. You take so much, and then you were supposed to be through and ready to go get a job. I wasn't quite through my course, and I hadn't taken the final exam, but it was almost time for me to. And that was when I heard of the magazine *Antiques*, never knew it existed before.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did you hear about it?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I suppose—well, it was a very interesting coincidence. One of the—a beau that I picked up—well, he wasn't a beau, but he took me out a bit, and I liked him, and he liked me. And his name—he was a

French—young Frenchman named Pierre that I met while I was in Paris. He lived in Paris. He was on the other side of the thing. He was trying to learn English to work in America and make real money, and he was a newspaperman. That's what he was, and his paper sent him over to New York. [00:08:00] And he got in touch with me, and we'd go out to dinner together occasionally. And one day, he said, "How would you like to get a job as a secretary in a bank?" And I said, "Well, I think that would be just terrific." And he said that he had heard that the Chase had some openings or something like that. No, no, no. I'm mixing up two stories. I had been at the Chase. I just got that through an agency. While I was there and realizing that this was not my life work, but I could live on it until I found my life work, Pierre said that he had an American friend who—a woman who was an editor of—it had nothing to do with *Antiques*, but it was published in the same office as the magazine *Antiques*, and that they were looking for—they heard that *Antiques* was looking for a secretary. This was a roundabout but beautiful, um, coincidence, I thought, that my Paris year was giving—putting me in touch with a job in New York. And I went and saw the lady editor, and she said yes, that it was for the magazine *Antiques*. She was on *Asia Magazine*, but the two were published and owned by the same people. And, um, the editor of *Antiques* had gone away for his summer vacation, and he was out in the Rockies. But, um, he needed a new secretary, and they wanted to hire one who would work in while he was away and be all ready to take over, to help him when he got back. [00:10:06] So we all liked each other, and I was charmed with all these coincidences. And I—they offered me the job, and, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The publisher offered you the job or—

ALICE WINCHESTER: The—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The editor wasn't there just then.

ALICE WINCHESTER: The editor wasn't there, but the editor of *Asia Magazine* was finding a secretary for—

ROBERT F. BROWN: For him.

ALICE WINCHESTER: —Mr. Keyes, [ph] so that when he got back I was in his office. And he found me there, and we got along fine from then on. [Laughs.] I was scared to death of this business. Of course, I was still very green at the stenography. We worked five-and-a-half days a week in those days, and I went back to the office Saturday afternoons, and I'd pull out my little notebook and study it and study. "What in the hell did I think I was writing there? What were we talking about? What does that awful little sign mean?"

ROBERT F. BROWN: You couldn't make out your—

ALICE WINCHESTER: [They laugh.] And I really, uh—but I wasn't going to let Mr. Keyes know that I didn't know, and I think he was satisfied. He came back and, uh, started—we started getting acquainted, and he'd dictate letters to me, and I'd work over them and go back at night and work over them and so on but soon caught on to the stenography part, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you didn't at this point know much of anything about the subject of his magazine. [Laughs.]

ALICE WINCHESTER: Didn't at all. Well, I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was he like? What was your first impression of him?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, I don't know that I really remember my first one especially, but I think I quite fell for him at the start. He was a charming person, very symp—*sympathique* and very appreciative, didn't at all seem to mind that I was a greenhorn completely. [00:12:07] In fact, it appealed to his, uh, own tutorial background. He'd been a professor, you know, at Dartmouth for years, some good many years, and, um, so here was a fresh pupil for him. I didn't know a decorative art from any other kind of art, and the whole field—the fact that there was this whole field of the decorative arts fascinated me. I thought I had learned a good deal about art at Smith and in Europe, and I didn't know anything about a ladderback chair. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: These all had escaped you. You had said also at that time you were interested in art. You were more interested in modern things at that moment.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That is true. Uh, I—they just appealed to me. They—I was the age to respond, and it was very exciting to think of artists creating new forms of art or new styles of art. And Polly and I used to go around to some of the art galleries on Saturday afternoons, and she had a pretty good appreciation, too, very good. And we—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you remember some of those galleries that you were interested in or what kinds of things?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, dear. Offhand, I don't. I'll see if I can remember.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But that was a common excursion for you and your sister.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: But then—so Keyes was—he wasn't—didn't care in the beginning whether you knew much about things or not. Right?

ALICE WINCHESTER: No, I don't think he did, and he just wanted me to be able to—my duties were stenographic primarily, writing—taking dictation and writing out decent-looking letters and typing yards and yards of manuscripts for the press, making final copies of edited stuff. [00:14:09] He did the editing, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You didn't find this particularly onerous, this typing and all this new—[inaudible].

ALICE WINCHESTER: No. No, but I wasn't very speedy and all that good right at the start. [Laughs.] I got so I was very, uh—oh, sure, I could type up anything in no time and all and take dictation and all that, but I had to keep my mind pretty much on it at first, and I succeeded in doing that. And then, because—well, we were kind of congenial. I guess Mr. Keyes discovered that I really found this material interesting, and he, of course, was fascinated by it all and was a born teacher, as I said. And he kind of used me as a sample part of the—of his public, I think, now and then, and did I—did I think that article explained something satisfactorily. What was—maybe I asked questions, and he'd think, "Well, that should be worked out," so it wasn't very long before we kind of got to working together on things a little, though he was always still the boss and the one with the brains and the knowledge and all of that. And I just did his busy work for him. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you at some point discovered that he himself was self-taught, you—[inaudible].

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Yes. Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: That must have made him somewhat less formidable, I mean, even though he was somewhat older, of course.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, I think that's true. Yes. Yes, it did, and—well, he soon got over being formidable. He was a charming person, really, and very—oh, he didn't try to keep me in my place or anything. [00:16:05] There was no question of that. We just got to—he would enjoy explaining something to me. A new article would be submitted, which somebody had said did he want to see, and he said yes. And it came, and he would sit down and read that, and he'd say, "Now, look at this." And then, I'd go over and sit down beside him, and he'd say, "Now, how do you like that? How does this appear to you? Do you understand what it says?" and that kind of thing. So it was great. We made a very good team, and, of course, he was teaching me all the time, which he just automatically did. He talked to people in a, um—explaining what was going on and wanting them to understand what he was talking about, and that's the way he did his editing, too.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The magazine had originally been in Boston. Is that right?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And had he been with it up there or—

ALICE WINCHESTER: He founded it. He was one of three who founded it. There were two other—two classmates of his, I believe, young Dartmouth men, and, um, they had been in college together. He al—he went back to the college and was in the—oh, what as it he did? He taught English, I think, yeah, and American literature, and then he got into the management end. And he was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: A dean or something on that order?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Something like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: At Dartmouth.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Would they—they wouldn't have anything called an assistant president, surely, but it was something like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There could have been a secretary to the president, something on that order.

ALICE WINCHESTER: [00:18:00] Possible. Yeah. And he had a really responsible position on the, um, staff of Dartmouth when, uh—well, then, did I tell you about getting the magazine founded?

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, he had a classma—a couple of classmates, one of whom was—oh, he had some kind of a business in Boston, and he developed a little antiques business more or less on the side. And he got more and more interested in the antiques business. They called him Chauncey [ph], and I can't think of what his real name was or what his last name was, but I probably could track it down somehow. Anyway, um, there were these three classmates, Mr. Keyes and this Chauncey, somebody—and somebody else who was in—went into some kind of financial business in Boston.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Boston.

ALICE WINCHESTER: They were all in Boston. Oh, they got Mr. Keyes to agree to be editor of this magazine that they wanted to found. Chauncey played with antiques on the side, and he had some other kind of a business. He bought and sold, and the other one was something of a collector, I think. Anyway, Homer [ph] was the brains, and they said, "There should be a magazine. Look at these English and French publications. We should have an American magazine about the decorative arts." So he said, "Sure." [00:20:00] And they talked it over together, and I think that Chauncey put up the money, if some was needed, as there must have been, and they opened an office in Boston. That's where the magazine started, and the Keyes were living there by that time. They moved there for the purpose, I believe—

ROBERT F. BROWN: From Hanover.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Hanover. And, um, these other two classmates put in their suggestions and so forth, but it was really Mr. Keyes who designed the magazine in terms of what was to be in it and so forth. Chauncey sold a lot of the advertising, and so Keyes was the editor and got it going.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Got going fairly rapidly.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, I think so. And the first issue was January 1922, and it's been going ever since. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why was it moved to New York? I know you said Key—Homer Keyes was a New York native, New York City native.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, he was, but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was that possible part of the reason?

ALICE WINCHESTER: —I don't think that had anything to do with it. He was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: No?

ALICE WINCHESTER: —he lived in Brooklyn, actually, which was different from New York in those days, still is, but in other ways. And I don't think he had any personal family there anymore. Well, I don't know about that. I don't think it had anything to do with his moving. I think—oh, oh, oh—this was when it was sold. That's right. This was just before I got into it, I believe.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, it had been sold to someone in New York. [00:22:02]

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. That is, it was sold to Dorothy Elmhurst [ph], who was in London, actually. She was Dorothy Whitney, daughter of William C. Whitney, who had pots of money. I've forgotten how he made it, but he was one of those big millionaires, and, um, she, I think, had done some traveling and got interested in Asia, China, Japan, whatever, and had something to do—or bought or helped to found—I'm not sure about this part—*Asia Magazine*. The—the magazine was—she had money to put into it, and it—that was all right, but she was advised that she should get in on a sounder financial basis and she should have another magazine that would help to pay for *Asia*. So they looked around. I don't know just who was advising her at this time, but her broker or somebody said, "Why don't you buy another magazine? And here's this little new publication, quite recent, called *Antiques* that seems to be doing very well over there in Boston. Bring it to New York, and it could make a fortune and pay for *Asia*." This is the way I heard the story, more or less, and, um—so, anyway, that's what happened. *Antiques* was bought from these Boston gents. They were well paid, I'm sure, and it was moved to New York with the idea that it could grow and become wealthier and make more money for *Asia*. [00:24:00] And Mrs. Elmhurst, Dorothy Whitney, was, um, in—in effect the actual owner, but it was in a corporation with *Asia*. And there were—some other property was bought, too, along about the same time, so that was all just to keep the magazine going. But—but it explains why it was moved to New York, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: To New York. And Keyes was brought along.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, and he came as the editor, continued.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he have family, too?

ALICE WINCHESTER: He had a wife and a daughter who was a little older than I, and she was—went to Vassar and graduated a little bit before I did. And she—she and a classmate of hers were living together in an apartment in New York. That's right, in the Village. And Mr. and Mrs. Keyes lived on, um—oh, that place by 57th Street on the River—Sutton Place. And it was—and, uh, Kit, the daughter, was very independent, but she and her father got along all right together. [They laugh.] It was very important not to be your parents' child in those—in those days, especially in, uh—in our family where we were supporting ourselves and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, certainly. Well, I was going to ask, but, uh—this is—as you came on to *Antiques*, this was the beginning of the Depression.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So I suppose even as a young worker you were aware of this—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, indeed.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —and realized you—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, and the magazine was aware of it, certainly, just looking toward a rosy future here in New York. [00:26:07] And here was the Depression, and a lot of the antique dealers and everybody else was going broke. Nevertheless, it really—it always continued to grow. You look at the file of it. I was sitting on the bookshelf, and each volume is a little bigger than the one before, it seems to me. It—well, we were conscious of the Depression, certainly, in my early days and almost for the rest of Mr. Keyes's life. How long did it last, the Depression? We learned to pinch our pennies, and we didn't have any extravagant doings around the office or in that kind of thing. And salaries were low, but everybody's salary was low at that time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Inaudible.] Yeah. Costs were depressed as well as sales. The, uh—Mr. Keyes was pretty broadly acquainted in the art world and among dealers and the like.

