

OVERHILLS ORAL HISTORY

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the winter of 1997, a large and unusual tract of land in the Sandhills region of North Carolina changed hands when a Rockefeller family sold a private estate to the U.S. Army. Cottages and stables, pig houses and barns were emptied. A golf course stood idle and sand roads that once saw more horses than vehicles during any given winter were abandoned. The place known as Overhills fell silent after decades of an exceptional, albeit little-known history.

Overhills began as a hunt club in the early twentieth century and evolved into a secluded winter vacation home for the Rockefellers. Overhills was at its peak a private, exclusive estate in the 1920s. In that era, leisure and sport for the wealthy northern capitalist predominated as bird and fox hunting, polo, golf, and horseback riding filled winter days in the pine forest. Following the Great Depression Overhills became a quiet retreat for the descendants of Percy and Isabel Rockefeller. In addition to a climate of sport, vacation and relaxation for the wealthy, throughout its history Overhills maintained a working farm status, with fields and farmers scattered across its thousands of acres. In 1997 Overhills was sold by the family to become part of the Fort Bragg Military Reservation. Eventually the sounds of military training and the boot prints of soldiers replaced the solitude of bygone days and the hoof prints of horses in the sandy trails.

Conducted on behalf of the U.S. Army,¹ this oral history represents an attempt to resonate some of the old sounds of Overhills, at least in the form of personal reflection. Many of the words contained in these pages were spoken by people interviewed about their experience at Overhills. These individuals are the primary narrators of this account. Through memories and stories from those who were witnesses of events, participants in activities, and members of a community, this study offers a portrait of Overhills with the benefit of a human story and the personal context of life experience. An oral history is distinctive, by its nature, in terms of the use of personal testimony to aid in the depiction of a former place and time and to enliven the overall historical narrative.²

Like many other oral histories, this study has an obvious "place consciousness," in that research is focused on a particular place.³ The common denominator of experience for narrators is that they lived, visited, or worked at Overhills. While not a town or formal settlement, Overhills was a well defined setting. Its geographic boundaries were fixed, though not necessarily conspicuous. Overhills was controlled by certain parties through time with a continuity of purpose, creating a space within which activities were generally related to a common operation. It was also a place rich with a historical built environment and natural and agricultural landscape, including buildings, farm fields, homesteads, swamps, and sand roads meaningful to those familiar with the land. The longer Overhills persisted as a large Rockefeller property steeped in history, despite the modernization of the surrounding areas, the richer the sense of place.

Those people who share experience and familiarity with Overhills help constitute a kind of community. While the members of any community can be defined by common

social identity, based on a number of factors such as ethnicity, religion, or occupation, they can also be defined based on their connection to a neighborhood, town, or other characteristic place. Members of the Overhills community include the repeat visitors who came for years and called the estate their own, passing their tradition of winter retreat as well as property ownership to their children. Members also include the numerous employees who worked and lived at Overhills for years. While there was considerable social distance between millionaire landowners from Connecticut and local tenant farmers in the Sandhills, those who spent years of their lives living at or returning to this place came to share common ties to the land, to estate operations, to the property's history, and to each other. Many called Overhills home, whether it was a winter vacation home or a small family household alongside a tobacco field.

Our approach to learning about Overhills from those who knew it best is organized around major topics. At the heart of Overhills history is leisure; consequently, the nature of recreation enjoyed by the Rockefellers and friends is explored. The types of foods and meals prepared are described, revealing well-founded traditions and the importance of cooks and domestic staff. Former employees offer some perspective on their work and daily life as well as how they spent some of their playtime as children and where they went to school and church. Rockefeller family members and employees provide some definition for the secluded, somewhat ambiguous location of Overhills as well as the seasonal trips there, the adventure of traveling and the anticipation of winter visits. The history of selected buildings is featured for some that were demolished decades ago and for some that were considered especially important. Likewise certain landmarks such as the post office, railroad, lake, and golf course are discussed. Narrators were asked to describe people, including leadership figures and those who left their mark by spending years of their lives at Overhills. Some narrators offer perspective on the history of the estate and bygone days of bird and fox hunting. Finally, narrators reflect on a definition of Overhills as a historical place and what it meant to them personally.

Many of these wide-ranging topics that were covered in the interview process are at the heart of this oral history report and any oral history project. A total of 33 interviews were conducted with 45 people. Of these, ultimately 31 interviews were donated and/or incorporated into the final collection of archived material.⁴ For each interview, the identification of the topics outlined above guided the development of a series of questions. The questions only served as general guidelines, allowing exploration of as many topics as a narrator's range of experience allowed and prioritization of particular topics with which individual narrators had the greatest experience. All interviews were conducted by a pair of researchers.⁵ In most cases a single narrator was present, though in several cases two or more narrators participated.

The selection of prospective narrators was influenced by a general goal of capturing as much variation as possible to represent a range of experience at Overhills. For employees, such variation was considered in terms of their location of residence and type of work. Farming, domestic staff, stable work, and supervisory roles were all considered. In some cases, the children of former employees participated. Several Rockefeller family members were interviewed. People with lengthy periods of experience were sought, though some with more limited Overhills life chapters were interviewed as well. The range of years

covered by the narrators includes the 1920s through the 1990s. In several cases, in addition to presenting their own memories, interviewees' experiences reflect upon that of their parents, siblings, children, and/or spouse experience (See Appendix 1: Interviewee Profiles).

Narrators were identified in several ways. At the outset, a list of long-time employees who appeared in payroll lists, correspondence, and other records was compiled and an announcement was also placed in a county library.⁶ Rockefeller family members and individuals known to be familiar with Overhills were asked to suggest individuals who might contribute. Once interviews commenced, narrators were asked to offer names of prospective participants, a networking technique that proved to be most effective in reaching narrators. In a couple of incidents individuals who learned of the project but were not candidates for interviews offered photographs, newspaper clippings, or other documents. Fortunately, many of the former residents and employees interviewed had remained in the general Sandhills region after leaving Overhills, several living within a short distance of the estate. Six interviews required travel to different states and in four instances informants traveled from other states to Fort Bragg.

Interviews followed a fairly typical sequence. Prospective interviewees were initially contacted by telephone and a letter introducing the project. Each interview began with a brief summary and overview of the project goals as well as a description of the overall interview process, including consent to be interviewed and the audio recording. Post-interview steps were described as well, including the transcription process and the return of the transcript for the narrator's review. Every informant was asked to sign a consent form stating that s/he agreed to engage in the interview process and following their review of the interview transcript, a deed of gift form.

