

Buckhead Heritage Society

Oral History Project

Interview with Henry L. Howell

March 9, 2014

Interviewers: James Ottley, Chad Wright, and Dick Hall

OTTLEY: This interview is with Henry L. Howell at his home at 2492 Habersham Road on March 9, 2014, here in Atlanta, Georgia. The interview is being conducted by James Ottley, Chad Wright, and Dick Hall of Buckhead Heritage Society. We'll begin now, if you're ready.

HENRY HOWELL: I am indeed.

OTTLEY: Great. Thanks so much for agreeing to be interviewed. We really appreciate it. We'll go ahead and kind of start off with the basics, here, start from the beginning, so to speak, so if you'll, you know, state your name and tell us when and where you were born.

HOWELL: I'm Henry Howell. I was born on Peachtree Battle Avenue in 1938, February. Well, I guess I was technically born at Emory University Hospital in 1938.

OTTLEY: What was your first childhood memory of Buckhead?

HOWELL: Well, when we talk today, what are we talking about when we say "Buckhead"?

OTTLEY: Well, I think that anywhere in the general vicinity probably counts.

HOWELL: So, the current definition of Buckhead, not the definition when I was growing up, which was exactly the crossroads of West Paces Ferry, East Paces Ferry, Roswell, and Peachtree. Because I would never have said I was from Buckhead. I would always have said I was from Atlanta, as soon as I learned how to say where I was from. And Buckhead was a very specific, quite small geographic place.

OTTLEY: Well, thanks for making that distinction. Okay, what was your first memory of Atlanta, or your neighborhood where you grew up?

HOWELL: I grew up at the corner of Arden Road and Peachtree Battle. And that was, it wasn't country. Oldfield had already been developed. All of that at one point had been Howell land, and I grew up downhill from my cousin Barrett Howell and the Clark Howell family. So we had a fair bit of land surrounding us. And my memories were that it was a wonderful, wooded place. Had a lot of friends, children were growing up on Oldfield and Woodward Way, and we would play soldier in the woods. We had a fort up in the woods, and it was quite astounding. A little bit further along, on a house that Arthur Montgomery built, at a location he built on Peachtree Battle, there was a sort of cliff over Peachtree Battle at that point, this big curve and the creek is on the other side, and we thought those were breastworks. They may or may not have been breastworks on top of that cliff.

OTTLEY: Where exactly was that again? I'm trying to follow.

HOWELL: If we're going west on Peachtree Battle past where Woodward Way dead-ends into Peachtree Battle, at the curve, there's a sharp curve in Peachtree Battle with a cliff that now has a rather elaborate house on top of it. But in those days that was just part of Barrett Howell's property, or the Clark Howell property. And we would go up there and think we were playing soldiers. And I guess at that point we would have been Union soldiers probably, but we didn't know that. And every now and then we would throw mud clods down at a car. And now and then somebody would stop and charge the hill. We would scatter.

OTTLEY: Great. Did you ever find any artifacts up there?

HOWELL: No artifacts, no.

OTTLEY: You had mentioned earlier a little bit about horseback riding in the area. Was that something that you did as a child or teenager?

HOWELL: I knew an Englishman once who said, "A horse is the only animal in the world that is dangerous at both ends and uncomfortable in the middle." So I didn't, I never did any horseback riding. In fact, I, like so many of my friends, went to Fritz Orr Camp-club-school, and fell off a pony early on. And they couldn't get me back on! So I'm afraid I've never done any horseback riding. But certainly walked all over that area.

OTTLEY: I gotcha. You mentioned Barrett, I don't want to go too far into that, but was there considerable horseback, folks doing horseback riding in Buckhead, in and around Buckhead at that time?

HOWELL: Not by the time I came along, no. I think Barrett may still have had a horse at the house at that point, but I'm not sure.

OTTLEY: Can you give us kind of the general boundaries that you remember then of the Howell land, and maybe describe those boundaries?

HOWELL: You're talking about the then extant still in the Howell property or in possession of the Howells?

OTTLEY: I guess...

HOWELL: Pretty much everything on the west side of Arden Road between Peachtree Battle and West Wesley and going over almost to a stream that goes down from West Wesley to Peachtree Battle, nearly all of that was what remained of what had originally been four thousand acres of Howell property.

OTTLEY: Okay. And can you talk a little bit about your ancestors and some of these pioneer folks in the area, family members in the area?

HOWELL: Well . . .

OTTLEY: The family history, if you will.

HOWELL: The family history. Apparently, Judge Clark Howell, as he was called, came down into the city of Atlanta from his father's place up in the area of Duluth or Warsaw, Georgia, which was apparently at that time called Howell's Crossroads. Or Howell's Crossing. And staked out—I don't know whether he first came to the city, that was in 1854—but he had by then acquired a saw mill on the banks of Peachtree Creek, famous Wilbur Kurtz painting of it. And that was, that's the site of today's Peachtree Battle Circle immediately west of Howell Mill. But the land extended all the way to the Chattahoochee. And there was a second saw mill, pretty much where West Wesley crosses Nancy Creek, which I never realized until fairly recently, and which kept showing up on federal maps, Civil War maps.

OTTLEY: Was it also called Howell's Mill?

HOWELL: Hmm-hmm, yeah. There are several sketches of that.