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think so. He had—or he—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You said he knew a number of curators as well.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. He, um, developed acquaintances with them. He loved to just go around to the antique shops and see what was doing and find interesting things, and hi—his interest at first was just not at all in terms of buying and selling, but he found it an interesting field. And he didn't—they were comfortably off, but they didn't have the kind of money that a big collector has to have. And he didn't really buy very much except just furnishing for his house, apartment. And, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he would go to the dealers as a way of studying? [00:28:01]

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, and just—

ROBERT F. BROWN: In those days, it must have been the principal way. I mean, the museums didn't—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The Metropolitan had quite a lot by then, but it was nothing like we could see today, right?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, quite a lot. No, and he cultivated the dealers as a way of knowing what was in the market and what was interesting and so on and became good friends with a lot of them. And they'd—they'd be delighted to have him drop in and really understanding that chair over there and what was unique and interesting about it and so on and so on. And, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But did he begin taking you along on this—[Inaudible.]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, and that, of course, was a very important part of my education. And I learned an awful lot just from looking and listening, and then, too, he would—well, we had a good library there already, and *Antiques* would receive review copies of all the books that were being published and really a good many from the very—from my beginnings. There would always be books coming in for review, and Mr. Keyes didn't take those home or pass them out to the reviewer. He mostly reviewed them himself, but he, um, put them on the shelf. And we had a wonderful library. Uh, his office and a couple of other rooms were lined with bookshelves, which had just come to the magazine pretty much.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[Inaudible.].

ALICE WINCHESTER: Once in a while, he'd buy something if it was really necessary, but mostly they came for review.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you begin, uh, reading fairly avidly in those publications?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Looking back, did you have a—were you developing a particular stronger interest, one particular one, than others, or were you rather very broad in what you were curious about? [00:30:06]

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, the—Mr. Keyes's emphasis was on American things, and *Antiques*, at that time, I think was the only American publication devoted to antiques. And, um, so that was one criterion, and then I—well, I don't know. He—he was interested in practically—furniture, silver, porcelain, and glass he was very much interested in and all the general categories, and so I just followed along. [Laughs.] And he would, uh, as I said, take me around to the shops or the museums, and when there was an exhibition of the decorative arts we'd go to that, of course.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you remember some of the dealers you got to know, uh, fairly early?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, Israel Sack was one of the leaders, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was his background, Israel Sack?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, he told me the story of his life several times. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: It wasn't the same each time—[inaudible]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, no, he was pretty consistent, but it came—he came from, um, Russia.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I think you had said he went to England first or—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, and learned—and worked for a furniture—modern furniture-maker there, that is, a craftsman, a furniture-maker, but, um, one who really did it by hand. And, um, then, he worked from that into the old things and got over here and established his company, which is still going strong. [00:32:06] It's one of the most prosperous, I guess, supported the whole family, and they're all still in it. And, uh, he—he was a real old character. He spoke with a strong accent, but he, uh, knew what he was talking about, and he really had studied furniture and understood it perfectly. And then, he spread into the other kinds of things. I guess the store still is basically furniture, but they're likely to have some silver or some nice piece of glass or china.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were these men, people like—such as Israel Sack pretty patient with you all? They'd take time showing you things and all—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah. They loved to. I think they—I think they all enjoyed it. They loved having an audience and having the feeling that they were talking to someone who appreciated these wonderful things they had for sale.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALICE WINCHESTER: They're very personal about it. I think, as I recall it—I think it's true and probably still is that anyone that's a real success in the antiques business is just sold on antiques in the first place, adores them and loves to have them and to handle them and to have them in his possession long enough to make some money on it. [Laughs.] But they really love what they're doing, the things they're handling, I think. If they're any success at all, they have to.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about collectors? Did you get to meet any such very early? I mean, would Mr. Keyes take you around to private collections?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Not that I remember so much.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Not that early? No?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I—if somebody dropped in on him to chat over something or to ask his opinion of something, he'd usually—well, not usually, but he'd often include me in the conversation. [00:34:10] We had a little office half as big as this room, you know, and we were right there in each other's lap practically.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Pretty small, 15-by-15 feet or something. Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, so people had to get by my desk to get into the visitor's chair and talk to him. So I was—I didn't obtrude myself, but I would be included quite often, which was very nice. I don't remember so much about collectors individually. I'm—I know I met a good many, but I was just his assistant, and, um, I don't think I went to their homes with him or without. I didn't get to doing that until after his death, actually. And, um

ROBERT F. BROWN: And exhibitions, would they have been—there wouldn't have been all that many museum exhibitions.

ALICE WINCHESTER: No, there weren't a lot at all, so whenever there was one it would be very exciting. And we would have an article about it, and we'd get lots of pictures and so on. The museums had pretty good PR offices and sent us news and notes about—and pictures of whatever they were doing, but, um, the great emphasis on American things, I don't think—well, I don't know. Maybe antiques had a lot to do with it, and maybe it really did begin, um, while it was in Boston. And it grew rather rapidly after it came to New York, but then along came the Depression at about the same time right on the heels of the moving. [00:36:10] And so we had to pinch the pennies and not be extravagant in what we published and so forth.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The, uh—behind those exhibitions at museums must have been some curators, I guess. Even then, there were a few curators who specialized in—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, there were.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —decorative arts. What about American decorative arts? Were you beginning to get museum specialists in American—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, I think so. I remember—yes, the Metropolitan had a very good silver person, a woman. Now, what was her name? Uh, one of the publishers—was there a Century Book Company?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Yes.

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think that was it. It started—there was a series, which had already been started some years, I think, before I even heard of it, before I ever got to the magazine, um, and they published books that looked—the size and shape of a novel with a light blue cover, *Early American Silver*, and that was done by Louise somebody, who was the curator of silver—of American silver at the Metropolitan. And there was one on furniture and one on glass, and that was done by Rhea Knittle, who came from Ohio, and she was a great contributor to the magazine. I think she started as an antique dealer out in the middle of Ohio. I can't remember what town, some little place you've never heard of, I think. [00:38:00] But she knew all about—Ohio, of course, was important in the development of American glass, and she had looked up and learned about all the beginnings of glassmaking in the United States. And she did a whole book on it, which was part of this early series. I remember the whole series.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But people like that could—would help with these exhibitions or conceivably did.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Louise, the, uh—the curator at the Met in silver.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And then, in furniture, were there—in Boston, there was Edwin Hipkiss.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In New York, there was—was Joseph Downs [ph] involved yet—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —at the Metropolitan Museum, or someone—[inaudible]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think he was. He was—let me see. Was he there when I got there? I think he was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So there were a few people.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. There would be an outstanding one in each museum or each—maybe each city, and, um, they—they really did—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would Mr. Keyes travel a bit because—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, quite a lot.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —even though the Depression had come, I mean, there were still prominent centers throughout the North and Middle West, I think, and so forth, Cleveland or Chicago and places like that to be—

ALICE WINCHESTER: If there was any, uh, significant museum event like an exhibition, he would travel, and he did quite a bit of lecturing. He would be invited to come to speak at considerable distances, not merely just in New York or New England, but he did quite a lot of it. And then, oh, if they did something out in Chicago or any other place that got advance publicity and was exciting enough, he'd go and see it. [00:40:05] Philadelphia, he used to go back and forth there and Washington. I don't know how much they were doing in the Middle West, but I think they were—

ROBERT F. BROWN: As a speaker, was he, uh, quite fine as a speaker, or how would you characterize him?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think so. Yeah, I think he was—oh, he had a very good sense of humor, and he'd see to it that he used it judiciously. [Laughs.] And, uh, I think people enjoyed him very much, and he did quite a bit of lecturing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You said that as a writer he tended toward the flowery.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. I think that's true, but, uh—oh, he was kind of a 19th-century writer, or 1890s at least, and loved to put in little extra flourishes and use words that were more erudite than common and so forth. But he—but he wrote well and clearly, and he did an awful lot, though. He did—well, I think before I got there he did all the editing of other people's articles, and some of them felt that he was a little bit too free with his blue pencil.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. [They laugh.] He did quite a lot of rewriting.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: But—well, if you look at the magazines and read a little bit, you can recognize his style very readily.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he would have—he had a pretty good reputation with writers, with potential—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes, I think so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He would meet with them as much as he could. I mean, did they—

ALICE WINCHESTER: The people that wanted to contribute?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Potential contributors, or would he call—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, yes, my recollection is that, um, people that had a hobby or made a great discovery or acquired a particularly gorgeous object and said, "Oh, that ought to be in *Antiques* magazine," would get in touch with him and either send a picture or call him up if—if they were near, and, um, talk to him about it. [00:42:27] And maybe it would develop into a whole article, and he would discover that this person really had some valuable information, which was not elsewhere available, and he'd kind of coach them along and say, "Write it this way, and cover this and that," and so forth.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[Inaudible.].

ALICE WINCHESTER: Or then, there would be people who were not really potential writers but just had wonderful pictures and wonderful things, and he'd get photographs taken, and he'd write the article.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He'd write about it. And you began helping in some of these things, right?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. You mentioned that sometimes—though he got along well by and large with writers, he sometimes tangled with the dealers. There were—were there times when they didn't appreciate what he'd written about them?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I'm not sure why I said that. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: He didn't—[inaudible].

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, he didn't always agree with the dealers, and they, of course, were pretty—I don't know why "of course," but they usually were pretty positive of their own opinion. And if he said, "Well, I don't know. I think you may—maybe that chair has a little French in it," or something like that, and they'd say, "Oh, no, it came direct from England," and—I don't know. He would argue with them a little, but the dealers were of all kinds of course. [00:44:01] They still are, and some of them really were extremely knowledgeable and sensitive to the fine points and the things you have to know in order to, um, appreciate a thing. And, uh, a lot of them deferred to him and were very glad to have his OK on something, so it worked both ways.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would he—when he would take you around to go to dealers, which I gather you did fairly regularly, did he—would he be able to point out the reputations of the various dealers? I suppose that would come up in his conversation, mention that so-and-so is perhaps not so honest as somebody else.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, I think so. He—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[Inaudible.]

ALICE WINCHESTER: —he was pretty discreet about it, of course, but among—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure. Sure, because the dealers—

ALICE WINCHESTER: —the staff, not only me but the advertising staff. He'd see to it that they knew what they were—the people selling advertising for the magazine, um, had sometimes to be warned about some of the dealers who were not as—quite the kind we'd like. And, uh, he would go that far in trying to instruct them how to judge the integrity of the dealers.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, that—on the other hand, the dealers were practically the—the bread and butter, weren't they?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, they were.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I mean, the advertising, through advertising.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So it was sort of very difficult to—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, but there were—I can't now name a specific instance, but I do remember that there would be certain dealers that we were supposed to just politely skip over, and the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And not solicit because—[inaudible]—reputation—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, the advertising department would be—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —of the magazine.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah. [00:46:00] And Mr. Keyes would not hesitate to warn the advertising manager if he felt that he had a line on something like that because it wouldn't do the magazine any good. Well, the advertising manager would appreciate the fact. It was—it was just that he was not an expert.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No. No. Now, you mentioned that the emphasis was mostly American. This is the great gap that Keyes and his first partners tried to fill, but there were—there was periodically, uh, material on Chinese ceramics, things of that sort, right, because—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: —Mr. Keyes was interested in—[inaudible]—as well.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes, very much.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And in European furniture, was there sometimes a—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Certainly English. Anything English, I think, rated almost as high as American. [They laugh.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, you just used the word "high." Was there already a little hierarchical quality to the—your, uh, feeling about things? I mean, was American considered the most interesting because the most rare, or

—
ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, just because it was American. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Chauvinism. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think so.