All interviews were transcribed in full and the involvement of narrators extended beyond the interview into the transcription process. A necessary means of capturing the spoken word, transcribing a recorded conversation transforms the irregular, dialect-filled, sometimes emotional voice into a standardized, grammatical text. To make the project a collaborative process, narrators were asked to review all transcripts prior to donation. Any clarifications, corrections, or embellishments were accepted and integrated into the transcription with appropriate notes as to the changes. All narrators had the opportunity to exclude portions of any transcript from use in publication or placement in a permanent repository. In addition to reviewing the transcript, a draft version of this report was distributed to all narrators for review and comment.

As any oral history results in a mass of interview data, it is an inherent challenge to collect bits of voice and expression into a final product. While fairly simple on the surface, the construction of an oral history report can be a complex process influenced by a range of factors. Beyond the selection of information to include in an oral history lies the challenge of editing and presenting the narrators' words in a meaningful way. Our primary objective in editing was to allow narrators to speak for themselves but to do so by placing it in a contextual framework. In so doing, extraction of passages from transcripts was the most liberal practice on our behalf. Extractions occasionally involved piecing together portions from separate passages in order to join statements on the same theme. No changes were made to sentence structure as it was originally transcribed. In most cases, interviewer

questions were removed in order to improve continuity in the narration. Where questions assist in the introduction of a topic or provide a necessary transition, they were retained. In editing the selected passages to produce the final collection of narration, our methods were relatively conservative and minimal changes were made.⁷

The structure and content of these documentary chapters reflect an effort to capture information on a wide range of topics and often a span of time that could include decades. The subjective nature of oral history and the sometimes unreliable source of information, i.e., human memory, are recognized problems with this type of research.⁸ However, the merits of oral history relate less to the accuracy than the unique quality of the data, especially in the collection of information and life histories that would otherwise not enter the written record. At its most essential level the purpose of this study is to document information from a unique perspective for posterity. With an emphasis on description of places, people, events and activities, the resulting product is not an unbiased nor is it an exhaustive history. Although oral histories are typically unfinished because not all voices and not all perspectives are heard, it is worth noting that “historical work excluding oral sources is incomplete by definition.”⁹

In the end the voice heard in our study is a combination of the individual narrators and our own. In order to add a more conventional historical framework to the often anecdotal, personal stories and brief, colorful descriptions presented from the interviews, Chapter Two provides a brief outline of Overhills history, outlining major developments and general trends, building on historical research as well as the first-person testimony offered here.¹⁰ Most of the words that follow in Chapters Three through the Epilogue are those spoken by narrators. Brief introductory statements (in italics) offer some background for different topics for which passages from interviews are then used to illuminate Overhills and provide information and insight that complement the history constructed from archived documents. Though the focus of oral history is on first-hand testimony, the creation of any oral history begins and ends with the researcher. By selecting the questions for interviews, selecting relevant excerpts from transcripts, and ordering the information in a written document, multiple perspectives are imprinted on this study. It is hoped that in its entirety, the oral history presented here will shed light on and add voice to the activities, people, and years of time that passed at Overhills throughout much of the twentieth century.

¹As part of compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, the U.S. Army recognized the historical significance of the Overhills property, identifying the Overhills Historic District; see Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc., *Historic Architectural Resources Survey Report, Overhills Tract, Fort Bragg, Harnett and Cumberland Counties, North Carolina*, Fort Bragg Cultural Resources Management Program, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, May 2000. After analysis of land use alternatives, the Army determined that integration of the Overhills property into training areas would adversely affect the Overhills Historic District; see Notice of Availability, Final Environmental Impact Statement To Fully Integrate the Overhills Property Into the Fort Bragg Training Program, Fort Bragg, NC, published in the Federal Register, 1/6/2006, Vol.71, No.4,

pp.920-921. The Army consulted with the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office to resolve the adverse effect in accordance with federal regulations 36 CFR 800. This oral history study is one part of a resulting set of resolution measures for Overhills. Other measures include documentation of the Overhills Historic District in accordance with standards established by the National Park Service for documenting historic buildings and landscapes. In addition, Fort Bragg is creating an Overhills archives for permanent curation using the estate records transferred to the Army.

² Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 93.

³ Linda Shopes, "Oral History and the Study of Communities: Problems, Paradoxes, and Possibilities," *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 2 (2002): 588-598.

⁴ Three individuals declined to donate, though one of these individuals (Bruce Strauch) who declined donation offered a substantial memoir based on the original transcript. One interview was eliminated from consideration due to poor health of the individual. Two interviews conducted prior to this project were incorporated: one interview of a former Overhills resident (Andrew Jackson, Sr.), contributed by Byron J. O'Quinn; and one interview of a previous Overhills tenant farmer, conducted in a previous oral history, see *Sandhills Families: Early Reminiscences of the Fort Bragg Area, Cumberland, Harnett, Hoke, Moore, Richmond, and Scotland Counties* by Lorraine V. Aragon, 2000.

⁵ Jeffrey Irwin and Kaitlin O'Shea conducted all interviews except the first two (Kim Elliman and Ann & Kim Elliman), which were conducted by Irwin and Heather McDonald.

⁶ This information was gathered from the Overhills Document Collection, on file at the North Carolina State Archives. The Overhills Maps and Overhills Object Collections are on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

⁷ Some oral history may involved editing transcribed words extensively in order to create a desired narrative; see Rebecca Jones, "Blended Voices: Crafting a Narrative from Oral History Interviews," *The Oral History Review* 31, no. 1 (2004): 23-42.

⁸ For discussions of the limitations and biases common in oral history see Trevor Lummis, "Structure and validity in oral evidence," *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, (New York, New York: Routledge, 1998).; Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History A Practical Guide for Social Scientists*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1994), 15-22; Also, see the interview as a "performance" influenced by the interviewer who has "interview authority"; Katherine Borland, "'That's not what I said' Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, (New York, New York: Routledge, 1998), 320-332.

⁹ See Alessandro Portelli, "The Peculiarities of Oral History," *History Workshop*, 1981, no. 12, 71.

¹⁰ Previous historical research on Overhills includes: Davyd Foard Hood, *Overhills Historic District National Register of Historic Places Nomination*, Draft, 1992, on file at North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office; Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc., 2000.; The Jaeger Company, *Overhills, North Carolina, Historic American Landscape Survey Level One Recordation*, Fort Bragg Cultural Resources Management Program, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, January 2006 (Historic Narrative by Diana Werling).

CHAPTER TWO

A BRIEF HISTORY

The history of Overhills begins with a larger story involving a significant shift in regional North Carolina history where a once dominant agrarian culture was replaced by new investment and land use ideas. The predominant naval stores industry was in decline by the late 1800s, and by the turn of the twentieth century the Sandhills region was considered by many an impoverished land with limited possibilities. Change came with considerable influence from outsiders as timber companies, bankers, developers, government agencies and sportsmen made use of old turpentine orchards and small family farms. New resort towns were created in the western Sandhills.¹ Large peach orchards replaced pine trees. Hunt clubs were established by northerners through the purchase of contiguous farmlands. The greatest event in the local transformation came with the entrance of the United States Army, which began in 1918 its acquisition of a massive chunk of land for Camp Bragg, a field artillery training center. Within this overall historical pattern of a “New South” in the Sandhills,² the unique story of Overhills takes shape.

