

Buckhead Heritage Society

Oral History Project

Interview with Lucia Pulgram

October 30, 2011

At the North Buckhead Civic Association Fall Fling

Interviewer: Erica Danylchak

ERICA DANYLCHAK: This is an interview with Lucia Pulgram of Atlanta, Georgia. The interview is being conducted on October 30, 2011, at the Blue Heron Nature Preserve on the occasion of History Day at the North Buckhead Civic Association Fall Fling. The interviewer is Erica Danylchak, representing the Buckhead Heritage Society of Atlanta, Georgia. Thank you so much for joining us today and for being willing to share your memories of Buckhead with us. What brought you to Atlanta originally? Were you born here?

LUCIA PULGRAM: Thank you. I was born here at Crawford Long Hospital, in the old hospital before the new one was built, on Piedmont.

DANYLCHAK: And what area of town did you grow up in?

PULGRAM: I grew up on Peachtree Battle Avenue, the first house off of Peachtree Road. And we used to find, or I'm told that there were found, minié balls and things from the Civil War, which was fought, Northerners were there on where our property was, shooting across Peachtree Creek up to the hill where Piedmont Hospital is. And anyway, the trench was there all filled with pine straw.

DANYLCHAK: Was that in your own backyard?

PULGRAM: Yes.

DANYLCHAK: And can you describe how Buckhead has changed over time, as you've lived here?

PULGRAM: Oh, yes. To me Buckhead was the crossing of West Paces Ferry and Peachtree Road. And there was the chicken feed store, what's the, can't say the name of it. There was the Atlantic Ice and Coal Company there. You've probably heard about those before. And Wender & Roberts was a great gathering place for the young. And the Buckhead Hardware Store. And a wonderful old place off, I think it was probably on Buckhead Avenue, for keys and door knobs and all sorts of things that houses were built with in those days. I was born in 1925 so it's been a

good long time. I lived across the street from E. Rivers School, which burned down about 1945 or -6.¹

DANYLCHAK: Do you remember why that burned down?

PULGRAM: I believe it was they were trying to get some hornets' nests down and they were reckless, I guess, with their torches. I wasn't there to see it. But I was very interested in the new school that was built there with Jim Edwards, whom I knew later as an architect.

DANYLCHAK: Can you describe what the first school looked like?

PULGRAM: It was a big granite building, big chunks of granite, very heavy. It had fire escapes that were tubes of some metal that you could get into from the classroom and slide down to get out. And since I lived across the street from the school, we could take some wax paper and climb up there and slide down and go . . .

DANYLCHAK: Was your home an architect-designed home?

PULGRAM: It was designed by the artist Frank Mack. He also built some homes on Northside Drive. He was the first person that lived in my home. And then we bought it a few years after he had built it. I think about 1922 he built it.

DANYLCHAK: And how long did you live in that home?

PULGRAM: I lived all my life there growing up until I went away to college. I guess I was there until, well, off and on I was in New York and Paris and other places until I got married in 1952.

DANYLCHAK: And when you were young how did you make your way into Buckhead at the crossroads there at Peachtree and Roswell? Some people have told us they rode their bikes. Did you use a car?

PULGRAM: Peachtree and Roswell? You mean, the point there. Well, I have ridden my bike there, from my house all the way out to the park on Powers Ferry, but not often.

DANYLCHAK: Did you use to take the trolley car?

PULGRAM: I took the trolley to Washington Seminary to school.

DANYLCHAK: And then did you take the trolley also up into what people considered Buckhead, where the theater was and Wender & Roberts?

PULGRAM: Well, usually we drove up there. That was not too far from my house.

DANYLCHAK: Can you describe the Wender & Roberts for me? You said a lot of people used to congregate there.

¹ E. Rivers Elementary burned down in September of 1948.

PULGRAM: Well, it had those little round tables with the wide-backed chairs that you could sit at and have some ice cream. Of course, there was Coca-Cola there. And there was a counter there too.

DANYLCHAK: So, when did you move to North Buckhead? When you got married in 1952?

PULGRAM: Well, I lived several other places then. I lived in the Garden Hills area a few years, and then we built our own house on East Conway Drive.