[END OF SIDE B.]

This is tape number two.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[00:00:00] taste for things American, American antiques.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, um, I think that the—the magazine *Antiques* had a good deal of influence on, um, people's taste or preferences or whatever, and, um—and, actually, Mr. Keyes just published the things that especially interested him, things that he, uh, thought were worthwhile or unusual or especially interesting. And, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was in control. I mean, it was his—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was the editorial and the policy voice.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, absolutely.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The owner, really, kept—had a light touch, you know.

ALICE WINCHESTER: The—we never had—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mrs. Elmhurst.

ALICE WINCHESTER: —anything much to do with the owner, actually. The—Mrs. Elmhurst would—who was the owner—would maybe come and pay a call about once a year and maybe not for two or three years. I think she was rather proud of the magazine, and she enjoyed flipping it—through it, but she was not really interested in it. And, uh, the only reason she bought it was because she was urged to support her magazine on Asia.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Her—yes, her first love—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —was something that might very well be a cash cow, as they say, or something.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Uh-huh. Did you begin looking more and more at things American, I mean, to the exclusion of European? For example, you—of course, you had had your early exposure in France. [00:02:00] What about—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —was there any—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —lingering interest in things French?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, certainly. I had a personal interest in them, but they—there weren't near—there weren't many dealers in this country, um, who imported French things. There came to be more and more—there was a—a company—oh, I can't think—with a—that began emphasizing Russian things and importing Russian silver and Russian—I don't know what else. And, um, it—it had a certain influence. It—there was quite a new movement of dealers from Europe.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This would have occurred in the '30s, perhaps.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, I'm trying to put a date on it, and maybe it was even in the '40s, more likely, I guess. And the antiques business as a whole had quite a depression along with the rest of the Depression, and, um, so anything new that people would shell out money for was desirable and if genuine and decent in itself. And I think

that there were a good many more European dealers who moved over here. Uh, what was the turning point? What—what were the years of the war in there, anything?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, 1941 to '45. [00:04:00]

ALICE WINCHESTER: That's it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about even following World War I when, perhaps, America was—at least, New York was prospering?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Some of the art galleries had—Parisian art galleries had outlets in New York much earlier than that.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That's true. That's true.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But the—in the decorative arts, by the—by at least the '40s, then, in New York you had—you were beginning to have a good deal of European, I suppose, Asian as well, right?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think so. Yes, I think so. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you think the magazine began in small measure to reflect that?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did it occasionally, um—

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mentioned that Mr. Keyes often had, uh—if there was an exhibition going, he would sometimes ask the museum curators to write.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, and that—there came to be more and more, uh, curators who kind of specialized, you know, and were really very knowledgeable in their respective fields and had something to offer. And they—by and large, the museum people did a great deal for the magazine, I think, in supplying material.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You became, uh—after about four years, you became Mr. Keyes's associate. You became associate editor.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That's right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did your job change—[inaudible]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: [Laughs.] It didn't change much at all. No, actually, it didn't. Uh, I was still his secretary and handled his telephone and his mail and, um, typed up anything that he wrote, uh, his editorials and his own articles. [00:06:04] And I don't think—it didn't change at all except that I got to knowing more about what I was doing and understanding better just what the point of the magazine was. I—I was enchanted with the whole thing. It was a charming subject to fall into. I had never paid much attention or any attention, really, to antiques, and—as such, and, um, I don't know whether I had mentioned to you before, um—we had a neighbor just obliquely across the road from us in Greenfield Hill who—a couple, rather, both of whom were fascinated by antiques. They came from Charleston, I think. No, no, no. Wait a minute. They were English. Oh, heavens. I'll sometime—

[Audio break.]

ALICE WINCHESTER: Anyhow, this was back in Greenfield Hill before I ever heard of *Antiques Magazine*, before it existed. This lady and her husband had antiques in their house, and I had a little girlfriend when we were both about 12 or 13. We thought she—Mrs. Shackleton [ph], she wrote books about antiques, she and her husband, Robert and Elizabeth Shackleton. And we would drop over and pay a call on Mrs. Shackleton, and she'd say, "Oh, let me show you what I got in New Orleans on the last trip down there," and little dinky things, little pieces of china and so on, things she'd put on the mantle. They didn't take any place in a picture of antiques in my mind. [00:08:04] I had no picture of antiques, but, um, that was—if you had mentioned antiques to me, that's what I would have thought of. And I never paid any attention to whether chairs were old or new or whether they had belonged to your grandmother or not. And, um, I just thought that every new invention was something exciting, so this opened a whole new world to me, and I did, uh, discover it was quite fascinating. And the things in it had their value and beauty.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did this in the beginning exclude modern design, or was that a gradual evolution away from interest in contemporary design? Or is it wrong to say you dropped your interest in contemporary design?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, um, no. I—I think I was just interested in, uh, modern because it was—because it was new, and it was the new thing, and it was much talked about. And it was a development instead of just some old thing that was around. And, uh, then, when I began to appreciate a good deal more the beauties of antiques and why people did collect them and why it was nice to have them, I, uh, dropped the excitement about the new.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was it your—maybe some of your earlier memories of why people had antiques, what—was there a day, say, in the '30s when you thought, "I know why that person wants them," or maybe—did people tell you, "This is why we have antiques"? [00:10:03] Someone—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Who's there?

[Audio break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Continuing our interviews, this is July 28th, 1994.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: And we're at the point where you've become editor of the magazine *Antiques* in 1938. Perhaps you could reiterate how that came about, how you—did you just naturally fall into the position when Mr. Keyes retired or—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, uh, it did seem more or less that way. I had, of course, worked very closely with him as I'm sure I have said, and he, um, obviously was training me. And I think it was obvi—I benefited and enjoyed the effects, but I am sure that it was apparent also to the members of the board who controlled the business side of the magazine, who were not very many. I think there were only about three people who represented the, uh, family, the Straight [ph] family—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The Straights.

ALICE WINCHESTER: —or Mrs. Straight and took care of business details and saw to it that everything was in order. And I don't think I can remember very specifically just how and when and where this happened. I'm sure I must have made it clear that I felt myself up to the job and, uh, wanted to let it be known that I wanted to continue in an active way, but I, uh—I don't think there was very much argument or hesitation about it. At this distance, I can't remember how long it took for the board to finalize all this and officially make it go into effect and so on. [00:12:07] But, um, that's what did happen, and I was, of course, impressed with my great responsibilities and the obligation to try to fit into Mr. Keyes's shoes and so forth. But I was thrilled and delighted, too, because I loved the magazine and felt that I had learned a great deal about the whole subject and how to handle it, and it was a very welcome challenge, so—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he simply retire, or was he—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, he died.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He died.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Um, I can't even remember exactly the sequence of events here, but I think he—I think he'd had some illness and nothing very serious appearing, but then it came back, and my recollection is that it was rather a sudden and not expected death at that—when it happened.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But the magazine was in good shape in terms of (inaudible)—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Everything was in order, and we just kept going.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —with the circul—what was circulation then? Was it fairly large?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I wonder. I wonder.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I suppose it was quite small compared to what it later became.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, I think that's true. I—I can't remember. I shouldn't even guess at it, probably, but—but it was. It was a small thing, and it was a very personal following of Mr. Keyes to a large extent, I think. He—I must have said before that he, uh, cultivated the contributors and knew most of them personally, and many of them were collectors. [00:14:00] And he got them to—as collectors to write about their pet subject and so forth. And I, uh, was exposed to his technique, of course, and admired him and everything he did very much and did

my best to follow along.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would you describe his technique as serious and the facts were right but, at the same time, appealing to a broad spectrum of reader, or how would you—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Uh, well, it was a very specialized kind of readers, and, I mean, people—it was really addressed to collectors, and, of course, there are more now than there were then. But, um, it wasn't meant to be a popular magazine. It was meant to be serious and reliable and factual and dependable and all of that, not romancing off about how great antiques were but, um, informing people what they were all about and how to extend their knowledge and, uh, what to look for in the things that appealed to them superficially and become a specialist and so forth. And I guess that more or less it's perhaps a fair definition of Mr. Keyes's policy, and I—I didn't at all expect to try to expand it even if I could just continue the magazine as he had created it. I thought that would be a terrific opportunity, and that was my highest ambition at first. Gradually, of course, as I got better acquainted with people, collectors and the people who were already interested in antiques, I learned the kinds of things they wanted to know or things that I thought they should know. [00:16:12] [Laughs.] And, uh, so that—I really felt that I was just continuing his policy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Soon, you began expanding to areas that he had not treated or—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, I think so, a little—probably moving farther forward in time, I mean, not insisting on 100 years old or any specific age for antiques, but looking—and also, I think in time I got the courage to branch out into other types of things beyond those that Mr. Keyes had been personally interested and had—in and had, um, published—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What were some of those types that you branched into—[inaudible]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, I wonder.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Folk art, was that one that you—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Yes, that was a big thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did that start pretty early?

ALICE WINCHESTER: That—that's true, and it wasn't entirely new. Mr. Keyes had been interested to a degree, but he was rather scornful of a lot of it. I mean, it wasn't really great art as compared with Copley or something, and, uh, I found—I pers—I got interested personally. I found a lot of these so-called folk art things interesting and worth pursuing and worth learning more about and trying to find out how or where or when and by whom. And, um, I—I didn't set out to expand the magazine, but little by little I discovered that here was an opportunity for research or publication and/or that we had ignored, and there were enough people interested. [00:18:12] And it was enough of a valid subject, so I went ahead.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There was—in the case of folk art even at that time, there was a core of [inaudible]—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —the Shakers [ph], but certain—[inaudible]—artists, a couple of art dealers like Edith Halpert [ph] certainly was—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, indeed.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Are these people you knew or knew of?

ALICE WINCHESTER: The so-called primitive painters. Yes, and I, um—I began making a point of trying to get abreast of that field and get better acquainted with dealers and potential writers and so forth. And it became a very—I guess a major part of our field before I got through.

ROBERT F. BROWN: One happy thing you had was, it seems to me, that labeled or absolutely documented pieces of earlier American furniture were being discovered all the time, weren't they?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was this a function of antiques to announce this or to have someone write about—[inaudible]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Um, there—collectors themselves were often—had a studious approach to the subject, and they knew how to go about some kinds of research and find out who this

cabinetmaker was or this potter and what his setting was and what he added to what had been known before and so on and so on, all of which was splendid material for publication, I found, and there were an increasing number of people who—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can you recall some of the, uh, collectors with whom you first collaborated or worked, [inaudible]—

ALICE WINCHESTER: [00:20:01] Oh, my. I wonder.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —the '30s or the '40s, some of the earlier ones?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm. Well, one of the early ones who continued through the rest of her life was Nina Little, and she very—in a charming and friendly way began to, um, kind of offer me suggestions and try to steer me along and try to see that I covered, um, things, newly discovered things and so on, that, um—and she was a darling person and one of the most serious and reliable collectors. She—she didn't go off on tangents and get all excited about some little minor thing, but she saw the whole picture very well. Uh, she—we became very good friends, which we were for the rest of her life, and, um, in retrospect I realize more than I did at the time, I think, how consciously she passed on ideas to me and tried to steer me and was very influential to me. Fortunately, I appreciated it all, and we remain very close friends.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was her interest primarily folk art, or was it broader—broader than that when you first knew her?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think that it was—I think she would have said herself or did say that it was primarily folk art, but she did see folk art in relation to the broader field. [00:22:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Not simply as something very distinct and isolated.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm, yeah. And, uh, she had a sound—she had given herself, I guess, a sound background in American painting and also craftsmanship, and she knew the magazine from—I guess from its early days and, uh, understood what—what its place had become and what it could become. She was just a great lady. That's what she was, a sweet little person, but she had a mind of her own, and she used it. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: But her advice was always well meaning—[inaudible].