While its particular evolution is the result of many factors, the ultimate force behind the formation of Overhills was the lifestyle of the nation’s elite around the turn of the century. The accumulation of wealth through the rapid growth of capitalist enterprise, industrial corporations and investment banks, created a wealthy social class of sportsmen, many hailing from north urban areas. This class of men shared a strong interest in a culture of sport as well as common aspects of worldview, attitude, motivation, and social affiliations. With massive wealth came the luxury of leisure time, which many filled with hunting for sport, a hobby that not only fulfilled their personal interests but honored and legitimized their social standing. Through hunting, these sportsmen “conversed with a technical vocabulary explicit about game and guns, demonstrated an abiding interest in natural history, adhered to a code of ethics, donned fashionable dress afield, often professed an interest in highly trained dogs, and belonged to cosmopolite associations.”³ Armed with money, leisure time, and guns it was a handful of members in this broadly defined fraternity that contributed to the conversion of an old stretch of pine forest and sandy soil into a rustic club and later idyllic family retreat.

Throughout the South, the grounds that would enable the realization of a sportsman’s lifestyle came largely from old southern plantations and farms, which provided thousands of acres of forest, old fields or coastal lands needed to run to hounds, hunt quail, or shoot waterfowl. Nineteenth century rice plantations in South Carolina and Georgia were purchased and in some cases expanded, the mansions serving as winter country estates and the old fields and swamps as hunting grounds. North Carolina also had its own “distinguished, if little known, history of game and shooting lodges and clubs.”⁴ The Currituck Shooting Club along the outer banks was likely the earliest of its kind in the state. In the Piedmont, especially lower Guilford and Randolph counties, several hunt clubs were established, at least one with a connection to Overhills.⁵ These

hunting preserves and clubs were mostly private, organized and funded by wealthy individuals or small alliances of business partners and friends, millionaires seeking bucolic retreats for their sporting pleasure. The growth of these hunt preserves contributed to the preservation of vast tracts of land. Concomitantly, a strong interest in wildlife habitat for good hunting contributed to the establishment and growth of wildlife conservation efforts.⁶

The land that would constitute the nucleus of Overhills originally took shape in the hands of the locally prominent McDiarmid family. With their Scottish heritage, Presbyterian faith, multi-generational family landholding, and successful naval stores operation, the McDiarmids reflect entrenched historical themes of Sandhills history in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their Ardnave Plantation, seated along the Lower Little River near the village of Manchester, was the home of Daniel McDiarmid throughout much of the nineteenth century.⁷ Daniel was the son of Highland Scot immigrant and Presbyterian Minister Angus McDiarmid.⁸ By the late nineteenth century, Daniel had amassed a substantial estate, a plantation of some 13,000 acres as well as other landholdings and enterprises relating to naval stores production, including a turpentine still, a planing and saw mill, and grist mill.⁹

Soon after his death in 1873, Daniel McDiarmid's land exchanged the Old South for the New. McDiarmid's estate was left to his two sons, Archibald Knox and William James, both of whom would become successful businessmen in the local community.¹⁰ However, roughly a decade later, financial problems forced the McDiarmid brothers to mortgage their inherited property twice, first in 1884, then in 1890. These debts went unpaid and the old plantation was brought to auction in 1892, to be purchased by two men: John Y. Gossler, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Rufus W. Hicks, of Wilmington, North Carolina. There could be little doubt about the immediate fate of the land, as Gossler owned Gossler and Co., a large Philadelphia-based lumber trader that was "extensively engaged in the manufacture of yellow pine lumber in North Carolina."¹¹

The sale of the old plantation marks a fairly well demarcated point of departure from the prevailing nineteenth century culture and industry to the local emergence of a New South-style economy, with its associated new patterns of land use. The domestic, agricultural, and industrial operations of an old turpentine plantation of a respected Scottish family had been silenced. The longleaf pine forest that remained would be logged, a somewhat typical tale that left the overall region with an uncertain future.¹² The new landowners of the McDiarmid land hailed from well beyond the region and their immediate interests were exploitative. The property itself not only bore witness to new ownership and use, it began to grow significantly, becoming part of a much larger consolidated holding. Beginning with Gossler and Hicks, successive owners continued to acquire small adjoining farms totaling tens of thousands of acres over a few decades.

Shortly after acquiring the McDiarmid land, Gossler and Hicks transferred the property to the Consolidated Lumber Company, a corporation established by Gossler. Gossler's company would own the land for nine years, during which time more acreage was acquired and a significant portion of the longleaf pine forest was undoubtedly harvested. The lumber company then sold 20,035 acres in 1901 to an Englishman named William Johnston, a transatlantic shipping company owner from Liverpool, England, who intended to start a game preserve.¹³ An excited news report covering this transaction recorded the

amount of land at 25,000 acres.¹⁴ While hunting treks may have been led on the property during the lumber company days, the sport was most certainly practiced in some form under Johnston's ownership when his son, Edmund, hunted and reportedly lived on the estate, then known as Arranmore.¹⁵ Aside from this apparent residence for Edmund, the Johnstons did not develop the old McDiarmid property, choosing instead to sell it in 1906, though young Johnston remained in the area, and married Daniel McDiarmid's daughter.

The next purchasers of the property were two Marylanders with their minds set on hunting. James T. Woodward and General John Gill were most certainly acquainted through business and social networks. Woodward, while establishing a reputation as a prominent banker in New York, particularly as president of Hanover National Bank, maintained his own farm and his sporting club memberships in Maryland. Though not an actual general officer, Gill had fought in the Civil War with a Maryland Confederate unit. He later founded the Mercantile Trust and Deposit Company of Baltimore, becoming one of the wealthiest men in that city.¹⁶ Gill was instrumental in starting the Climax Lodge near Greensboro, and his familiarity with the Sandhills included involvement with the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railway.¹⁷

With the investment of "a party of northern millionaires,"¹⁸ Woodward and Gill developed the Croatan Hunt Club of Manchester, Gill touted by a local North Carolina newspaper as "the moving spirit in the [Croatan Club] venture."¹⁹ The Croatan Club was formally established in 1907 when Woodward and Gill sold the old McDiarmid land plus additional acreage amassed during lumber company and Johnston ownership. Approximately 22,000 acres were sold to the Club. A group of northern capitalists and bankers invested in the deal: Bernard N. Baker, Baltimore Trust and Guarantee Co., William Woodward, Hanover National Bank of New York (James T Woodward's nephew), Oakleigh Thorne, president of the Trust Company of America, William DuPont, Cord Meyer, James H. Smith, and William B. Dickerson, banking house of Moore and Schley, and Andrew W. Smith, D.M. Look, and W.M. Barnum.²⁰