DANYLCHAK: What was North Buckhead like when you first moved here? And when was that? The 1960s?

PULGRAM: When I moved out to . . .

DANYLCHAK: Conway Drive.

PULGRAM: Yes. That was '63. Well, it still had the little church there on, I guess it's the Sardis Church there at the corner of Peachtree and, I mean Roswell and Powers Ferry. And I've noticed that somewhere else here that they had the steeple down for a while off of it and it sat out on the lawn next to the church for a long while until they got the new one that they put on. The park, the park was great. It had the swimming pool and the stables, and I know there had been an old people's home there. Of course, that's now turned into an art school, and the Galloway School, and the art museum or art school there.

DANYLCHAK: Can you describe what Roswell Road looked like when you first moved to North Buckhead?

PULGRAM: Well, the big difference is the trees. There used to be trees and it was like you were going out of the city and into the countryside. And now those are gone.

DANYLCHAK: Do you remember the nursery company that was just across the road from where we are now?

PULGRAM: I do. Yes.

DANYLCHAK: Can you describe that for us?

PULGRAM: I don't remember a great deal about it. It was Weinstock's, and it was, it had plants and landscaping things that you could get there.

DANYLCHAK: Did you ever come to this property?

PULGRAM: Did Bill tell you about his connection with Weinstock's?

DANYLCHAK: Yes, ma'm.

PULGRAM: I think that's very interesting.

DANYLCHAK: It is. Did you ever come to this property? We heard that there was, well, there still is a lake here, and that a lot of people used to come and swim in the lake for recreation.

PULGRAM: I did not. No, I didn't. I was a little far away for that.

DANYLCHAK: Did you ever go to Peachtree Gardens? The clubhouse off of Mountain Way?

PULGRAM: I think that we went to some dances there I think. Yeah, I remember that.

DANYLCHAK: What were those like?

PULGRAM: Well, they were fun. I don't remember great details about them. They were not very fancy, but they were a lot of fun.

DANYLCHAK: Are there any significant historic places in North Buckhead that you think are important for Buckhead Heritage and others in the community to know about?

PULGRAM: Well, Buckhead extends a long way now, all the way down to Collier Road and north. Of course, I remember where Piedmont Hospital is, if you're calling that part of Buckhead. But it's the home of, it was the big home of [pause], a lawyer, oh, I'm sorry, I can't remember his name right now. But I do remember the big house there. The man was my mother's godfather, so I should remember him, his name. Of course, the Alexander property was very important to me because I was a friend of Judy Alexander. Harry Alexander, who built that house, was a friend of my mother's, and I used to go there to parties. I remember little Harry, the son, at a birthday party for Judy, ran with a pin popping balloons! He turned out to be a very nice man when he grew up. But that house was that, I guess I talked to somebody else about the art gallery there. Judy Alexander, Harry's son built it. Did I say anything about that before? She had a gallery that was the first one to really bring new, current, modern art into Atlanta. The High Museum was not doing it. She had Franz Klein's work here in Atlanta, and people used to come in to Atlanta to, even to buy some of the things that she showed. It was very daring. Then she fostered very popular art, folk art, and Nellie Mae Rowe was a woman that she sponsored and fostered.

[brief interruption]

DANYLCHAK: And where was her gallery?

PULGRAM: It was on the Alexander property. It was on the corner of Peachtree and, must have been Wieuca Road. I'm not sure. I think it was.

DANYLCHAK: And it's no longer there.

PULGRAM: No, it's not. And the house is no longer there either. That's where all of Phipps Plaza is built.

DANYLCHAK: Do you have any other favorite stories of growing up in Buckhead or of living in Buckhead that you want to share with us?

PULGRAM: I talked to some people earlier about the—well, when I was very small I used to see the skies light up red when the steel was being poured down at where Atlantic Station is now. I used to hear the trains. Atlanta really flourished and was built by the trains coming through here. I would hear them at night, you know, going choo-choo-choo. And riding on them, took the trains to college in Lynchburg.

DANYLCHAK: Well, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us.

PULGRAM: It was fun to talk to you.