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, always, yes, indeed. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was her husband involved at some—at one point or another, Bertram Little?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes, he—he became the—what was it, director—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, of the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That's right. And he was on that board or involved in it, I think, practically all of my—all the time that I knew them. I don't know when he started in, but he was very—he was very knowledgeable, too, and he and Nina kind of supported each other and taught each other and shared their interests and so on. And, um, they were quite an ideal couple in the whole field. It was really remarkable. They made a point of knowing people that were interested in what they were, and, um—and they didn't, um, shrink from expressing their opinions and offering their advice and so on. But it was always good advice, and the various organizations and museums that they were connected with, I think, all benefited from their joint help. [00:24:09]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, you came on as the Depression was flourishing, and you took on the editorship. It was still with us. Was there, uh—do you—was there quite a struggle to keep a magazine going, or you were fortunate in Mrs. Straight's backing—[inaudible]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, she stood by it, and there was, I think—I've forgotten now how long a period it was, but there was quite a while when, um, she really supported the magazine. It wasn't that we were self-supporting. She paid for—paid the bills for getting it printed and so forth, and, um, the—but the, um, circulation increased. I can't remember any specifics about this. I don't know just how long it took, but after being a very minor thing it did really take hold and—and developed a circulation that was surprisingly large for such a specialized thing. And we became self-supporting, and I don't remember the times, the time it took for this and that. But by the time I did retire, uh, we had been making money.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did World War II in any way affect not only the magazine but, uh, collectors and—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, it did. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —sort of a muting of things for a while?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I think a lot of them—well, the whole thing, it was not patriotic to spend your money just in charming things. [00:26:00] It was a matter of, uh, being discreet and helpful and trying to save the—going into bankruptcy and so on.

[Audio break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: After the, uh, Second World War in the late '40s, do you recall any particular things you began doing at that time? Was there—was there a—a new prosperity or anything that began to be noticeable fairly soon as a magazine editor?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Um, I don't know that I really remember or whether I'm just imagining this, but I don't think of any particular thing that happened at the—for the betterment or otherwise of the magazine. But, of course, there was a different atmosphere and a whole—the whole country was in a different condition, and there was no sense of guilt if you, uh, were just playing with antiques instead of doing your war work or something. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: It no longer mattered.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: And it—everybody was relaxed, and it was different. And it was also legitimate, I seem to remember, to begin thinking more about new ideas and new ways to spend money on the magazine for its improvement and increase circulation and so on, which I believe came to pass.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you begin having more illustrations or more color, things like that?

ALICE WINCHESTER: More color we did. Yes. We had been very pinchpenny about color, and we never got lavish with it at all. It seemed an immense expense to me, and—but we were more relaxed about it. [00:28:02] And there was just a general feeling of—of, um, less pressure and less need to pinch pennies and consequently to try out new ideas and spend a little money on some interesting thing that occurred to us.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When did you begin your feature "Living with Antiques," your—

ALICE WINCHESTER: I don't remember exactly, but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: That was something that you'd initiated.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. I did not—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was the purpose of it?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, it was to show people how nice antiques can look in your own home or, vice versa, how well lots of people had furnished their homes with choice antiques. And, um, I don't think I—I know I didn't originate the idea. Mr. Keyes used to show people's homes occasionally, not a great deal, but when he saw one that he thought was really especially nice or a good collection well disposed around the place, around the house, he would publish it. And, um, then, I think that I was particularly interested in it. It seemed to me a logical approach and a way to get people interested in more things, different kinds of things. And, um, I don't know whether there was actually more—there must have been, probably, more of a movement on the part of collectors to think about the arrangement of what they collected. [00:30:01] At any rate, I don't think I created the idea, but it seemed to me something that deserved more attention.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And it is—is this a section that you would write or have others—some of your other people do?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Both. I did a lot of it but not all of it by any means, and sometimes—quite often, it was done by one of the staff who would go out and get the photographs to supervise the photography and then write it up, discuss it with the owners, and so forth, and/or it would be myself. I enjoyed doing it very much, and it was kind of my department, my especially personal department, but everyone on this—in the editorial staff worked on it, I think. And then, once it got started under that heading, um, people would write in about either their own collections or one that we might be interested in, and, uh, we'd get ideas from outside and follow up on them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Through these columns, you began to know more and more collectors, didn't you?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would you travel, I suppose?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I traveled quite a lot. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I enjoyed it very much. I also did a lot more lecturing than I had up to that time, and the two went together. And if I was invited to come and speak at some distance, I'd usually sort of, uh, get in touch with the local museum or something, or the people sponsoring, you know, inviting me to come would plan things. And I'd make the most of my connections as I traveled about, and there were always people who said, "Oh, you should see so-and-so's collection. That's really worth looking at." And, of course, a lot of it did feed into the magazine. [00:32:03] And I found, um, not only things worth publishing but people who were well informed and able to write and write about their own things or doing research in some particular line, the whole thing. It helped tremendously. I mean, it was absolutely essential, I felt, and I think it was—still, I think so—to have a personal connection with people in the field, dealers and collectors both, and all the museum people and everything. And, um, I broadened my own acquaintance intentionally, very considerably, and, um, then the others—Edith Gaines was very good at going out, and she would—she began being a lecturer.

ROBERT F. BROWN: She was one of your staff. Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, she was associate editor, I think, and a very good one. And she—oh, after she had been with us a little while and got her bearings and everything, she decided that she was going to be a specialist in glass. She liked it, and we needed a specialist. And there wasn't anybody outside that we automatically turned to for advice or something, so she taught herself and talked to all the collectors and dealers and became a specialist in American glass, and it was great. And, um, then the other—the girls who—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible]—Helen Comstock.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, she was a jewel and very able and excellent at covering almost any kind of subject, and she knew a lot of the people. She had worked on, um—what was it she worked on? [00:34:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: On another publication?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, before she came, and then she was sort of freelancing, I think. And I asked her to come to *Antiques*, and she did us a world of good. She had a broad acquaintance among the dealers and collectors and museum people and a very sound general knowledge, too. And, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were most of the collectors, say, through the '40s or into the '50s in the Northeast, or were they spotted pretty well around the country—[inaudible]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I suppose they were concentrated in the Northeast.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But this picture was changing—[inaudible].

ALICE WINCHESTER: But it was changing, and there were more and more in the South. And I remember kind of cultivating the South myself. How did I get started on the South? I just liked it. I think I was invited to come and speak somewhere, and I thought the people were charming and cordial and—and well informed and sort of a different point of view from the ones around here and so on.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What would their difference have been, more of a regional pride or a different way of looking at antiques?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Excuse me.

[Audio break.]

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, sure. Southern history is different from Northern history, certainly, and there was the whole, um—the Civil War was getting nearer than it used to be. And, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean nearer the—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Nearer to collectors and, uh, things related to daily life and all that as well as historical associations. And, um, I think that probably it had an—I'm quite sure that it had an influence on our circulation. We published a little of both, from—coming from both sides, naturally, not being—taking sides. [00:36:02] And, uh, as people's interest spread into fairly recent years, it, of course, included up to the end of the Civil War and then some, with emphasis on the South. And, um, I was very—I was interested just because I—the South was not exactly new to me. I got acquainted with it when I was in high school, I think. One summer, my father was teaching in a summer school near Asheville, and Mother was going with him. And they took my little brother and me, and, um, I was what, early teens maybe? And I thought those Southern ladies were just the nicest people I ever met. [They laugh.] And they were very polite to me. I mean, they treated me like a person, and, um, they

were—they were charming people. And, uh, Daddy had a great time. He enjoyed the Southerners very much, and this was my introduction to the South as different from the North and Southerners as different from me and people I knew. And I was always glad to have an excuse to go to some other part of the South. In the course of time, I lectured quite a bit around different places and would take advantage of travel expenses and that kind of thing and meet people where I went. And in—over the years, I pretty well jumped around over the South as well as over the North, and I enjoyed the travel part of my work very much and—and meeting the local people and discovering what was new and different about different parts of the country. [00:38:04]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can you recall some of the, uh, collectors you were beginning to see at that time, because I know, um—

ALICE WINCHESTER: This is too bad. I can't really—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, maybe just take—we could take another way. When you came on to the magazine, let's see, American antiques in terms of museums, there was a good collection at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The Metropolitan's American Wing, I guess, was—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —fairly far advanced.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Excuse me. Then came colonial Williamsburg and—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Well, after all, Williamsburg was in the South, and we got very much involved with them. And that was probably a major part of the connection and of my growing interest in the South. And as we, uh, worked with Williamsburg on forums and things, I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did that come about? Your first antiques—colonial Williamsburg antiques forum was organized—co-organized by you—the magazine at least, and you, rather—and colonial Williamsburg in 1949, I believe. How did that come about?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, it was by their invitation. I don't remember the actual beginnings of my acquaintance with colonial Williamsburg, but I knew of its existence very early in its existence, I think. And it was one of the kinds of things I wanted to know about. It seemed to me that it was something the magazine should be acquainted with and I personally would like to have, uh, some—explore it and see how it might be of interest to us and so forth, which I did. [00:40:01] And I don't remember details now about just how I—how and when I first went there and whom I met, but it seems—well, whatever the situation was, we—it was all very friendly from the beginning, and they were cordial. And I liked them all and enjoyed them and was interested in what they were doing and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was the goal or the aim of the forum?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Of the forum?