OTTLEY: Is that the mill that was built after the first one was burnt down, or were they both in operation at the same time?

HOWELL: Both operating at the same time, and I—when you say the first one was burned down, was a Howell Mill burned?

OTTLEY: That was my understanding, recollection from Garrett's account, was that the first one I guess was destroyed by fire or something, and that he built a subsequent one around the Fritz Orr Camp, which must be the one that you're referring to.

HOWELL: Then that has to—no, that would have been that one, and I, as I say, never was aware of it, but I always knew the one on Peachtree Creek. And the one on Peachtree Creek was not burned. The family story—by Sherman, who frequently would burn anything that aided the war effort—and supposedly the miller indicated that it was owned by a Mason, although he was not a mason. And so it was not burned when Sherman came through the area.

OTTLEY: It was threatened at least, it sounds like.

HOWELL: It was threatened, but not burned. And there's a, Franklin Garrett's last trip, last train trip included a visit to the Yale library, and he flushed out, as only Franklin could, an ad from the newspaper in 1865, in the fall of 1865, saying that Clark Howell is prepared to grind corn at his mill on Peachtree Creek. The other legend, and this comes from either my Aunt Rosalie or my Aunt Adelaide, both of whom were Evan and Howell's brothers, the legend was that the, well, A, "Peachtree Creek ran red with blood." Well, I think that's not the first time we've heard that about any creek in any significant battlefield. But what they also said was that the produce of the mill on Howell Mill Road went downtown on mule wagon, and it never got more than a couple of miles down Howell Mill toward town when it was bought by people coming out, rebuilding Atlanta. They never, ever had to carry it all the way downtown. Whoever they saddled up, they would just take that away right then and there. But the mill on Nancy Creek, that we think used to be Fritz Orr property, interestingly, that's what Evan and his wife, when Evan Howell came back from the war, they set up to operate that mill. And all that produce went to the Marietta National Cemetery to bury Union troops. So they had very good cash flow very early on from the two mills. And the other legend is that the miller who sold Judge Clark the mill on Howell Mill, said, "And you're gonna need a lot of timber, so we'll make you a real deal on this stuff." And that's how they wound up with this enormous amount of land that they cut off. And sure enough,

in the, I guess it was the tornado of '74, the first tornado, you could count the tree rings, and you'd see that the trees that blew over then were just about a hundred years old. Probably been cut right after the war.

OTTLEY: What about any relatives of Clark Howell's that fought in the Civil War?

HOWELL: Well, his son Evan is the, probably the best one known, best known one, and the only one I know much about. He also had a brother, Albert Howell, who was in the Georgia militia and who fought at the Battle of Atlanta. But as far as I know, nowhere else. But Evan first enlisted in Hawkinsville, not Hawkinsville, but Sandersville, with a cousin, Robert Martin, and served in the infantry with Jackson as a lieutenant in 1861. Mustered out and joined the, I forget what Martin's battery was called, but it became Howell's Battery, and he fought throughout, starting really in Mississippi, came through, went to Jackson, and that was the first action they had. Came back, was at Chickamauga, was at Lookout Mountain, was at Missionary Ridge, the Battle of Atlanta campaign, and was famously somewhere at the Battle of Peachtree Creek. Somewhere being yet to be determined. And Bob Jenkins' book I think deals with that. Famously there's a sign, and I don't know if you all have run into the book called *About the Proposal for an Atlanta Military Park*, which was basically to be the Peachtree Creek battlefield.

OTTLEY: No, but I have heard of that.

HOWELL: Jenkins flushed it out that it was one of the typical Atlanta booster things. It was done in 1899, and there's a picture of Deerland, which was the estate, the Spalding estate, out there on Peachtree Road, which looked like a country road. Had a telegraph line, couldn't have been a power line, just one measly pole with a couple of lines strung on it. And a sign underneath it, "Site of Evan Howell's Battery." Well, Evan Howell's Battery couldn't have been there the day of the Battle of Peachtree Creek, because the Feds were there and they were entrenched and they had two batteries there. But there is still, if you look at the sign for the medical building, the Sheffield Building, right underneath that is this little plaque saying, "This is the site of Evan Howell's Battery, the Battle of Peachtree Creek." Not so. I remember seeing a sign, and whether it was the same one, I don't know, right at the city limits sign, back when that was in front of the Toddle House across from Palisades before the annexation. And that's much more likely. I think that Bob Jenkins in his book probably correctly places it on Old Montgomery Ferry Road, somewhere about 28th Street today, and just about where my bride Margaret Raines Talmadge, lived.

OTTLEY: You made a note or two about some famous or infamous relatives. I can't read the names. Did you cover some of those already just now?

HOWELL: Yes. Evan Howell was arguably the most famous. He went on ultimately to become mayor of Atlanta and in his final years bought controlling interest in the *Constitution*.

OTTLEY: When would that have been, purchasing the controlling interest in the *Constitution*?

HOWELL: The 1870s, and I have to believe that it was cash flow from the things that gave him, I think it was \$20,000, that he was able to buy the paper.

OTTLEY: Was it his ownership, was he the owner at the time that it was sold to, was it Cox?

HOWELL: Yes. Barrett's father, Clark, had the principal ownership, and the rest of the family had some holdings.

OTTLEY: You'd been holding it for a number of years. I think that was in the '20s or '30s?