At the same time that the old McDiarmid property was becoming a hunt club, another club, the Buckthorne Hunt Lodge, was being formed in the same area. Located on the south side of the Lower Little River, opposite Croatan, Buckthorne was important in Overhills history because it brought James F. Jordan to the Sandhills.²¹ A former Guilford County sheriff and highly regarded sportsman from Greensboro, Jordan was a local legend who became well connected through sport with some of the wealthiest, most powerful men in America. After establishing his reputation leading hunt parties for millionaires who came to Guilford and Randolph Counties, he would become a critical driving force in the creation of Overhills. Jordan was active in the Sandhills as early as 1903 when he and his wife, Mary, acquired local family farms, the McRay, McFayden, and Murchison properties among others, towards the creation of Buckthorne in 1908. The Buckthorne Lodge, presided over by native North Carolina tobacco businessman R.J. Reynolds, lasted for several years.²² By 1917, it would be incorporated into Overhills, but only for a brief period, as it soon became part of Camp Bragg. Jordan was a common connection between Buckthorne and Croatan throughout each club's existence.²³

Aside from the initiative of individual men, one of the most important factors influencing the development of Buckthorne and Croatan was the penetration of the

Sandhills pine forest by a railroad in the late nineteenth century. The entrance of wealthy sportsmen and resort vacationers into the rural south was influenced by or coordinated with the railroad. By the 1890s a “second Northern invasion” occurred in North Carolina when northern investment in railroads opened the countryside to a recreation business predicated, at least in part, on hunting game.²⁴ In some cases, men who helped create hunt clubs were directly involved in railroad development.²⁵ In others, the railroad simply provided the access to land or resorts for urbanites from northern cities.

Across the state of North Carolina rural rail lines “cracked open the door of isolation,” and this is certainly true of the Sandhills area and Overhills in particular.²⁶ The Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railway Company (CFYVRR) was chartered in 1879, beginning with a forty-five mile stretch from Fayetteville to Gulf, running through the McDiarmid plantation. By the spring of 1884, the railroad provided access to and from Greensboro, with plans to expand its route to the coast at Wilmington, setting the stage for Guilford County hunt parties to visit the Sandhills and for the Consolidated Lumber Company to remove timber. At the turn of the century this regional railroad was divided up, its tracks becoming sidelines of larger networks. The old line between Fayetteville and Sanford became part of the Atlantic Coast Line and maintained a connection to the Seaboard Air Line, two trunk lines that provided access to much of the eastern United States.

Early Croatan and Buckthorne hunt parties came via the CFYVRR to a camp at the hamlet of Manchester. Roughly twelve miles north of Fayetteville on the south bank of the Lower Little River, Manchester was a rural cotton mill community that predated the Civil War.²⁷ By the late nineteenth century Manchester included two cotton mills, a Presbyterian church, a post office, a general store, and sawmills.²⁸ One of numerous rural Carolina communities boosted by the new rail lines of the late nineteenth century, Manchester became incorporated as a town in 1895, boasting 1000 residents by 1900.²⁹ With the entrance of the CFYVRR, a train station was positioned at Manchester and soon thereafter the Guilford County hunt parties paid their visits. Like much of the Sandhills, the New South for Manchester meant certain evolution. In the first half of the twentieth century, the rural railroad and cotton mill village began to disappear, being eventually eclipsed by the development of Fort Bragg and Pope Army Air Field (later Pope Air Force Base) as well as the expansion of the neighboring town of Spring Lake.³⁰

While bird hunting and fox hunts at Overhills would become fairly ordered affairs with permanent lodging, stables, and kennels established, the early Croatan and Buckhorn hunts were likely a bit more primitive. In his memoir, Aubrey Brooks, a prominent North Carolina lawyer and legislator, recalls hunting with Jordan in the Sandhills. In a description of a 1908 hunt at Buckthorne, Brooks’ recollections reveal a somewhat austere, wild quality to these days:

I joined J.F. Jordan, an experienced huntsman...on a week’s camping trip to Manchester...[For years] we had annually enjoyed these hunts which were entirely unorthodox in both preparation and performance. Jordan owned about 30,000 acres of cut-over land in the sandhills...The outing consisted of attaching a box car to a jerkwater passenger train and loading it with hounds and saddle horses...Near the Manchester station was a row of abandoned sawmill shacks which were crudely

*fitted up as a camp. At the crack of dawn each morning we had breakfast, mounted our horses, and loosed the hounds.*³¹

The camping trips to Manchester eventually gained more form and ceremony as the Croatan Club began to evolve. While little is known about the Croatan Club's roughly four years of existence, the property appears to have been expanded and there were some improvements. Deeds and newspaper articles refer to "tangible personal property," an office where regular stockholder meetings were held, and a former residence (Arranmore) of Edmund Johnston. Arable land, livestock, farming tools, vehicles, and feed are also noted. The extent and exact nature of these improvements remains unclear, though they undoubtedly contributed to a twofold increase in the value of the club in four years.³² A clubhouse had been conceived as early as 1906 when the Croatan Club formed, though it would be built in subsequent ownership.³³

The Croatan Club began to transition to a new era in 1910. James Woodward died in 1910 and General John Gill's interest in the estate seemed to have waned.³⁴ Replacing the Croatan founders were proprietors James F. Jordan and, at least briefly, Leonard Tufts, owner of the nearby Pinehurst resort. Tufts, who managed a 40,000 acre shooting preserve in Pinehurst, apparently entertained the notion of connecting Croatan Club with Pinehurst and developing a game preserve and resort. His commitment was fleeting however, as he sold his interest only two months following his and Jordan's acquisition proposal to the Croatan Club. Tufts was quickly replaced by William Kent, at the time a newly elected California congressman. By the spring of 1911, Kent and Jordan created the Kent-Jordan Company and acquired the Croatan Club.³⁵

The genesis of the Jordan and Kent relationship is unclear, yet its importance in Overhills history can hardly be overstated. Kent was apparently the right fit for Jordan as the two formed a partnership that would last for several years and ultimately forge the club of Overhills. While his Yale education and wealthy pedigree match subsequent Overhills investors, Kent's roots in Chicago and California and his political inclinations differ somewhat from the eastern capitalists who came before and after him. Elected in 1910, Kent's first session of Congress was the 1st session of the 62nd Congress. Raised near the Redwood forests of rural northern California, Kent was the son of a wealthy Chicago businessman. After graduating from Yale in 1887, he pursued a career in his father's business and real estate before entering politics. A Progressive Republican and Independent, his appreciation of the outdoors and progressive political ideals led him to numerous conservation efforts, emphasizing public control of lands. Known as a philanthropist, Kent donated land for the Muir Woods National Monument in California, one of the earliest national treasures of its kind.³⁶ In 1903 he commented on the degrading nature of cities, the need to seek recuperation and strength in nature and to "escape to wilder environments."³⁷ This sentiment was likely shared by most Overhills visitors throughout its history.