ROBERT F. BROWN: The forum at Williamsburg, the antiques forum.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, that was to stimulate interest in Williamsburg, of course.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because it was held there.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, but our aim was to stimulate interest in the magazine and to gradually, I think—I felt—more about publicizing antiques of the South, which the magazine had hardly touched until about then.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what was the format of the forum? What was the program in general?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, there would be lectures in the morn—there would be a—a theme running through the whole week, and there would be lectures in the morning and discussions or exhibition or an informal program of some kind in the afternoon and plenty of time in the afternoon for members to—or in the morning, too, I think, an hour at least—to go around and visit all the exhibits of colonial Williamsburg. And we tried to make the sightseeing tie in with the theme of the forum, which was usually quite possible to illustrate from the Williamsburg collections. [00:42:01] And, um, naturally, Williamsburg liked to have their things emphasized, and as far as I was concerned it seemed to me an ideal way to, um, introduce a lot of subjects that the magazine hadn't covered and things that were new in print anywhere, really, and people were doing books and whatever. And there had been far less done on the South as I recall it than on New England, for example, and, uh, the whole regional study of antiques got to be broadened and explored more than it had been before.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you have a fairly large, uh, audience from the beginning?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I don't remember specific numbers, but I think we were always pleasantly surprised just about. [Laughs.] I think the first one, um, we—of course, we were full of trepidation about the very first one. Maybe it would be an awful flop. Maybe there would be 10 people. Well, it turned out, I think—I don't remember specific figures, but I would guess that we had over 100 the first time. I don't know, but Williamsburg had allocated a certain amount of its space for it, and I think it was all taken. And, uh, of course they—I mean rooms in the hotel—and, of course, they had ideal meeting rooms and speaking rooms, auditoriums and whatever. And, um, all that part was a tremendous help, and their staff was darling and very cordial and welcoming, and we—their staff and our staff got to be very well acquainted and congenial and got along beautifully. [00:44:07] And, of course, our treasurer and business department at home were enchanted to have us have this new way of making a little extra money, so everybody was happy, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see. The magazine shared in the proceeds, huh?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Yeah, 50-50 as I recall it, because, of course, we did really start it. We—well, I had forgotten all of these details. I hadn't thought about it for a long time, but as I recall it, um, one of the head people on the Williamsburg staff approached me by mail, I think, and said, would we be interested in discussing possibilities for such and such a program. And then, whoever it was—I don't—I think somebody from CW came to New York, and we had a lunch together and decided, sure, there were great possibilities here. And then, they asked me down there to discuss it on the ground with the rest of their staff involved—that was involved, and, uh, so it grew. And it was really a very satisfying and worthwhile thing in every way, I think, and we did explore new things, new approaches to antiques or new kinds of antiques, I mean ones that were not tiresome old repetitions. And there were good speakers. There were people who had really studied a lot and discovered things for themselves. One of the best people in the South and who became one of my best friends was Henry Green in—

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:46:01] Was he in Georgia?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, and, um—Savannah—and his personal specialty was Southern furniture. I started to say glass, and I don't know whether he really had any interest in glass or whether I'm confused about that. But he had a great interest in Georgia furniture, and he had been a great pioneer in, um, discovering locally made pieces and learning about early craftsmen and so on and so on. Of course, I got him to write articles for *Antiques* about Georgia furniture and gradually about other Georgia things, and we published Green's house in "Living With [ph]." And then, too, he also was an early speaker in the forum, I think, on the—

[END OF SIDE A.]

winche93_2of3_cass_SideB_r

ALICE WINCHESTER: [00:00:00] Well, I would do more introducing than speaking. I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But lecturing was a—had become a prime, uh, outlet for you.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, it had.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You lectured frequently.

ALICE WINCHESTER: I did. I did a lot around different parts of the—all over the country. I got all the way to California and Washington, [laughs] and, of course, a good deal quite a bit nearby. And I, um, did not consider myself a specialist in any one thing. For instance, Henry Green knew much more about furniture than I did, both Southern and Northern, and there were people who knew a lot more about glass and silver and everything else than I did. So I, um, took the tack of developing what I had already developed somewhat in the "Living with Antiques" articles, and that was—is probably the subject I talked on most often, um, illustrating it with pictures from the homes of collectors who had exquisite pieces beautifully arranged, lovely pictures. I had a splendid photograph collection, um, slides, that grew over the years. And I would—the owners, of course, were willing to have me use the slides with or without their names, depending, and I put together articles about living with antiques and something about the growth of interest over the previous generations or generation and then where it stood at nice places that I knew now, and then, once in a while, maybe something that wasn't so good, and, "You shouldn't do this if you're collecting antiques," and so on. [00:02:02] And—but that was, um—that's what I talked on much the most often.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you didn't fear to pronounce on taste or lack of it.

ALICE WINCHESTER: No, I don't think so, but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The magazine had a role to play, you felt, and you as its editor—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —upgrading taste.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That was it. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And I don't think I talked about taste very much, but I did try to show place—either places that obviously represented taste or something that would be a joke because it was so awful, and—but not very much of that. And in the course of all of this, I, uh, developed a little bit more my own thoughts about collecting and what to do with your antiques and tried to promote the idea of looking upon them as something pleasant to live with, and don't put yourself into a museum but, on the other hand, show respect to these antique gems and so on. And, uh, I'd spell out a good deal of specific information whenever I had it. Is that the—

[Audio break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: But so the—what was the—would you say is the result of your extensive lecturing? You think you were indirectly increasing awareness of antiques, awareness of your magazine.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, of course, that's what I was primarily concerned about, and I think, probably, it did have a good influence, spread the word, and people got acquainted with it who might not have been before. But usually I would be invited by some group or possibly a museum that already had a defined group of small public, at least, to—who would like to hear about antiques. [00:04:04] So I didn't—I don't know. I don't know how much I sounded preachy. I—I tried to make it, um—to encourage interest and curiosity about getting further into antiques and doing your own research in that kind of thing, and I think I probably had some influence in that direction. On the other hand, there were plenty of people who were already experienced collectors and with—had a good background and a good understanding of what they were doing and so on, who didn't need that kind of encouragement but just enjoyed looking at other people's homes, which they saw. They—I almost always illustrated these with slides.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, this is about the time, uh—the beginnings of formal training in the study of antiques.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That's true.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had the American Wing in MFA and Williamsburg and some other museum collections, but you evidently played a fundamental role in some of the planning for Henry du Pont Winterthur program—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —which gets going in the early '50s.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That's true.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was your first awareness of what he intended to do at Winterthur?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I don't know that I can tell you much about that. Um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you brought in by him at some point or by some of his advisors?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I wasn't brought in officially in any way. Um, we were on friendly terms personally and, uh, in terms of our respective organizations.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You would have known him as a major collector—[inaudible].

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. He was one of the first ones that I used to hear about. People were impressed to death by him, and, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:06:03] They were?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes. Now, surprisingly, because of his collection, his whole house has nothing in it but American antiques, and wonderful ones. And consequently, he must know a good deal about them. Well, he did, but he, of course, also benefited from everything the dealers knew. And, um—but the collection was certainly famous for its extent and quality and everything, and, um—and everybody accepted the fact that it was Harry's [ph] taste that did it, and knowledge, and I think fairly, justly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did he talk to you about his plans now and then?

ALICE WINCHESTER: A little bit, not awfully much. His—his place was famous before I really got on my own feet, and he—oh, I remember. One of the first antique shows that I went to as editor of *Antiques*, which was kind of a

step for me, you know, and I had to be on my good behavior and not be stupid and so forth, in Delaware—it was in—where did he live?

ROBERT F. BROWN: He lived near Wilmington.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Wilmington. Um, there was an antique show there, and I went down representing the magazine just to attend the show and to trot around and shake the hands of the dealers and develop my own acquaintance and so forth and represent the magazine. And, um, I was invited to dinner at Winterthur the first evening or something. [00:08:07] And a few other people were, collectors, I guess, maybe—I guess a couple of the dealers. And, um, the word went around, "Oh, you're going to Winterthur to dinner?" [They laugh.] And, uh, it was kind of an event for me, frankly. I think it was probably the first time I went to their—to his house, though we'd met. Anyway, uh, I do—I'm recalling now something that I'd forgotten long ago, but it—it was kind of a step. And I was delighted to get a little acquainted with him as a person. He was awfully hard to get to know, and he didn't really unbend very easily, but he was—he could be charming, and he was cordial. And we—I always enjoyed his company, and that was the beginning of our acquaintance.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was dinner quite an event just as they said?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, just—yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Rather formal and elaborate?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Rather formal. Yes. Yeah. And I think he always lived rather formally, but, uh—but it was natural for him. It wasn't an unusual occasion for him, and—[inaudible]—guests to dinner every night, I guess, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Well, was it about that time you began talking with him or others like Joseph Downs or Charles Montgomery about—as they were beginning to plan the, uh, educational program there?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And the museum.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah. I guess so. I'm not really very clear in my memory about the sequence of events there. I don't think I was in on the plans very much. [00:10:04] I would hear about them, but I wasn't one of the consultants, or I wasn't really invited to make suggestions. I think Harry knew himself pretty well what he wanted to do, and, of course, Downs and Charlie Montgomery were very able advisors. And I think they got along fine. I don't think I made any contribution, in other words, but I was certainly very much interested. And what I always could do would be to publicize any new step that was going to be of influence, and in a dignified and intelligent way it was what we tried to do. And I think that's what we'd achieved, and it was useful to other organizations.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Um, you also—you spoke at various times with various dealers. Who were some of those that you particularly knew and admired or at least were aware of?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, of course, Ginsburg & Levy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Ginsburg & Levy, was that a firm that had been around for some time before you came on?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes. Yes. Isn't that awful? I can't remember their first names anymore, but, anyway, the name of the firm was Ginsburg & Levy, and there was a Mr. Ginsburg, Sr., and there was a son who was probably not far from my age. I don't know whether he was a little older or a little younger, but he was learning the business from his father. He was in business with his father by the time I began to really know them, but I got to be good friends with them. [00:12:02] And, um—oh, there was Israel Sack. He was one of the landmark fellows, and he was—he had been in business from the—well, probably he and the Levys and so on, they were—let me see. I don't know whether they were before the first war or between the wars, but they were well established by the time that I was getting acquainted with them all, and they were the grand old men who had—well, they weren't so old at that time. They had been in business long enough to have a real reputation, and they—people didn't make jokes about how you want to beware of that antique dealer, you know. Some dealers did have a reputation for not being very straightforward or reliable or not really knowing much about what they were handling, but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: These two firms did—[Inaudible.].

ALICE WINCHESTER: Those two firms did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: These were people—Homer Keyes had taken you around to meet some of these men.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That's right. That's right. And, um, they had—they had all been in business, I think, when the magazine started, and they were among the first advertisers who helped launch it and so on. They hadn't been very long by that time, probably, but I think you could find them all in the first issue of the magazine and faithfully thereafter.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you get to know some of the members of the Sack family?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: One was Harold Sack. Did you know him?

ALICE WINCHESTER: There—I knew Harold, and, um, there—a younger brother.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:14:05] There was a brother Albert.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Albert, yes, I knew him also. I knew both of them, um, and I think I was trying to remember if I had ever been in their home or homes. I don't think I ever was, but I felt as if we were all pretty pal-y, and we'd meet at shows and events of every kind. And I would visit them in their shops for—oh, for my own education a lot, and they were always—these that we've been mentioning were very cordial and generous with information and really would, uh, give me—teach me things I mightn't have had any other way to learn. And I was very grateful to them all and found them very—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And they'd learn basically by just looking and looking at many things. Is that right?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think so. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Um, Israel Sack was a great storyteller. He always wanted to—oh, he'd sit back in his chair and spin out a tale, and it would turn out to have a good point and be very entertaining, and there were—lots of them were stories of his collecting experiences or his antiquing experiences. He—he had come from Europe as a boy, and just how he fell in with the antiques people I can't remember hearing, although I must have. But at any rate, there were a few dealers before the Sacks and the Ginsburgs, or maybe they were—Israel Sack was—came from Europe himself, but he belonged to the older generation of—

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:16:02] Can you recall any of his stories?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, I wish I could. I don't believe I—if I—I'll think about it. If I think of one, I'll let you know. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was entertaining, was he?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, very, always. And he had a good wit. He'd have a story that was apropos and to whatever someone had been saying or someone was talking about somebody else, and, "Oh, do you remember when this and this happened?" And he also spoke with quite a strong accent all the rest of his life, and, um, then there were the Ginsburgs and the Levys. And they were—they, too, came from Europe, and they learned about American antiques, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: There weren't that many major dealers then, were there, at that time?

ALICE WINCHESTER: No. No, there weren't. They were—those were the outstanding ones, and there came to be, of course, a good many American-born ones, though I—they don't come to my memory right now.