HOWELL: No, that was in the '60s I believe. [aside] Do you think you know? I think that was early '60s. Again, my opinion only. If Barrett had taken the paper from his father it would have been a magnificent paper. Barrett is a very civic minded kind of guy, but I think his father—Barrett was young, maybe hadn't shown that he was quite the leader that he really is. And Clark decided—and they were deeply in debt. They had just built the new building which my father had designed, actually, and went deeply in debt to do that, get new presses.

OTTLEY: Give us the address of, approximate?

HOWELL: Forsyth Street almost across from old Rich's downtown. And the Constitution building was in a corner of what became the entire Rich's block. The Constitution building, this Victorian building, which survived right into the 1950s, before they built the new building, which remains there today, unoccupied, but quite handsome in my view.

HALL: Could we stick with Evan Howell just a bit and complete that story of the battery, the famous story that he's firing on his own family property?

HOWELL: Right. Which probably is a bit of an exaggeration, because he probably wasn't firing in that direction. He was probably firing due west. There's the story of Evan Howell, the adjutant of the 33rd New Jersey regiment was down, like so many northerners, visiting the battlefield, and Evan Howell was taking people around as he loved to do. And the adjutant said, "Somebody basically was giving me absolute hell over here on this hill," in Collier Hills. And Evan said, "That was me. That was my battery." And the man said, "I take your hand and salute you. I understand what you did and I'm proud you're a fellow American." A very touching story.

OTTLEY: Moving on slightly, what did your family do together in Buckhead?

HOWELL: Now, we're back in Buckhead. In Buckhead, as a child, I went with some frequency to Wender & Roberts with my mother, who loved nothing more than to go to the counter, despite my mother being a rather elegant person. She loved to sit at the counter and have a grilled cheese sandwich and a milkshake. A real milkshake. And, of course, Wender & Roberts had a world-class selection of comics to browse through. And the other place I loved to go was King Hardware, which was down the street. And the strange thing was, in that one block of Peachtree between Paces Ferry and, is it Buckhead Avenue? The next one south, that single block had two very good drugstores, Maxwell & Hitchcock and Wender & Roberts. And two very good hardware stores, Buckhead Hardware and King Hardware. That's sort of intense competition. I believe I remember on, I think Buckhead Avenue, a feed store. I think there was a genuine feed store, the kind you would feed significant animals, which maybe leads off, not exactly where you were heading [chuckle] but I did need to get it in, we grew up as I said in a somewhat rural setting, or heavily wooded at any rate. And the war came along. Rationing came along. We had a really wonderful colored couple, Georgia and Melvin Holloman. And Melvin could do anything. Melvin said, "Mrs. Howell, tell you what. I can get you some hogs and a cow and some chickens." And my mother was a great gardener, and she knew that she could plant. And basically we became remarkably, if not self-sufficient. . . We had a cow, a calf. We had pigs, and

we had chickens, and we had lots of green beans, which I really hated to shell. Asparagus, lima beans.

OTTLEY: Sounds like a pretty big operation for a residential . . .

HOWELL: They had a set of terraces, that she had thought would be growing flowers, but in fact they turned into growing things to eat.

OTTLEY: Is that house still there?

HOWELL: The house is still there.

OTTLEY: And refresh, I'm sorry, approximately what was the address again?

HOWELL: The corner of Peachtree Battle and Arden. Unless you're looking for it you don't know it's there. You don't know what else was there. But it really was remarkable. And as a result I saw a little bit about what it's like producing food. Invariably the pigs got loose, on the weekend, when there was no help around. And we routinely used to go over to my Aunt Carol's for a very elegant Sunday lunch. So we were all dressed for lunch. And the pig would get out. We'd get a call from somebody down on Oldfield typically. "There's a hog rooting in my shrubs down here." We would traipse down there with a slop bucket. "Here, sooie. Here, sooie." The other vignette in that, the cow occasionally got loose. And sure enough, one Sunday the cow was loose, standing in the middle of Northside Drive, three-lane at that point, still three-lane. Standing down a Greyhound bus heading from Chicago to Atlanta. There was this cow face to face, right at Peachtree Battle and Northside.

OTTLEY: That is too much.

HOWELL: Fun times.

OTTLEY: Describe a typical Christmas or Thanksgiving or other holiday.

HOWELL: No particularly special things. Always had a big Christmas tree in the hall that all too often fell over. And since it was a marble hall it broke all the ornaments. And my mother was not a great fan of Christmas decorations anyway, so this just confirmed that. But my father said, "No, we've got to have it." Santa Claus was very real until it became not very real. And I was an only child.

OTTLEY: What schools did you attend?

HOWELL: Went to E. Rivers until E. Rivers famously burned, where, I don't think there was a child of my acquaintance anywhere in northwest Atlanta, which certainly included Buckhead, that was not present at that fire. Even though that was not physically possible! But everybody remembers that fire, and all of us were overjoyed with the great excitement. But it was a really amazing thing. And you all are probably all too young to remember it, but E. Rivers had these tubular fire escapes. These enormous, probably five feet in diameter, that you would just slide down. Well, damn it! The school burns down and nobody's in the school, and nobody got to ever slide down the slides. And unfortunately for me, actually very fortunately for me, I was in the Morris Brandon district. And Morris Brandon had opened the year that E. Rivers burned down, 1948. And my father had been the architect, and I had walked over there because I always

walked to school, and I walked over with him as it was being built. Somewhere I've got a picture of walking around on the forms that were forming up the first floor. So it was fun. Present at the creation. So I did the fourth through the seventh grade there. Wonderful teachers. And then was sent, to be sent off to Episcopal, but Westminster, Bill Pressley came down. I'm not sure how Lovett got started, but, the new Lovett, but Bill Pressley came down to see if he could recruit any interest in a high school that had an academic emphasis in Atlanta.