Shortly after the Kent-Jordan Company was formed, another Greensboro area man helped shape the estate. The J. Van Lindley Nursery Company invested in lands at Overhills in 1911. Purchasing an initial 643 acres along Jumping Run Creek, the Guilford County-based company established a local branch operation that would ship stock out to

Greensboro via the Atlantic Coast Line railroad. Two farming complexes were established on the eastern edge of Overhills. Adjacent to the creek's valley floor, which was cleared for planting nursery stock, a collection of buildings included a bungalow for occasional visits by owner Paul Cameron Lindley, a barn, workers' houses, and a school/church. On a prominent ridge overlooking Jumping Run from the southwest, a second complex was established, centered on the farm manager's (Atlas Simpson Davis) house, with nearby workers' cottages, barns, and several large fields extending out along the ridge.

The introduction of the nursery operation at Overhills, perhaps an effort to raise capital for development,³⁸ came about through another connection with James F. Jordan. He and the Lindley family were both well known in Guilford County. The Lindley family achieved prominence in Greensboro from the late nineteenth through early twentieth centuries. Following his father's Civil War era enterprise, John Van Lindley established one of the most important nurseries in the south in its time. With its base operation at Pomona, just west of Greensboro, Lindley expanded nursery operations in Forsyth, Moore, and Harnett Counties by the early twentieth century. With roots in a local Quaker community, J.V. Lindley and his son Paul C. Lindley were active in other business pursuits and civic endeavors as well.³⁹ P.C. Lindley was with Jordan in 1911 on a visit to Overhills to evaluate the soils along Jumping Run Creek that were praised for their fertility, as well as to lay out the planned town of Pinewild.⁴⁰

The Lindley Nursery branch at Overhills was successful, growing to include a total of 1,224 acres by 1914 and for nearly two decades, fields at Overhills such as Possum Bottom, Rice Patch, and Lashly Field served as a principal source of nursery stock for the company.⁴¹ Stock grown at Lindley consisted of a wide variety of trees, fruit trees, and shrubs. A partial list of products includes: Oak trees, Texas Umbrella trees, Norway Maples, Southern Magnolias, grapevines, apple trees, and Pineapple blight proof pear trees, as well as English Laurel, Nandina, Border Forsythia, Japanese Privet, Deodara Cedar, Flowering Quince, Firethorn, and Amur River Privet. In addition to nursery stock, some of the fields were dedicated to crops like corn, soybeans, potatoes, melons and garden produce.⁴²

In tandem with the introduction of the nursery and resonant of Leonard Tufts' cursory interest, Kent and Jordan explored development ideas well beyond a hunt club or game preserve. Concepts of a planned town were seriously entertained as was a grand resort hotel. A prospective arcadian community called Pinewild was conceived in 1911. Playing on the names of western Sandhills resort towns Pinehurst and Southern Pines, this new town was purportedly laid out in 1911, set to cover 200 acres and include camps and residential homes, a library, theater, clubhouse, waterworks, an electric plant, parks, a schoolhouse, churches, a railroad station, and a lake with a center island and gondola rides.⁴³ Several years later, plans included a 200-room resort hotel, to be called the Vanderbilt Inn, for which Jordan had secured a party of investors and a highly respected New York architect.⁴⁴

While Kent and Jordan dreamed of something greater in scope, they established instead a relatively simple country club that opened for its inaugural winter season in 1913. In a setting of rolling hills and a vast largely cutover pine and scrub oak forest, the Overhills Country Club featured relatively few facilities at first. A clubhouse, or "well-

equipped little hotel,” with fourteen upstairs bedrooms, a covered porch, a gun room, and dining room offered lodging. Only a few steps away from the Clubhouse porch, the golf course was a substantial creation, designed by one of America’s premier architects, Donald Ross. Both the Clubhouse and golf course were situated atop a broad ridge overlooking the lake and railroad just to the east. This ridge, later called “the Hill,” would form the nucleus of Overhills for its remaining history. Near the railroad, a passenger station had been constructed by the Atlantic Coast Line, and close by were bird dog kennels and a farm barn. A few sand trails cut through the turkey and blackjack oaks and young longleaf pines. Patches of old growth still stood, including scarred trees tapped for resin. The rustic, uncomplicated character of the club impressed enough people to continue its development and guide its history for decades to come.

The earliest parties to visit were fairly diverse. In the inaugural 1913-1914 winter season, thirty parties registered in the guest book, the first signing in December. Reflecting local interest and Jordan’s influence, a number of visitors came from North Carolina, though a slim majority hailed from New York and Connecticut. Over the next few years the majority of parties arrived from New York and Connecticut with some North Carolinians continuing to visit and some from various areas, including guests from Washington D.C. in 1916, likely friends of Congressman Kent. By the seventh season, the number of North Carolinians dropped off, coincident with James Jordan’s death in 1919. In that season Jordan’s wife Mary signaled her farewell, signing the guest book one last time “Mi Última Visita a Overhills—¡Adios!” In the ensuing decade, the guest book is