ROBERT F. BROWN: David Stockwell or—[inaudible].

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, sure. Yes. Charlie Montgomery.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Montgomery—[inaudible]—pewter, didn't he, for a time?

ALICE WINCHESTER: And—yes, and—oh, then there were ones in Boston.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, I think Sack began in Boston himself.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, he did. That's right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: So the—uh, these were one source of—it was too early to rely on people who had studied formally this field because no one had, I mean—[inaudible]—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. There—that nobody had, yeah, there wasn't any place.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was collectors, dealers, curators—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —who had sort of picked it up on the job as well.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That's true. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And then, there began to be books, and the people who knew a subject and were literate enough would publish a book. [00:18:07] And there got to be a great library, which we had. Mr. Keyes built up the library at *Antiques*, and it was a very choice one. And I managed to get one of my own by the time I became editor, but—but it was building all the time. And, um, the books were—a number of such books were written by the museum people, but then other—many others were by collectors or people—dealers or people who just happened to have an interest and a sort of scholarly approach.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were most of them pretty useful, or were there some that were still rather misleading, rather romanticizing or—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, uh, there were a few that were kind of just romanticizing, but there—from the time that I joined the magazine—before I joined the magazine, Mr. Keyes had built up at least a wall full of good, reliable, informative books about—not only about American antiques but about the whole field and everything, furniture, glass, silver, tin. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, you tossed your hat in the ring in 1950. You published *Primitive Painters in America*—

ALICE WINCHESTER: With Jean Lipman.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —with Jean Lipman.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did that come about? This was your—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, let's see if I remember it straight. Um, Jean had become quite a collector, she and her husband. She was the leader, I think, but her husband took a good interest in it too. [00:20:04] And she—they had become collectors of American painting. It seems to me that she was kind of a pioneer in talking about American primitive painting. I'm not certain that she deserves that credit, but I think she does. At any rate, whether or not she was one of those that really established it as a type and something to study apart from more conventional American painting—at any rate, she soon was known for her collection of American primitive paintings. And she had a good eye, and she knew what she meant by the term and set up her field of collecting for herself, knew just what she was interested in and what she wasn't. In fact, she was a little didactic. And if you didn't happen to agree with her, she could be quite positive. [Laughs.] But, anyway, she did have a good eye and a good understanding and a good memory and all the things it takes to be a good collector—also, a good pocketbook—and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. So how was collaborating with her? Did that go fairly smoothly?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, we—yes, we got along very happily. Now, let's see. Where was this exhibition? We were asked to do it jointly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was in 1950, prim—would it have been the Whitney, possibly?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I don't think it was in the Whitney, but where else would it have been?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why don't you just—

[Audio break.]

ALICE WINCHESTER: [00:22:00] She and I—now, wait a minute. It was at the Whitney.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There was a Whitney exhibition.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That's right. And she had this connection with the Whitney. She—I don't know whether she was on the board or whether it was a formal collection, but, anyway, she was great friends with them and vice versa. And she and I were asked to put on a show of American primitives from private collections—I'm not sure whether they were private—from other collections. And, um, I was getting very much interested in this field, and I had a feeling that there were—it needed clarification and sort of establishing, uh, boundaries of what American primitives were and whether it was a good term and what it really meant and that and so on. And, um, Jean was inclined to go overboard in enthusiasm once in a while, I thought, but she—she knew—she had already been studying this type of thing before I had, and she knew a lot more about it than I did. And, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you mean she attributed more quality to certain things than you felt existed?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think so. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: But, um, that's how it came about, and we did work together on it happily and comfortably. And it came off. We decided together what we wanted to have in the show and asked for these loans. [00:24:00] I don't remember anything about the mechanics of it, which must have been quite a part of it, but probably we both worked at it. She was editor at this time of, um—what was the name of her magazine?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, later she was at *Art in America*. I'm not sure she was there yet, though, but she was an editor as well.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, she was, and I think—I may be mistaken. I think she was already—

ROBERT F. BROWN: At *Art in America*?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah. But anyhow, we—it worked well. We each made a list of the things we thought ought to be included, and then we agreed on that. And then, we asked for loans, and I don't recall that anybody refused one. I guess we mostly went to museums but not exclusively.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did it have quite an impact, the show, the exhibition, and the book?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think so. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I enjoyed doing it very much. Jean, I think, had done something of the kind before, but I—it was the first time I ever had, and I thought it was great fun. And I, um, enjoyed working with the owners, the museums and so on, and—and, uh, altogether it was a very pleasant and successful experience. I think it—my recollection is that it was well received and—I think.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, the following year in '51, your book—your bestseller, *How to Know American Antiques*—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, that's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —how—what was that comprised of? Did it derive from lectures and from things you'd written—[inaudible]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I don't think so. I think it was just out of my—

ROBERT F. BROWN: A separate project?

ALICE WINCHESTER: —experience and the kinds of things that people asked me and the kinds of things I thought they ought to know before they put their money down. [00:26:03] And, um, it—I did—I remembered my own experience. People would ask me questions, of course. "Do you know a good book that'll tell me all I need to know?" And finally, I thought, "Well, look, there is a place for this book, for a book of this—that answers that description. And I think I could do it, because I started from a state of absolute ignorance, and these are the things I should have known." So I wrote it in very elementary terms as I recall it, and, uh, it was a good success and even went into a second edition or something like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So that was very popular and very quickly was popular.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were also, um, by this time in—the end of that decade, in '59, you're editor of, I gather, an anthology of treasury of *Antiques*, articles from *Antiques* or—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes. The *Antiques Treasury*, is that what we called it?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, that's right, *Antiques Treasury of Furniture and Other Decorative Arts*.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That's right. And that was a selection from published issues of the magazine.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you find that, uh, supplemented a great deal what—those you got to by subscriptions? I mean, it went far beyond your usual—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —magazine subscribers.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes, and that was—it was a real success, and it was just, um, articles taken from issues of the magazine.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you pretty much calling all the shots on this sort of thing? I mean, you hadn't a board or anything that—

ALICE WINCHESTER: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: I—we did have the—the magazine was run by a board who were—the members of which were concerned primarily with financial matters. [00:28:04] And, uh, before I would launch on anything like this, I would have discussed it with them and gotten their OK and all, but they were interested and delighted when I made some extra money for the magazine through such efforts. And I was full of enthusiasm and youthful vigor at that time, and, uh, I—well, something like Jean Lipman, I would get one idea after another of the sort of extracurricular activities.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you just kept at them, because then in '63 came your *Living with Antiques*, another—[inaudible]—title.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That was another thing, which—*Living with Antiques* was the title that I used for years about exactly that. It was a never-ending series. I don't know whether it's still going, but throughout my history, in practically every issue of the magazine, we'd have a "Living with Antiques," which would illustrate the private home of some collector or family or whatever, and of all kinds. Some of them were on par with Winterthur, and then there were little farmhouses with cute New England antiques, and then I worked in a lot of things from other parts of the country, too. This went along with my travels and my lectures and that sort of thing, and I—when I went somewhere to lecture, I'd usually be entertained either overnight or at a meal or both in one or more houses in outlying places. I did do a lot of traveling at some—at a certain time there. [00:30:01] I enjoyed it thoroughly, and I felt it was all—well, I was having fun and meeting pleasant people and looking at beautiful things, but it was also—everything I did was promotion for the magazine. And giving a talk, of course, spread people's acquaintance with it and so on, and it was all legitimate and great fun for me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You also, uh—at the time of all this writing and expanding the magazine, you were active on yet other boards. We've mentioned, uh, your role in the antiques forums at Williamsburg and your—we discussed Winterthur. But you were also a charter member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, so—

ALICE WINCHESTER: That's correct. I was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —you came in on that. That would be around 1950 or something on that order.

ALICE WINCHESTER: I guess so. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And how did that come about? Had you [inaudible]—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, I was just fascinated. I heard about it, and I guess I was invited to join or something. I don't know, but it sounded like it was—I don't remember the details, frankly, but the people who were launching it must have been people I knew, and they invited me to join in. And I, of course, could help publicize a new effort of that kind, which we—I considered perfectly proper to do in the magazine, spread the word. And, um, so that's why I would be invited to it, but it was—I really was in touch with a lot of different kinds of approaches to antiques at this time, and things—it was all very exciting and wonderful that so many people were appreciating it, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was that national trust in its beginnings concerned with a few big, grand places, or was it trying to—as it does today, trying to broaden, very, very broadly, the interest in preservation and awareness [inaudible]—

ALICE WINCHESTER: [00:32:14] I think it was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —from the beginning it was—

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think it was from the beginning, um, intended to do just what it's done.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, related to that, you evidently played some role in some capacity with regard to preservation in places like Newport, Rhode Island. Do you recall?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I don't think I exactly participated in any such—I don't think that's what you could say about what I did, but I did—I would try—in order to keep the magazine alive and not let it just go simmering

along in the same rut all the time, I'd try out all kinds of new editorial approaches, and one was a regional issue or one focused on a particular historic town, city, whatever, region. And I'd travel to whatever place it was. Usually, my choice of place would depend on somebody I happened to have met who thought this would be interesting and would be a good local help to me and, uh, introduce me to people that had something to offer, so on and so on. But I—I got an awful lot of fun out of it, naturally. I did a good deal of traveling about and meeting people in different towns and regions, and, um, did you mention Charleston?

ROBERT F. BROWN: No, I hadn't yet, but what about—in Charleston, did you work with local—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, I think we did a Charleston issue. [00:34:01] I'm quite sure we did, and there I—yes, there were plenty of people who were interested, and, sure, they were glad to help. And they could steer me to other people who would help to supply information or places that ought to be illustrated and whatever and whatever, local collectors and people who had developed some kind of reputation in the field. And, of course, all the dealers, whenever there was anything of the kind, they would be very helpful, so all of this was woven together one thing at a time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You—you were in some capacity involved at the White House at some point. Was this when they were going to redesign it or trying to restore it at some point?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I can't remember this very well. I do have a vague recollection of going there and, it seems to me, being shown—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because I know—I believe Mrs. Kennedy brought in a curator of the White House.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That's right, and I think that was when it was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Clement Conger, maybe, or someone of that—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah. I think that's so. I—I don't think I personally made any contribution to the White House, but I think I may have been invited to come to some gathering that—that put emphasis on the antiques in the White House. And there, again, you see, I had a magazine to print things in, and I could publicize that sort of thing, and I think I'm not making this up. I think I published an article about some room or some collection in the White House. I think a certain room or maybe more than one room was being focused on. [00:36:03] And I—that is the way I would have done it, I'm sure, and I think that's the way I did it. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, your involvements with—as a trustee of the New York State Historical Association, uh, did that come about, say, in the '50s or '60s?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, that just came about because—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You became—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, I—probably, the beginning of it was that I was—I think it was Nina Little, probably, who recommended me. I think she was on the board for some time before I was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were they attempting to build up a collection of early New York decorative arts and— [Inaudible.]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, it wasn't so much building the collection that I had anything to do with. It was, uh, concerning events at Cooperstown and publicizing things that they planned and so forth. And, um, they had a summer forum. I don't know—they didn't call it a forum, I think, but they did, and I was asked to come and be one of the speakers, which I did. And then, I think I probably—I also, um, did quite a bit of special issues, with special issues, and my recollection now—or if I'm not making it up—is that we did an issue on Cooperstown, on the museum. And, um, I worked out techniques for treating restoration or a museum like that or a private collection or something, and we did a lot of just publishing what—things that I got acquainted with and thought people ought to know better.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And then, once you got the information and the photographs, you could produce them reasonably easily in the magazine.