OTTLEY: Where did he hail from?

HOWELL: He came down from McCallie School. He was married to Alice McCallie. And so there were the two McCallie brothers and Bill Pressley all being three sort of headmasters in the same school. And I think Bill Pressley was famously ready to see if he could go somewhere else. And Vernon Broyles invited him down and at a later date we had Bill for lunch and just asked him to reminisce. Somebody asked him, I think Faye Pierce asked Bill Pressley, "What did it take to get into Westminster that first year." "You had to have read the ad in the paper. You had to have come to the initial meeting, and you had to have had three hundred dollars." That was our tuition the first year. And there were twenty-one of us who showed up to be the boys in the North Avenue Presbyterian School for Girls. So.

OTTLEY: How many were in the first class you said?

HOWELL: Twenty-one. Twenty-one boys. And then we were just melded into the North Avenue Presbyterian School for Girls, which was over on Ponce de Leon. And the second year we spent time in the education building of the North Avenue Presbyterian Church. And in the middle of that year they finally got the first building completed at the new campus.

OTTLEY: What was it like going to that new campus, when it was just being, just been built?

HOWELL: Oh, it was incredible. Just incredible. A, you got there by driving across the expressway, I-75, that was just being built. So, off Howell Mill, the entrance at that time was, it was only later that they put the bridge in off Nancy Creek Road.

OTTLEY: Can you describe how the course of Howell Mill before 75 came through? I mean, is the timing such that from the very beginning 75 was in play, or was being built? You never had like a Howell Mill entrance to it directly?

HOWELL: No. We had the Howell Mill entrance, because that was the way into the property at that point. And then at the time, and I guess it was by the time the second academic year out there, they had constructed the entrance off the thing and built the bridge across Nancy Creek. But that was a major effort, and they hadn't done that when we first moved out there.

OTTLEY: Did you literally cross the 75 area, the area that 75 was in?

HOWELL: Which was just being graded at that point. So the motor graders were coming and going. The carioles would look here and look there, and then they'd dart across. It's about where the Breman Jewish home is now, where we went across.

HALL: Is that right? What year was that?

HOWELL: That would have been '54 or '55.

WRIGHT: Did Howell Mill always come into a dead end at Northside?

HOWELL: No, not at all. It went right on down to Paces Ferry.

WRIGHT: And then that's where it stopped.

HOWELL: That's where it stopped, yeah.

OTTLEY: Okay. I don't want to belabor the point here. I do find it fascinating. So Howell Mill, you would cross over the area that was being graded, and then would you connect in over to West Wesley and then go in that gate?

HOWELL: No, no, no. That was actually, that would have teed into what is now the existing drive that at that point just went right down in front of both buildings. Now everything has been tidied up and you don't do that anymore. But back then you could drive in front of both the school buildings. The boys' school was done a little bit ahead of the girls' school.

WRIGHT: Did they accept boarders initially?

HOWELL: They did. They, I guess, Washington Seminary always had boarders, and we did accept boarders. There were no boarders with us, the first class, but later on there were some boy boarders, and they were out at Glenridge, the wonderful place, Glen Place out on Glenridge Road, which I gather still exists. I don't know who owns it.

OTTLEY: Is that the hunting lodge property?

HOWELL: There's a big house.

OTTLEY: That still exists in that . . .

HOWELL: Still exists. Turned into a dormitory. Not particularly proximate to school, but it worked. And then they built the two so-called dorms on the property later. Then they decided they really didn't need to be a boarding school. But strangely enough, in those early days it was hard rounding up enough people who were interested in a top school.

OTTLEY: How did they get the Glen property for the dormitory? Was it volunteered to them? I mean, was it a private residence at the time, or did they buy that property, or how did that come about?

HOWELL: I don't know. And I don't know that they owned it. I doubt they did. My bet is it was just a lease.

WRIGHT: Who sold the property to the school off of Paces Ferry?

HOWELL: Fritz Orr did, for a very reasonable price. Fritz was a wonderfully civic-minded kind of guy, and he believed—he drank the Kool-Aid, and thank heavens he did. I think he sold that property for a hundred thousand dollars at very good financing terms.

OTTLEY: Not just the camp area, but the entire, he owned the entire property.

HOWELL: Hmm-hmm. He did.

OTTLEY: Did you play any sports in the community or at Westminster that—

HOWELL: I took tennis at the Piedmont Driving Club with Jack Waters, but I didn't have the talent that many of my classmates had, so ultimately when the second tier of people came down from McCallie, the second year Donn Gaebelin and Sumner Williams came down, and they brought with them soccer, which was hitherto unknown to us. So I became a soccer player. That was my main sport. Always liked to hike, very much liked the outdoors.

OTTLEY: Were there hiking trails on, in the early days at Westminster, on that campus, or was it just woods?

HOWELL: It was just woods.