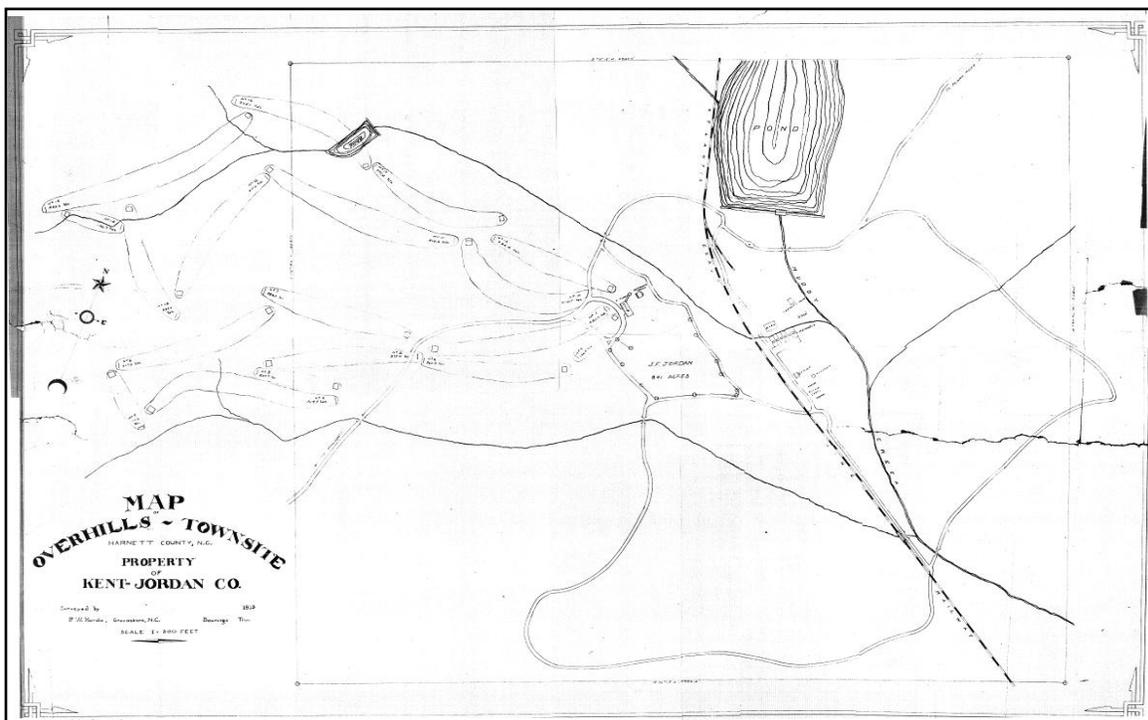


Figure 2.1: The 1913 Kent-Jordan Company Property, Overhills Townsite in Harnett County, N.C. Surveyed by P.W. Hardie of Greensboro, N.C. The map shows the railroad, the Overhills golf course, the Hill, the lake, and the early buildings at Overhills. Overhills Maps Collection, Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

dominated by members of New York society, including groups of men who were friends and business colleagues. Several had common roots as Yale graduates and were either partners, fellow directors or common investors in corporations, investment firms or banks. The number of visitors at Overhills in any given year typically did not exceed a few dozen.

Two important visitors came to Overhills in the club's fourth winter season. William Averell Harriman made his first trip in March of 1917. At the time he was a young man who had graduated from Yale less than four years prior. With a massive inheritance from his railroad baron father, Edward Henry Harriman, W.A. Harriman would soon begin to build his own business enterprise in shipbuilding, capitalizing on a Naval buildup during World War I.⁴⁵ He would later go on to run a major New York investment firm and eventually turn to national politics, becoming a major politician and diplomat of the mid-twentieth century.⁴⁶ In the 1910s and 1920s Harriman nurtured the sportsman lifestyle bestowed by his upbringing, developing a particular passion for polo. While he had already traveled to exotic places on wild adventures, in Overhills he saw enough beauty and potential to commission a comfortable small cottage for himself in 1918, adjacent to the Clubhouse.

Like Harriman, Percy Avery Rockefeller was a Yale graduate (though considerably earlier, in 1900) and a millionaire progeny. By his first visit to Overhills in the fall of 1916, Rockefeller had inherited a fortune from his father, William Rockefeller, and had assumed a role as one of the leading industrialists of his time. The nephew of John D. Rockefeller, Percy accepted a director position for National City Bank soon after leaving Yale. He would go on to serve as a director for numerous corporations, representing a wide variety of industries, being called "one of the nation's leading industrialists and financiers" at the time of his death.⁴⁷ After Rockefeller's initial visit to Overhills, he returned twice in the winter season of 1917-1918. On his second trip, Rockefeller brought his wife, Isabel Stillman Rockefeller and their five children: Isabel, Avery, Winifred, Faith, and Gladys. Something about Overhills obviously struck Rockefeller as he would go on to commission his own large house on the Hill and soon make other investments in the club, eventually becoming the primary financier and owner of the estate, which itself became part of his family legacy.

Like his brother William Goodsell Rockefeller, Percy married a daughter of James Stillman, who was another tycoon of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a railroad and banking magnate. Isabel Stillman, who inherited and maintained her own fortune, showed commitment to Overhills equal to Percy's, albeit in her own way.⁴⁸ Investing in a new lodge on the Hill for her children and acting as a benevolent spirit for Overhills employees, tenant farmers, and the people of the surrounding community, Isabel made her stamp on Overhills history. She is remembered as an independent, strong-willed, caring person, cultured in though not necessarily predisposed to the high society to which she was born.⁴⁹

The entrance of Percy Rockefeller and Averell Harriman corresponded with and contributed to a significant transition for Overhills. The critical involvement of Kent-Jordan had ended by 1919. Kent left the venture to his return to California after Congressional service ended in 1917 and Jordan's death two years later came unexpectedly. In this time frame, Harriman had constructed his cottage and Rockefeller had

They stayed as guests in Rockefeller's or Harriman's cottage or in the Clubhouse, where the daily schedule included a foxhunter's breakfast at six-thirty in the morning, bird-hunters at eight o'clock in the morning, ladies at ten o'clock, then lunch, afternoon tea, and dinner.⁵² Preceding the arrival of visitors, hounds, horses, foxes, quail, and polo ponies were shipped to the estate. Hunting reached its zenith in the 1920s as fox hunting fell under the leadership of Percy Rockefeller. Bird hunting was organized through the syndicate, and quail habitat and bird dogs were carefully maintained. The estate continued to expand in size, covering over 41,000 acres by the end of the decade. New facilities were added, including a new hunt complex and a polo field ca. 1921, and a new lodge was built for the Rockefeller family in 1929. In addition to seeking solitude and escaping to a wilder environment, Overhills offered a range of recreational opportunities, including foxhunting, bird hunting, golf, polo, horseback riding, trap shooting, tennis, swimming, and fishing.

With the expansion of activities in the 1920s, additional facilities took shape. By the early part of the decade, additions to the Hill area included Harriman's relatively modest framed Craftsman-style cottage (1918) adjacent to Percy Rockefeller's larger concrete and steel Covert cottage (1921), to the rear of which a bungalow for Rockefeller's valet was also built (ca. 1921). In 1929, one of the most substantial and symbolic buildings was constructed. Attributed to Isabel Rockefeller, the Croatan Lodge was built for her children and grandchildren. While similar to the Covert in its structural fabric and design, Croatan was truly planned more as a lodge than a house, with most of its floor plan devoted to several bedrooms, sleeping porches, and a nursery. A large living room and small dining room offered public space. Unique in the use of brick and ceramic roof tiles salvaged from historic buildings in Charleston, South Carolina, Croatan became an enduring symbol of Overhills history and a favorite destination for the Rockefeller family for generations. Together the Clubhouse, Harriman Cottage, Covert Cottage, and Croatan Lodge were arranged in arcing fashion around the first and ninth holes of the golf course, completing the historic Hill area for the time being.

Away from the Hill other facilities were built as well. Out along the 15th fairway of the golf course, a polo field was carved from the pine forest, with a pine allee approach from the Hill. Near the railroad and passenger station, the old farm barn was converted to a polo barn and a handsome riding stable was erected. A new bird dog kennel was constructed in this area as well, and a bath house was built at the lake. South of the hill a small dairy barn was erected. Several workers' cottages were added, including one for the bird dog keeper, estate superintendent, chauffeur, and the dairy manager.