ALICE WINCHESTER: [00:38:03] Yes. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: You got to know Louis Jones and his wife Agnes.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes. I knew them well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was the head of the historical association.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was he like? Do you recall?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, he was a great deal of fun. He had a great sense of humor, and he loved to be the center of attention, and he was entertaining. And, um, he also was devoted to his museum and Cooperstown and the New York history and the region and so on and, I thought, did a very good job—what I knew—well, there were all the collections. It was—is a museum where there is a lot to see, uh, but then they had—they were among the ones who first had summer sessions.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And it became a—

ALICE WINCHESTER: What did we call those things?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, summer school or—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Not exactly, but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —institute.

ALICE WINCHESTER: I don't remember. Isn't that funny? But, anyway, it might be—oh, some were just a weekend. Some were a couple of weeks and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or perhaps a workshop or something.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, that sort of thing. And at Cooperstown, I think they had two successive weeks but with different people, I mean, repeating a program. I'm not sure just how they did it, but, anyway, it was one that—oh, it became one of the things that I did every year, every summer. And they would ask me to come and speak, and, um—oh, then, of course, I also was on their board.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. You were also a trustee of Old Sturbridge Village.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah. That was more or less the same kind of thing. The two organizations were not so different. Their focus was entirely different and their personnel, but I enjoyed being on both boards. [00:40:01] And I think—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Sturbridge more personally supported by the Wells brothers? It's a bit different in that sense.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, it was. Yes, that's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible]—state-supported—[inaudible].

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. They had some wealthy pocket in—for Cooperstown, too, it seems to me. I can't think now who, but it was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Clark, something like—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Sure. That's right. That's right. Goodness, I've forgotten a lot more than I can ever tell you.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were also, I guess, formerly an advisor at the Albany Institute of History and Art.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Who was—was that in Norman Rice's long tenure there or as director?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think so. Yeah, I think so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And they had a very old collection, but I guess they wanted advice—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: —on how to, what, interpret it? And this would be—these would be examples where you might showcase some of them—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —in your magazine.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: The Museum of Early American Folk Arts, which was set up in New York, I think, in the '50s or so, you were an advisor to it.

ALICE WINCHESTER: That's right. Yeah. My goodness. How did I have time for all of this stuff? [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about on the other hand? These are all mostly concerned with earlier things. What about something like the American—America House, which later became the Museum of American Crafts? Mrs. Webb's, Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb's [inaudible], were you—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, not Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb, the other one.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Aileen Osborn Webb. Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah. Oh, I was devoted to her. I thought she was just a charming person, and I felt pleased and honored to be a friend of hers. And I thought that, well, she was a very warm-hearted person and outgoing and, um, had this passion for American antiques. [00:42:07] And I think she had a very good eye and trained herself pretty much to know what she wanted and to know what was worth collecting. And, um, I don't remember how we happened to meet, exactly, but she would be around at various places where I would be around, and then she invited me to come up for a weekend.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Now, you're speaking of Shelburne, now, Vermont.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb. Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: No, not Vanderbilt.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No. Well—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: So visits at Shelburne, were they—was this before it was opened as a museum?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, but I—she already had it full of antiques and just her own collection. She had been having a wonderful time for years collecting the things that particularly appealed to her, things related to Vermont, which she adored. And, uh, she—well, at first, I don't think she had any special designs on me or I on her, but I was pleased to be invited to come and see the collection and, of course, immediately wanted to publish it. And she agreed, and little by little we got to be very good friends. And I did publish maybe more than one article about it. I don't remember exactly how I treated it, but it got publicity, which it well deserved, I thought. And, um, I—oh, she'd have wonderful weekend parties, house parties, and, uh, I got well acquainted with a lot of colorful people like—well, she herself was one. [00:44:11] And, um, Catherine Murphy [ph], I'd met her under other conditions, too, but I think she got to be a pretty good friend of Electra's.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And Catherine Murphy was—

ALICE WINCHESTER: She lived in New York City, and she collected—what did she collect? She had an apartment in New York, and she had a house in Connecticut and filled them both with antiques. And, uh, she was a very colorful person and kind of a dominating personality and would seize the conversation in any group and that kind of thing. And, um, I—maybe I shouldn't say this, but I had the feeling that she didn't really know as much about her antiques as she thought she did. And she could be very decided and positive in what she said, but you sort of viewed with alarm. But, um, she was good fun and a very warm-hearted hostess, and she—there was a whole—there was—there got to be a whole little group that felt—we felt we were a group, um, and I was included in it, but the others were mostly collectors. And Electra was one, and Catherine Murphy was one, and, oh, who was the, um—[00:46:00]

[END OF SIDE B.]

This is tape number three.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[00:00:00] Danbury, Connecticut, and this is June 29th, 1995. We were talking our last time of the various collectors of antiques and folk art with whom you became friendly, I suppose, beginning in the 1940s or so, right? You talked about Electra Havemeyer Webb and Catherine Murphy and some of the others that you may have gotten to know more or less well. Maybe we could speak a bit about some—about them.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Well, I, uh—I was naturally very much interested in, uh, collectors as people and what made them collect and how did they go about it and was there any particular, uh, genus, *Collector*, and I found them very good company. I enjoyed them, of course, and I was interested in what they were interested in and anxious to find out, uh, how they went about it and whether most people had followed a similar routine or whether they—each one was highly individualistic or what. And they were all very good company to me at the time. I was still, well, always anxious to develop my own knowledge of antiques further and, uh, discover how collectors went about it and, uh, whether they developed into more of a type or whether they became more individualistic. And actually, they—all these things happened, it seemed to me. [00:02:02] Of course, there were types of collectors, and, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: By that, you mean what, ones who were very methodical as opposed to—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, what do I mean? [Laughs.] Yes, um, there were people—collectors developed a certain scorn for people who didn't have—didn't share their interests. And, uh, yet the—they were—I decided that the ones that I met and got acquainted with were really rather individualistic. They didn't try to follow a pattern. Perhaps you could define the pattern of the collector, but they—they were individual, and they were interesting, and they were—they—having set about a certain subject or a certain period or a certain type of antiques, they stuck to that and, uh, developed their own knowledge of the subject and of the whole subject as well as any specific individual objects that they acquired.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And where would they have derived that knowledge, say, in the 1940s or so?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, various places. There were a lot of them by that time, and they learned from each other. And, uh, learning about the antiques involved knowing something of the historical background of the period they were interested in. [00:04:07] And that, of course, uh, historical—books have been written about periods, which were available to them. [Laughs.] And, um, a good—some of the most interesting collectors were the ones who had to do their own spade work, and they—that meant learning the character of the period they were interested in. And the type of, um—just what the antiques they were interested in were made for, why they had to be developed and invented or whatever, depending on whatever it was, and, um—I think that the most—the people, the collectors that I found most interesting and became best acquainted with were people who did, uh, sense the whole historical background of whatever it was they were collecting. They didn't just want pretty little objects. They wanted to know why and how and when, how—over how long a period these things that had caught their fancy were produced. So that involved a rather complex back—historical background, and it, uh—oh, they didn't all become learned about any particular period, but many of them did have a broad enough vision to see whatever their particular hobby was against a suitable and, um, revealing historical background. [00:06:13] Well, where they got all this is, uh—I don't really know. I mean, there are books about periods. There are books written in earlier periods, which helped to define it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were some of them possibly historians by early training, or that would have been—would be the exception?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, I don't, uh—I don't think that the ones I got best acquainted with were. I think—I may be generalizing too much, but I think—as I look back now and try to think—bring to mind, uh, the collectors that I knew the best, I think their fancy was caught by some charming little object, and they thought how and where and why and when. And then, they wanted to know the object—they wanted to see the object in its original setting and why was it made and who were the people that made it and first owned it and so on and so on, which was another way of saying that they needed the historical background, and they went after it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Perhaps you could talk about a few of the people with whom you became best acquainted who were examples of this individualistic collector.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Well, the, uh—let's see. I think—oh, I don't know. [00:08:00] You've been naming several of the ones that were the ones that I found most interesting and got best acquainted with and so on, and I don't know that they—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, Henry du Pont.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Henry du Pont, of course, was everybody's ideal. That is, he was recognized as a very intelligent and thoroughgoing collector. He was not trained in any his—direction of history as far as I know, but he began developing his own taste for, uh, the early American furniture and decorative arts of, uh, high quality and high artistry. And, um, he educated himself in the field, and he found out where to—where to get the information, and he acquired it. And, um, I discovered as I got better acquainted with him that his—he had a very, uh, far-reaching historical background in his head, and, uh, meaning by that—or what he discovered about the American antiques that so caught his fancy was that they, um—in order to fully appreciate them, you had to know, of course, something about the development of this country and social growth, development, and where did the American ideas come from. [00:10:00] And, of course, they all really were dependent on, um, European

—developed from that. Oh, there were, of course—the American collectors had a great self-confidence and a sort of snobbishness about preferring American things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, really?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Uh-huh [affirmative]. And, uh, they—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible]—chauvinistic—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, almost.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —[inaudible]—and rarity.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, rarity especially. Um, I think they didn't kid themselves that American antiques as such were finer than English or French or whatever. They knew that the European ones were really, uh, more seasoned. [Laughs.] But the American antiques had a quality which you could always recognize and which you knew was really better than anything made elsewhere.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, you—[inaudible]—that word "seasoned," do you mean they felt that European art was very knowing or very highly skilled?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think so. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: There was some kind of quality in the American which they preferred.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They said they preferred.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah. As I think of it now and try to express it, it sounds kind of silly because, of course, everybody knows that American things were descended from European and inspired by them. And why should we claim that they were any better in any way? [00:12:00] And, um, it's just—it was a matter of nation—national pride, I think, and effort to distinguish—to set up a character for American work that would distinguish it from European and make it, uh, plausible to be so interested in it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did Henry du Pont talk—when you were around, did you talk about antiques? Was he an enthusiast at all—[inaudible]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, he—well, in my acquaintance with him, we mostly talked about antiques because I, of course, was—I would pump him and try to find out about him and how he got into it and how he learned as much as he did and all of that and how did he learn to distinguish American from other—from European, all that. I would, uh, try to get him to talk about antiques, and he did very readily, but he wasn't, um—I mean, he talked about them more readily than almost anything else. He wasn't exactly a sociable kind of person, and he, uh—if you wanted to pursue a subject, you had to pursue it with him. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALICE WINCHESTER: But, um, he was very—always very friendly to me, and I, uh—oh, of course he was a figure apart from everybody else. "Oh, Harry du Pont." People would be just so impressed if you knew him, if you'd seen his collection and all that kind of thing. And, um, he—he had a reputation that must have been kind of hard to live up to, I think, now, looking back on it. [00:14:03] [Laughs.] But, um, he was simple and straightforward in his approach to the subject, and he just happened to like American things better than any others, and he developed a—acquired a really very distinguished collection and with—backed up by really sound research and first of all, and all the way through, a great eye and a way of learning about antiques. I think he was a very honest collector and didn't kid himself that things were better than they were. But he knew what he liked, and he stuck to that, by George, and, um, made it something of a model or made his own collection, I mean, something of a model, very decidedly, for lots of other collectors.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You, um—at one point, it was said that you were—helped, in a sense, to plan what became—as his collection was transformed from a private one into a museum and the study program.

ALICE WINCHESTER: I said that?