OTTLEY: I'd like to ask about some major events in Atlanta, one of which, of course, was the Orly crash. Do you have any memories of that?

HOWELL: Just the sense of grief that so many people who were so important to the Atlanta arts scene were perished. And I have a very close connection to that in that my best, longest friend, Mason Lowance, who's married to Susan Coltrane, as she was, and Susan had sold her ticket on the returning plane because she wanted to stay in Europe a little while longer. And so she was the sole survivor of that trip.

OTTLEY: Tell us about some of your, you mentioned Mason Lowance, some of your other friends. Some other folks that you grew up with. Any interesting stories or events with those folks in the area?

HOWELL: Well, just countless of them. Because, literally, we all walked to school back then. Carter Davis lived on Bohler Road at Peachtree Battle. I lived at Arden and Peachtree Battle. And it didn't matter what the weather was. I either walked or biked to school. There wasn't any carpooling to school. And after that we would, Mason Lowance lived at the corner of Howell Mill and West Wesley, so we would all congregate over there, have a Coke. Their wonderful cook would have made some cookies or something. And then we'd basically fight. Wrestle with one another and do all the things that sixth and seventh graders do.

OTTLEY: You mentioned that your dad was an architect. And I think you mentioned he designed Morris Brandon School. Any other buildings that we need to know about or that he was particularly proud of?

HOWELL: I am not sure how proud he was, but in his office, which was in the Rhodes-Haverty Building, the major picture that you ever saw was the Reidsville State Prison. A big project at any rate. He did part of Techwood Homes. He did a lot of work at the waterworks, their main office building, their office building out on Moore's Mill. Did a lot of city work.

OTTLEY: And then, what was your father's full name and your mother's full name?

HOWELL: Albert Howell. No middle name at all. And she was Carol Henry from Philadelphia.

OTTLEY: What was your dad's firm?

HOWELL: Tucker and Howell. McKindry A. Tucker and Albert Howell, who got together in 1929, just when things were tough. My father loved to do residences, and that just stopped, basically. So they wound up doing a lot of city and county work instead.

OTTLEY: I know that there's a lot of railroad paraphernalia and memorabilia in your home. Can you tell us a little bit about that interest and how you got into it?

HOWELL: Well, I guess, along with a lot of other people my age, when we grew up you didn't fly in those days. In fact, I think the first time I flew was when I was maybe ten years old, and that was very unusual. But at any rate, my mother loved to go to New York, and so we would all go down to the station at Brookwood, get on the train, and wind up in New York in eighteen hours. Just a wonderful trip, and initially on steam locomotives. And somehow steam locomotives got into my blood. They have a wonderful smell, they're very powerful, they're very noisy, they make a lot of smoke, all the things little boys like. Some of us never grow up. And lo and behold, we had a family reunion in the Atlanta Historical Society building, when that was in the Willis Jones house down on Peachtree. Franklin Garrett was, I guess, the only employee if he was even an employee. But he lived upstairs as sort of a guardian. And so after the reunion Franklin said, "Come on up," to my parents, "come up and have a drink." And obviously I tagged along. And lo and behold, there was his model locomotive of the Southern Railroad very famous Pacific engines that pulled their passenger trains, that were painted green and silver. And I said, a grown man, who is very famous, and he can have a model train like that? Wow. This must be okay. I became a great fan of Franklin's and remained so for the rest of his life. And he very kindly gave me his train when they had to go to Lenbrook. It sits in the adjoining room.

OTTLEY: And about where was that, just for the record, the house where the Atlanta Historical Society was on Peachtree? Was that, is that there now?

HOWELL: That is now, I believe, a Jewish Community Center building that is about to be taken down. And it's, I think, at the corner of Huntington and Peachtree. That was the house of Willis Jones.

OTTLEY: And any memories or can you tell us about going to catch the train at Brookwood Station?

HOWELL: Well, in those days, you were free to wander down to the platform at any time, and so people would routinely congregate down there on the platform. Sometimes people would have libations with them. And the train would come in, and you could easily get smushed by the train, but nobody ever did. And it was just a sort of nice party scene, so very different from queuing up to get on an airplane today. And you'd stand there and you'd wave 'em goodby if you were putting them on. I mean, there they were, and you'd walk alongside as the train pulled out. Or on the other hand, you'd be looking out the door, the vestibule being open, and waving out the window if you were riding.

OTTLEY: So people having libations, was there a little restaurant or bar?

HOWELL: No. People sort of brought their own.

OTTLEY: Brought their own, okay. There wasn't any type of railroad café or anything like that.

HOWELL: No. Brookwood was nothing but a suburban station. And now, as you know, it's the only station. But at that time it was very easy to take the train. And there were a lot of trains to choose from. Always a morning train and a middle afternoon train, and the Crescent going at night.

OTTLEY: And, memories of, I guess it would have been, your first airplane, would have been around 1948 or so if I'm doing my math right. Can you tell us about going down to that early terminal. You know, it was, would have been beyond the Quonset hut days.

HOWELL: No, it wasn't beyond the Quonset hut days. It was not. It definitely was not. The Quonset hut I think survived well into the '50s. It started, and in fact my father's firm did one of the very early iterations of the terminal building. And it outgrew that fairly quickly. Clark Howell, his father, was on the Civil Aviation Board, so that's possibly how they got that job. The terminal that I remember was definitely the Quonset hut. And after that then we had the iteration that you began walking out the things that maybe you all remember.