One of the more notable additions during the early 1920s was the construction of a hunt complex, commissioned by Percy Rockefeller. Located roughly one mile east of the Hill, the complex consisted of a formal arrangement of buildings and landscaping, featuring matching kennels and stables, both U-shaped with interior courtyards, haylofts and upper floors for living quarters and dressing rooms. These buildings faced one another across a "Circus," a meticulously landscaped, oval-shaped riding and training area with jumps. Pylons adorned with hounds marked the entrance and exit for the Circus, the western side of which followed another pine allee. Joseph B. Thomas, who designed the

kennel building, noted the complex as “very handy,” and “perhaps one of the prettiest to look at that I ever saw.”⁵³



Figure 2.3: Bird’s eye view of the Hill, ca. 1938: A–Croatan Lodge; B–Covert; C–Harriman Cottage; D–Clubhouse; E–Servants Cottages; F–Alabaster Cottage; G–Water tower; H–Railroad; I–Pine Allee. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

The grand new hunt facilities served the Overhills Hunt, which was formally organized in 1920-1921. While fox hunting dated back to the Croatan Club, and perhaps the Johnston years, by the 1920s the sport fell under the influence if not patronage of Percy Rockefeller. Its character rapidly evolved to become more consistent with the sport’s status among America’s elite.⁵⁴ With proper facilities in place, a pack led by one of the leading breeders and foxhunters of the day was brought to Overhills each season. While Jordan had served as the Master Huntsman for years, his passing in 1919 created a void that Rockefeller filled by inviting J.B. Thomas to help lead hunts at Overhills. Though a professional architect, Thomas is best known as a sportsman and breeder of hounds. Thomas’ personal esteem for the sport as well as his high-spirited character is well illustrated in his classic publication on the history of the sport in America, in which he describes aspects of the chase at Overhills. Thomas, who hunted 118 days out of 11 months of each year while maintaining his hound breeding in Middleburg, Virginia, also spent each winter at Overhills from 1921 to 1930.⁵⁵

Records kept by Thomas’ huntsman and his own reflections provide the most insight into foxhunting at Overhills in the 1920s. Thomas found the terrain generally well suited for foxhunting. In his descriptions of Overhills, Thomas noted the unusual and highly desired absence of wire fencing on the estate as well as the numerous rides that

hunters used to follow the hounds. These broad sandy trails, which cut through the forest at dimensions of, were reminiscent of a French landscape.⁵⁶ Much of the forest was, by the 1920s, beginning to regenerate after the lumber company harvest, while some clusters of more mature pines remained. Fire was a common occurrence, often creating patches if not expanses of a charred landscape. Agricultural fields, including cotton, the predominant crop of the day were scattered across the landscape as were hundreds of small pea patches. The greatest natural challenge presented by the terrain came in the form of the ubiquitous pocosins and streams that dissected the land. These thickly vegetated narrow wetlands and sometimes broadened swamps served as covert for the fox and obstacles for the chase. Although most hunts were small-scale, private affairs with a handful of friends as a hunt party, they were formal, rich with the traditions of proper attire, the finest hounds, and horses. In at least one episode in the 1920s, scenes of hunters at Overhills were featured in the New York Times.⁵⁷

Fox hunts began in the morning, as early as seven o'clock in the morning. While Rockefeller's Hunt Complex was common, other launching points included the old Manchester Camp, the Nursery, and the Fairley store in Manchester.⁵⁸ In the early 1920s the old Manchester Camp was still heavily used.⁵⁹ Hunts would draw in different directions, lasting up to three hours and covering as much as 27 miles of Sandhills terrain. With the objective of drawing different coverts with each outing, to cover as much territory as possible in the course of a season,⁶⁰ these hunts exposed much of the massive estate to those riding to hounds. The geographic breadth of the chase covered an expanse of natural and cultural environment. Hunt reports record a long list of local place names, serving as a narrative map of the rural country. Names like "haunted house," "colored cemetery," and "Fairley's Swamp," convey history for huntsmen who were keenly aware of the houses, rye fields, tenant farms, rivers, creeks, roads, ridge tops, and other local landmarks. Detailed accounts of hunts can be quite vivid descriptions of landscape features as well as the colorful names of hounds:

Hit off cold line immediately and a nice piece of cold trailing over burnt ground...when two large grays jumped out of a tuft of grass right under Marshall's horse...the pack ran fast along the river for a half a mile, then swinging left handed they swept across the cotton fields and crossed the Manchester-McCormick bridge road. Just as I got round I saw them go away with a great cry and drive led by Kate, Troupe, Pride and Rattle.⁶¹

Bird hunting had roots at Overhills as deep as the chase. With the incorporation of the Shooting Syndicate in 1921, the sport was elevated to a more organized status than it had previously enjoyed. The syndicate comprised a maximum of fifteen members, each contributing \$500 per year in membership dues. Leasing shooting and fishing rights from the Overhills Land Company, the syndicate enjoyed fee-based lodging privileges at the Clubhouse and use of the kennels, as well as motor transportation and use of the golf course. Some investment to support construction of a kennel was required from the syndicate. Guests could shoot for \$10 per day, while family enjoyed members' rights.⁶²

Active for ten years, the syndicate consisted of a small group of powerful businessmen, industrialists, bankers, financiers, and capitalists. The business and financial

interests of syndicate members were collectively massive and global in scope. The majority were from New York City. While several members came and went, a core group lasted for the duration. This group included the Harriman brothers (W.A. and E. Roland), George Herbert Walker, Percy Rockefeller, and F.W. Allen. The Harrimans, Rockefeller, and Allen shared Yale University alumni status and, at least the former two, Skull and Bones Society memberships. The Harrimans, Walker, and Rockefeller all shared investment and director and/or officer roles in the investment firm of W.A. Harriman and Company. Another regular syndicate member was a pioneer in the automobile industry. Windsor White, of Cleveland, Ohio, was president of the large manufacturer White Trucking Company.⁶³

Some of the typical hunt scenes encountered by these men and others were captured by another interesting figure involved in fox and bird hunting at Overhills. One of the cottages built near the Hunt Complex was unique in its design as a studio and its occupant was unique as well. Through the patronage of Percy Rockefeller, Overhills had its own distinguished resident artist, Percival Rosseau. Born on an antebellum plantation in Louisiana, Rosseau was a Civil War orphan who led an adventurous life as a young man. After running cattle from Mexico to Kansas, floating timber down the Mississippi, and starting an import business, Rosseau turned to his talent for art, traveling to Paris at the age of 35 to study at the Academie Julian. He eventually became a highly skilled sporting dog painter. After returning to America early in the First World War, Rosseau took up residence in the Old Lyme artist colony in the seacoast village of southern Connecticut known for its landscape painters. From 1925 until his death in 1937, Rosseau spent his summers in Lyme and winters at Overhills where he painted numerous hunt scenes and bird dogs.⁶⁴