ROBERT F. BROWN: No, but when—for example, you were given an award at Smith College, your alma mater, in 1968, and you were cited among other things as, so to speak, a planner of the Winterthur Museum of Henry du Pont.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, that's giving me some credit that I think I don't really deserve. I don't think I had any influence there. I was, um—Harry became a personal friend. We got along well together, and I enjoyed his company, and he seemed to enjoy mine. But we always talked antiques, and, um, I don't think I gave him any thoughts or ideas that he hadn't had first. [Laughs.] [00:16:11]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, then, I could ask—did he ever talk to you about turn—making this accessible to the public, making his great collection?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, he did. He would tell me his plans. I don't have any feeling that he asked any advice or that I offered any, but he did talk to me about what he—oh, we talked quite a lot. I managed to draw him out, intentionally, on how he came into collecting and how it became such a passion with him and, um, how he went about it and what his plans for the eventual preservation of his collection was and so on. He would talk to me about that and ask me for suggestions if I had any, but I don't think I had the nerve. [Laughs.] He had it all very well thought out. He knew what he was doing, and he was doing it efficiently and in a way that seemed to me entirely right and proper. He had a certain, um—he set his limits. He didn't just pick up anything American. He wanted it to be—mean something as a collection, which indeed it does, and it's coherent, and it's very revealing, I think, of the kind of craftsmanship and taste of early Americans. And that was what he wanted to do. [00:18:00] It's a wonderful collection. It's marvelous that there is as much of the—that early work preserved in one place and shown in appropriate settings and all that kind of thing. I think he had—well, he had, of course, a great eye and a great personal taste, uh, recognizing distinctions between objects and all that kind of thing. Um, and I don't think he kidded himself. I think that he didn't get too romantic about the olden times and the way he—the way it would seem now that it would have been nice for people to live. I think he accepted what he learned and believed it and didn't try to dress it up.

ROBERT F. BROWN: After all, it's in a structure that's essentially French.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, absolutely. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Um, folk art, he has a fairly distinguished collection, at least, of Pennsylvania German folk art. Was this in place by the time you first knew him because I know of your own interest at least in the magazine in publicizing the study and collecting of folk art? Do you recall with respect to Henry du Pont any comment on his part?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, let's see whether I do. Um, I—I always think of him myself, and I think probably most people do, as a collector of fine, refined things, not so much folk art. [00:20:02] And, um, I think they—that was his first love. I'm not sure. I'm—I shouldn't try to pass any judgment on him or even comment on his manner of doing things, um, but I think it possible that he intentionally developed an interest in folk art because he felt that it was a distinctively American expression, and it was the expression of early craftsmanship, which he wanted to be able to represent in his collection. I think his own taste was for the fine and the refined and the exquisite, but he made a very thorough study of what was the development of American taste and craftsmanship. And he wanted his collection to be balanced, so that's why he included it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There was—you always had the feeling from him that he wanted it to be a rather comprehensive collection.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: And he got it pretty well.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah. Yeah, I think so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You—were there other figures that he perhaps directly influenced, family, people of that sort?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, many. Yes, I think so. I'm not sure that I remember now as many names of people as I once knew. [00:22:02] But, um—well, everybody—it got to the point where everybody said, "Well, of course, Harry du Pont knows everything. He has everything in his collection." He was it, and everybody, I think—I can't remember anybody who said, "Oh, well, his collection isn't very important anyway," or anything of that kind. He was recognized as having mapped out his, um, intentions. What he really wanted was to make the finest collection of American—early American furniture and, that is, a collection that would represent the finest taste of Americans' ancestors. That's what he was doing. And, um, I think he stuck to it, and I think that it's pretty well accepted as such.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, at that time, there was also the growing American Wing, for example, at the Metropolitan Museum.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you suppose it ever occurred to him or perhaps to you, "Why is this man developing this separate entity?" or, "Why are some other collectors developing these large-scale collections?" Why not enhance the riches of, say, the Met or the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which had—and several other art museums? It probably never—

ALICE WINCHESTER: I don't think—I don't know. I never heard anybody raise that question or approach it that way, and I don't think so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: He was obviously so wrapped up in it and so honest and straightforward about what he was trying to do that I think people just accepted it and thought, well, wasn't it nice that he decided to use all his money that way. [00:24:06]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And he was pretty committed. I mean, he did use a lot of his money on—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes, indeed. He did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —that's right.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, indeed. He did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Other collectors of that time or even more recently that you got to know pretty well, did you know Mr. and Mrs. Henry Flint [ph]?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, I got to know them pretty well, and, um, they, too, were—they were very anxious to do something worthwhile, not just have the fun of collecting something that they liked, but they wanted it to be representative of whatever it was, which was another aspect of American craftsmanship, I think. And, well, there was—I think most of these collectors also thought of what it was really like to live in earlier times and what was there available to live with and so on and what would they like to see changed to suit their own tastes and so forth. And that was what they were doing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So there were two things, they wanted to evoke what it was like to live in earlier times, but they also—and sometimes, perhaps, they were a little in conflict—they wanted things that appealed to their own taste.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because I know it's often said with various period rooms that they're over-furnished.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, whether in fact that's the case with more and more research into documents, I don't know, but—

ALICE WINCHESTER: I don't know either.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —do you suppose that was a—

ALICE WINCHESTER: It may well be that by another generation the whole lineup will be different and people will deplore the fact that there aren't a lot more, uh, country furniture collections and that kind of thing. [00:26:06] I don't know. Actually, I think that the whole American scene of the first couple of hundred years has been pretty thoroughly studied, don't you? And, um, people who like the simple and the country type of thing and so on have—can find plenty of things to suit their taste, and it isn't all a matter of exquisite carving and design and all of that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No. You were—other authorities at that time, I mean, you were—certainly had a bully pulpit. You have to agree, but other authorities at that time, were you chummy with some of them? I mean, you've mentioned several names like James Thomas Flexner, who, of course, mainly wrote about painting, but Marshall Davidson, I think, is a name you've mentioned.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Marshall and his wife, Petey [ph]—what was her real name? She was always called Petey Davidson. They were just about my dearest friends. I loved them both very much, and we were very congenial, and we had similar interests. We had great fun together, and, um, we traveled together. I went to Europe with them a time or two, maybe, and, uh, just considered them the people I liked to be with. And I was very fond of them both, and I think they reciprocated my appreciation. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what was it in his—of his interests and his writings and all that bonded you?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, he was so sensible, and he—he was very thorough in his approach. [00:28:07] And, uh—but he was unassuming, and yet he didn't get carried away by, oh, some of the kind of foolish, vogue-ish things that some collectors were—he was a great student, and he knew an awful lot about the historical background of our period and, um, was very honest in his research and all that kind of thing. And he had a good mind to start with, and Petey, too, his wife was—they were quite ideal in their common interests. They had balanced each other out beautifully, and, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was her—what were her interests or her—what was her thrust?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, they were both very much interested in what turned up in the American Wing, for example. And, uh, I mean, for specific objects and things that they liked to live with and all that kind of thing, they had a great taste for the period that is generally accepted as the best. Um, but I don't think that they cared particularly about who made this and in what year and that kind of thing, but they had an appreciation of the development of taste in this country and where did it come from and what were the influences. [00:30:04] And that's one reason they loved to go to Europe. And they—they weren't pedantic at all, but they were very scholarly. There is a difference. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about someone like Joseph Downs who was active with the American Wing and then du Pont, developing Winterthur as a museum, at least? Did you know him somewhat?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Oh, yes, I knew him for a good many years, um, not as intimately as I knew the Davidsons, but we were good friends. And I felt free to discuss things with him and get his point of view and, uh, consult him. I—he was a real expert, of course, and, uh, I was very happy to be able to get his advice and opinion now and then. And, um, he wasn't—he was, oh, kind of in—I started to say "ingrown," which isn't a fair word to use for him, but he—he was not very outgoing, nevertheless. But he could be very friendly and very helpful and was very generous with his information, and, uh, we got to be very good friends.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you would be touching base with a person like that when you wanted to assess something you were thinking of publishing or including in—in the magazine or—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, quite often.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —not always?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I, of course, in time got to depend on my own judgment a good deal, which fortunately seemed to work out all right. But, um, when I was—when I did need advice and—or another opinion or even, for instance, "Is this colle—what is this collector trying to do? Is he on the wrong track, or is he not?" and that sort of thing, I would not hesitate to discuss that kind of thing with the Davidsons or, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Joe Downs.

ALICE WINCHESTER: —Joe.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: And, um, they would be very helpful.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were there others? I mean, for example, Charles Montgomery, was he someone—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah, he was a close friend of mine. His, uh, field of specializing was different, but he was also terribly nice. They were all very kind and helpful and, um, anxious to see things develop in the right direction, and we were—quite a bunch of us who were kind of discovering, we did—not really discovering, but working out ways to bring the importance of American antiques to people's attention and without doing any harm to the antiques themselves. And that was all very congenial and very nice.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had a sense you were sort of in on the ground floor. I mean, these were marvelously almost pioneering days.

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, they were, and that was the excitement of it. [00:34:01] It was really terrific, and

people would make a discovery, and, "Oh, isn't that marvelous?" and so on.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. You had not only these friendships but other, I suppose, responsibilities beyond the magazine. For example, you served on editorial boards, *Art in America*. You were with them for—

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —a number of years, I think, about 18 years. How did you come to be on its board, through your known interests or certain friendships?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, I don't remember exactly. We, uh—I would—there would be various kinds of events at which we would meet people of kindred interests and, uh, an exhibition opening at the Met or something, or maybe some kind of a gathering for—and there came to be a real gang of people who are all interested in the same thing and all very congenial and, uh, anxious to share their information and their enthusiasm. And there was quite a num—there were a number that I felt were personal friends of mine. We didn't always talk antiques when we got together. We had plenty of other interests and liked the same kinds of things and so on, and I know that they all felt pretty much the same way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, with *Art in America*, would the figure at that time have been Jean Lipman? Was she the—

ALICE WINCHESTER: She was the editor.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —editor for some time? You shared a common interest in, uh, folk art, right?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes. [00:36:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your book beginning in, say, 1950 with your *Primitive Painters* book, which is done with her, I believe—[inaudible].

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yes, that's right. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: As you look back, what would you say each—the contribution of each was? I mean, did you sort of divvy up the research and the presentation?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Well, each of us—I don't know. Each of us was looking for something—I mean, we weren't all after the same information, exactly, or we were after the same information but we used it in different ways. I, of course, was providing information for the magazine, um, and encouraging people when they had an interest in something to write it down, get it in print, and, um, Marshall Davidson would be working on an exhibition of the actual objects and that kind of thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Marshall Davidson?

ALICE WINCHESTER: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: At the Met or elsewhere?

ALICE WINCHESTER: At the Met.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

ALICE WINCHESTER: So I would get after him to write it down, but his approach to it was different from mine. I mean, he had to use it in different ways—a different way. I don't know. It all worked out very happily. We were one great, big, happy family, [laughs] and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did it happen that you and Jean Lipman did the book, *Primitive Painters*? How did that come about?

ALICE WINCHESTER: I think she asked me if I would. I think that—I really don't remember awfully well. I shouldn't try to say anything much about it because, um, I don't remember well enough, but, um, she—she was the one who asked me. She'd gotten interested, and she had a lot of information, but she wanted me to help her shape it up and make a book of it. [00:38:08] So that's what I did. I'm realizing that—

[END OF INTERVIEW.]