OTTLEY: That was in the '60s.

HOWELL: Yeah, '60s.

OTTLEY: A green building, bluish-green building?

HOWELL: Right. The one that old George what's-his-name came down and managed. George Barry. Wound up managing the construction of that building. No, my first plane actually was to, I was lucky enough to be able to go to the coronation in 1953. So I took the train up to New York. And we flew across the ocean. And I remember they had to refuel on a Constellation. They had to refuel in Newfoundland. And in order to take off once you were fully fueled on that runway, they literally reversed the props and backed back as far as they could, 'til the tail was sticking back off the end of the runway. And then roared off. And, no, I misremember that as well, because my parents had a place in the British Virgin Islands, and in order to get there you had to either fly to San Juan and then fly on a DC-3 to St. Thomas. So that happened earlier.

OTTLEY: Loosely related to that, I've heard that back in the '50s, maybe '40s, that there was a decent amount of contact between Atlanta and Havana.

HOWELL: Havana. The Havatlanta Races.

OTTLEY: Tell us about that.

HOWELL: I wish I could. I was not a swimmer, but it was a big thing. The Havatlanta people would come up here one year, and we would go down there the next year, as I remember it. It was all over the paper. If you were a swimmer it was very big, and a lot of people went just sort of for the fun of it. It was a big thing.

OTTLEY: When did the Howell property start to be sold off or major subdivisions emerged?

HOWELL: Probably, no, I don't remember. I do remember my Aunt Adelaide had inherited what was Oldfield Road. And she sold it off bit by bit. She'd sell off one lot, and then she'd sell off another lot. I used to love going down there because she was a great source of old family

information and also of Highland Bakery chocolate cake, which my mother would not have in our house, but Adelaide had.

OTTLEY: Where did she live?

HOWELL: The house is still there. An old frame house on Oldfield Road, about the third house down from Peachtree Battle, so all I had to do was walk down the hill, get through the hedge and go across Peachtree Battle, which didn't have much traffic on it then, and walk down Oldfield. And it was in her yard that I saw the first person I ever saw running, not running the way boys run, but a grown man running apparently for some kind of recreation. It never occurred to me at all, and that turned out to be Allen Post, who apparently had run in the Olympics, I believe. This was Allen, Sr., and he lived in the house across from Arden Road where it hits Peachtree Battle, which was actually designed by my father for his brother, Julian, who in turn sold it to the Posts. And the synagogue was built on the property that my aunt owned.

OTTLEY: The same Aunt Adelaide?

HOWELL: No, the synagogue at the corner of Northside. No, completely different. In other words, Howells were staked out all over the area. And slowly sold it all off. And Louise, who ultimately inherited that piece of property, and it was huge, it went back, everything that's the synagogue today including the way back in the back, that was all one piece of property. And back behind there it went all the way back to Woodway Way, and that had been sold off earlier.

OTTLEY: Any memories of the creek flooding?

HOWELL: Flooding. Oh, many memories of the creek flooding.

OTTLEY: I mean when you were younger.

HOWELL: Oh, yeah. Including, there's, well, there are a number of sewer pipes going across it on that grade up there on these stilts. And I remember on one flood somebody dared me and I, literally I sat on the pipe and edged across with my feet dangling in the water right underneath the pipe.

OTTLEY: How old would you have been?

HOWELL: I would have been twelve, thirteen, something when you're foolish enough to do that. But it was fun. In fact, I had to do it both directions, because it would have been a long walk to come back the other way. Yeah, and routinely flooding. Then it got better at some point. But it used to flood with regularity.

OTTLEY: Any memories of going over to Memorial Park or the Bobby Jones golf course?

HOWELL: Sledding on Bobby Jones, absolutely. No doubt about that. Memorial Park is later on. Those are fairly current memories. But a wonderful place, and I've always heard that's where Evan Howell had his battery and how he was present when that happened and was firing on his own land, which he could have been, but I don't think was.

OTTLEY: Any thoughts or perceptions as a young adult on any of Atlanta's mayors, like Hartsfield or Ivan Allen, Jr.?

HOWELL: We always felt we had superior mayors. Hartsfield, of course, was legendary. And then by the time Ivan Allen came along I knew pretty much what was happening, and he just did this magnificent job at a very difficult time. And a lot of people that you knew socially did not think, they just thought he was compromising and he shouldn't be doing that. But thank heavens he did.

OTTLEY: Absolutely.

HOWELL: Yeah. He was absolutely wonderful. As was his son, who was a good friend.

OTTLEY: Back to, I forgot to ask this one. When you were talking about the E. Rivers School. It burned. One of our famous columnists in the area wrote that that was one of the, if not the impetus for Buckhead choosing to be annexed into the city of Atlanta. And do you have any recollections of that or the political movement, the back and forth of Buckhead becoming a part of the city of Atlanta?

HOWELL: I would imagine that, that's a hard thing to fathom. In that, I think Buckhead was pretty conservative socially, and hard to think that burning the school and having that become a city school, which was perceived at any rate at that point not to be as good.

OTTLEY: The lore, well, I say the lore, the story if I can recount it quickly was that the pipes were not the same size as the city pipes and therefore they couldn't get the volume of water necessary to put out the fire, and that, I guess a certain politician, maybe even Hartsfield, somebody said that if it had been—

HOWELL: If we could have, yeah—

OTTLEY: Been put in, that kind of thing, you, obviously, you don't have any recollection of that.

HOWELL: No. I was in the fourth grade. And that, the school burned in '48, and the annexation was '53¹, so it could have been something that was said, but it certainly didn't have an immediate effect, I don't believe.

OTTLEY: Was that big, was the annexation, do you remember big news?

HOWELL: Oh, very big. Very big news. And I'm not sure that my family, my immediate family, felt that was a good idea. They were sure it would bring more taxes, as it probably did. But in retrospect it was certainly something we needed to do.

OTTLEY: Right.

HOWELL: And one thing that's probably not on your list, but I did want to say it.

OTTLEY: Please, please.

HOWELL: The amount, the freedom that we all felt then, you just did not fear for personal safety for your children. Margaret, my wife, can tell you the story of how she would ride the bus

¹ The annexation of Buckhead into the City of Atlanta occurred in 1952.

down, the Georgia Power bus at that time, from R. L. Hope down to Fourteenth Street and walk up 14th Street to do a piano lesson. This was when she's nine and ten years old. Nobody going with her. Me, going down to the dental arts, or Medical Arts building, where my dentist was. And I had braces on. I just got taken over to Peachtree Battle, dropped out at Fred's Fruit Emporium, caught the bus—

OTTLEY: Tell us about that.

HOWELL: Oh, Fred's Fruit Emporium. Just a wonderful thing. He always had the watermelon out in the coolers in front. Never did, couldn't secure the place. I don't know what they did at night. Just had this frame building.

OTTLEY: Where was it? The corner, down there where Peachtree Battle is now, right?

HOWELL: No corner, just straight across. Where now the shopping center exists. The shopping center, my father just called it "the hole" when it was finally developed. There was nothing back there except the swamp. But Fred's went along Peachtree Battle for maybe a hundred feet, and you could buy many things there, including lots of produce always, including those watermelon.

OTTLEY: It faced Peachtree, right?

HOWELL: Faced Peachtree. Just this open sort of fruit stand. Fred's Fruit Emporium. First time I ever encountered the word emporium, for sure. And so the bus stop was right in front of that. If you were coming out of town you got off in front of Fred's, and if you were going downtown, you got on in front of E. Rivers there. And nobody thought anything about it. And I would go down, get my braces checked, then walk downtown—

OTTLEY: That building still exists.

HOWELL: That building still exists, regrettably. It's in terrible shape. But after that I'd walk down to the Carnegie library, stop and have a Krystal, not *a* Krystal, I would have five or six Krystals at a dime apiece. And go to the library, which I loved to do. Walk up those steps and you felt like you were going into a temple of learning, in the wonderful old Carnegie library, whose street sign I have in the kitchen. After that I'd walk down to the Greyhound bus station and pay, I think it was fifteen cents. That would go right out Northside Drive, and I'd get off at Peachtree Battle. And this was when I was ten years old, eleven years old. And nobody, they knew I was somewhere in that process, but they didn't worry about it.

OTTLEY: Were any roads still unpaved in this area when you were a child or a young adult, that you recall? Kind of a random question.

HOWELL: Yeah, I know. It's a good question. And I think not. I think . . . Peachtree Battle was paved in concrete. I well remember that. In the old concrete where you always had the separators, and it was always buckling.

OTTLEY: Like Muscogee?

HOWELL: Like Muscogee, exactly. And I remember putting in the sewer in Peachtree Battle. We were on the septic tank for the longest time, and I think somewhere, probably in the '50s, maybe as a result of the annexation, they came along with one of those wonderful old-fashioned

diggers that had the huge wheel, buckets, that would wind its way down around the curb there. Pipe came, and the septic tank went. Progress.

OTTLEY: Speaking of, going back to Fred's Fruit Emporium and the development of the Peachtree Battle Shopping Center, was the kind of local thought process that was, you mentioned like your dad said that it would be crazy to build something down there? Or was there, did other people feel that way too, or was it a surprise to see that?

HOWELL: It was amazing. Nobody could believe that somebody was going to develop that. Who's ever going to patronize that? And it has become a superb shopping center. It's a major reason that we've been so comfortable living right here.

OTTLEY: What were some of the original stores down there?

HOWELL: I wish I could tell you. I cannot. There was an A&P. And so those of us who go back to that time still call the Publix the A&P. That was the anchor. And King's Drug Store was very important. It's now the Rite Aid. But beyond that I can't say. Of course the most important store there is Richards, and I'm not sure when that came in.

OTTLEY: Richards Five and Dime.

HOWELL: And everything else.

OTTLEY: Let's see. Just going over some of your notes, I certainly don't want to miss anything. Mrs. Slaton? You had a reference to Mrs. Slaton.

HOWELL: Yeah.

OTTLEY: Was that the property where the governor—

HOWELL: Governor Slaton's estate on Peachtree, in the middle of Buckhead, what was even then Buckhead.

OTTLEY: Right. And just for the tape here, geographically, that was right where the Peach shopping center is now, is that correct?

HOWELL: It was. And I'm not sure how far it extended on either side of the Peach. It was a big piece of property. And the rear entrance was on Slaton Drive, right off Andrews. I think the stub may still be there. I'm not sure. And that's how, the two times I went, that's how I was driven up there. But Mrs. Slaton had been a very good friend of my grandmother, who I'm sorry to say had died long before I came along. So my father always wanted to call on her on her birthday. And he took me twice to visit up there in that large house, which did have a drive onto Peachtree, but it was pretty well hidden from Peachtree, as I remember.

OTTLEY: Really.

HOWELL: I could be wrong on that. But I was not conscious that Peachtree was in the front yard.

OTTLEY: What about, were there formal gardens that were of note on that property?

HOWELL: I cannot tell you. I know the drive was a long drive.

OTTLEY: The back drive.

HOWELL: The back drive, yeah. But I can't tell you that.

OTTLEY: When did that property get developed, about?

HOWELL: Do not know.

OTTLEY: Any other famous landmarks along Peachtree or in the area that you have memories of?

HOWELL: Well, like everybody, we went to Margaret Bryan's Dance Studio for however briefly we could do that. I would be a better dancer if I'd spent more time there and less time running away from there. But we would go up the front steps and then as quick as we could escape out the side to bum around in Buckhead, go over to the drugstores, typically, until the lesson was over. And the Buckhead Theatre, of course, very important. Very beloved, and a marvelous thing to be preserved today.

OTTLEY: You mentioned the Hodge Parade?

HOWELL: Courtney Hodges, who was the first army commander, well, I guess Bradley was the commander and Hodge was underneath him, was a Georgia native and was a relative of a distant relative of ours. So I remember going to the Victory Parade, which was down Peachtree at the Fox Theatre. The reviewing stand was at the Fox Theatre. Sitting there, and that was in 1946 sometime. That would be one of my earliest memories of the Fox.

WRIGHT: Would that have been the same Hodges' Army-Navy out on Cobb Parkway?

HOWELL: No. Great store, though. Used to be a great store when it was downtown.

OTTLEY: Where was the Colonial that you referenced? I know there were several. Did you go to the one that was, again, right in Buckhead, right near the crossroads there?

HOWELL: Right. As you know, at that point there was the island, which had the service station in the middle of it. The cut-through from West Paces to Peachtree southbound, there was a street that ran, so that instead of having to go to the intersection with Peachtree you could turn right and go beside a filling station and angle in to Peachtree. And on the other side, the south side of that cut-through street, was where the Colonial store was with its "CS" and the rooster on top. And that was the supermarket in the area. The A&P was not around. And I think A&P may have taken that over. And then, of course, it all became the project where Sears and First National Bank were located for so long.

OTTLEY: Okay. I was thinking of somewhere else. Did you ever go to the Sears building and shop at Sears?

HOWELL: Did I ever shop at Sears! Being a tool person it was heaven. Yeah, we shopped at Sears a lot. And banked at that First National Bank building. You remember they were both

architectural feats with the translucent marble fronting. And that was the site, that was the staging area for the Peachtree Road Race initially.

OTTLEY: Which it says that you have run a couple of times.

HOWELL: I have run more than a couple of times.

OTTLEY: How many times?

HOWELL: I quit at 25. I said that's enough. And running might be an exaggeration. But I completed them anyway. But the very first one that I did was in 1972. And we had heard about, that was the third running of it. So we'd heard about the one the second year, and I had already started jogging, thanks to Kenneth Cooper and his marvelous book on aerobics. So I said, I might be able to do that. I wonder if anybody's going to be there. We drove up and, damn, there were several hundred people there. Several hundred people! I couldn't believe how many crazies there were. And they, we had a police escort so that, we all stayed in the righthand, furtherest right lane of Peachtree, and so the traffic—

OTTLEY: And it started at?

HOWELL: Started at the Sears building. And went right down Peachtree, right down to Five Points. And the problem with that is that not only do you have Heartbreak Hill, but you also have the tremendous hill where West—because it went down West Peachtree, not Peachtree, at the split. So you have the tremendous hill that faces you when you are at the MARTA station over the Interstate. And you're looking up to that. And you can see all the way up to Davison's. That is one hell of a hill, at the very end of the race. But it really was astonishing, and I think there were just shy of 400 people who ran it that year, and we simply couldn't believe there were that many crazy people doing it.

OTTLEY: You know, I haven't asked you about your career, and can you tell us a little bit about that?

HOWELL: I was lucky enough to go to work for First National Bank in 1963, and retired thirty years later. I have worked in the commercial banking area, the international department, and in private banking. It was a wonderful place to work. I have a lot of friends I worked with who are friends today. It was right downtown, and like a lot of people in those days, I rode the bus to work. I did not drive to work. In fact, we only had one car for the first maybe five years of my career. So if it was a really bad day, Stephanie would drive me down, but other than that, I would walk down to Peachtree, and when MARTA came along, I'd take the bus that went over to Lindbergh and take the train.

OTTLEY: Well, gentlemen, I don't know if you have any more questions. Henry, do you have any other, have we touched on everything that you wanted to hit on?

HOWELL: I believe so. It's been a wonderful town to be in, and Buckhead is a very special place. Even though I don't think I would ever say that I was from Buckhead, living where I live, even now, much less where I grew up. But I believe by current definitions I've always lived in Buckhead. Even though I didn't know that. And it's been a wonderful place and a wonderful time. And thank you all very much.