Beyond the sport of hunting, golf was an increasingly popular form of recreation in the early twentieth century, particularly in the emergence of country clubs and resorts, a trend recognized early at Overhills by Kent and Jordan. The Overhills golf course was completed, at least in its initial form, by 1913. Designed by the preeminent architect Donald Ross, the construction and occasional renovation work seems to have been overseen by the famous architect as well. The course was likely of the highest caliber produced by his hand. Playing at 6,544 yards, the course was comparable in length to some of Ross' longer designs in nearby Pinehurst and Southern Pines. The front nine began just beyond the clubhouse porch and included two par 3 holes, a single par 5 with a sharp dogleg left, and a signature par 4 with its tee on the highest landform around. The back nine took a more meandering path across the landscape, a more open arrangement that swept north through the pine forest before returning to the clubhouse. There were no par 3 holes on the back nine, but two par 5 holes, the longest at 585 yards. A 1917 *Golf Illustrated* article described the course as "one of the very finest golf courses in the country." A few years later, a visiting golf professional acclaimed the course as better than any at Pinehurst.⁶⁵

The golf course was intended to be a major feature of Overhills, whether a central part of the Pinewild town or an offering for guests of the Vanderbilt Inn; however it would never attain such prominence. Instead the course would remain private with limited exposure, garnering little of the attention or frequency of play of high profile country clubs.

It would change over the years, being reduced in length, the back nine holes abandoned and then renovated and the layout altered. Few records related to the course or golf activity survive. A diary from 1923 indicates fairly informal play by some guests walking less than eighteen holes and shooting well above par. The only tournaments known to have been played were held by Overhills staff, at least a few of whom was quite skilled. In the 1920s, Fort Bragg soldiers and their lady friends were invited to play the course during summer months for a fee. In the winter, men like Percy Rockefeller and the Harriman brothers played occasional rounds. One Shooting Syndicate member, G.H. Walker, most certainly enjoyed the course. Walker was a president of the United States Golf Association and founder of the Walker Cup international tournament.⁶⁶

A team sport with ancient, international roots, polo was another form of recreation emblematic of the distinguished social class of sportsmen who frequented Overhills in the late 1910s and 1920s. Records of polo are virtually nonexistent, though it is clear that a polo field was established and the old farm barn was renovated to accommodate polo ponies. The proponent of polo was undoubtedly W.A. Harriman, an avid player who led the United States to a 1928 world championship victory against Argentina.⁶⁷ The polo field set in the piney woods landscape was likely quite unique compared to the formal grounds at the Meadow Brook Club in New York, where competition was common. It is unknown if and perhaps unlikely that the field at Overhills was used for anything but practice. Local matches were held at nearby Fort Bragg and Harriman competed in Pinehurst. A 1921 letter from an English Army officer in charge of the Sandhills Polo Association mentions an expected visit from Harriman who would “bring down a big bunch of ponies and his own players.”⁶⁸ In a 1923 match at Fort Bragg, Overhills players totaled three, a necessary fourth borrowed from the Army.⁶⁹

Hunting, golf, and polo were only some of the activities that might fill a day at Overhills. Unique insight into daily affairs for a man of leisure at Overhills is offered by a diary kept by Godfrey S. Rockefeller. After graduating from Yale, Rockefeller spent part of the winter and early spring at the North Carolina estate. Rockefeller’s daily musings, written from the comfort of his uncle’s Covert Cottage, reveal a mixture of quiet days and nights with intimate gatherings and the occasional hustle and bustle of hunt parties or visitors’ arrivals and departures. Rockefeller’s daily adventures included varying combinations of a few holes of golf, bird hunting, shooting clay pigeons, and riding. Evening activities might involve playing the graphophone or the “victor,” extended conversations, even talking religion, playing bridge or poker, or writing letters. The quarry of a day’s hunt might have been served for dinner. Trips to Pinehurst and a picnic on the estate were other options.⁷⁰

Somewhat different crowds enjoyed Overhills in the two decades of the 1910s and 1920s. As noted above, the guest book for the 1910s includes a varied group of men and women. By the 1920s, visiting parties were mostly associated with the Shooting Syndicate, friends or family of the Rockefellers or Harrimans, fox hunter associates of Rockefeller or Thomas, or family or friend of the Rockefellers. Increasingly, the latter became predominant. A direct reflection of the importance of Percy Rockefeller’s personal connections and a Yale heritage in the development and sustainment of Overhills was a three-year ritual begun in 1928. In 1928, 1929 and 1930, Percy and Frederic Allen

entertained several members of their Yale class of 1900 at Overhills. This exclusive group included William S. Coffin, Corliss E. Sullivan, and John W. Cross. Still, at least in the early 1920s, some of the “old guard” continued to visit. Godfrey Rockefeller notes in 1923 the presence of “the old fox hunters,” a likely reference to the “mostly Guilford County people” who came to hunt at Manchester in the Jordan days.⁷¹

While sporting and leisure were the focus of many at Overhills in the 1920s, particularly in the winter months, there were many folks across the estate engaged in work. Overhills in general was run by a superintendent, a position that constituted a pivotal point of order. Correspondence with club members and estate owners, plans for visits, maintenance of club facilities, management of game birds, food fields, stables, dogs and kennels passed through one man.⁷² Below the superintendent were domestic staff, tenant farmers, kennel hands, and others. While cooks and other domestic staff would be brought on seasonally, hunt guides, stable hands and particularly farmers were local residents. Tenant farming was in place at Overhills as early as the 1910s, providing limited revenue as well as deterring poachers and fostering excellent quail habitat. Thirty tenants resided on over 3,000 acres of land at Overhills in 1925, farming 360 acres. Cotton was then the most common crop, followed by corn, with tobacco as a small minority. Other crops listed in the 1925 Farm Census Report included rye, wheat, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, and garden produce. Some folks continued the old tradition of tar production; nearly 400 barrels were sold at market in 1925 and records show tar being produced on the estate into the 1930s. While not farming, laborers at Overhills were engaged in a range of jobs, including cutting and sawing wood, working pea patches, fighting fires, watering shrubbery, maintaining the polo field, golf course, and club grounds, caring for Mrs. Harriman’s lawn, carpentry work, and dragging the roads.⁷³

One Overhills farm that dated to the Kent-Jordan days was distinguished from the others in several ways. Long Valley Farm, situated on the southeastern edge of Overhills, along the Lower Little River, was at one point a scientific farm, operating interdependently with Overhills, eventually becoming a separate Rockefeller-owned property. The farm was sold by the Kent-Jordan Company in 1912, shortly thereafter acquired by Robert Wall Christian. An occasional visitor at the Overhills Country Club, Christian created a substantial farming operation at Long Valley, expanding it to nearly 1,000 acres, incorporating a variety of crops and livestock, implementing experimental farming techniques, and adding a grist mill. Upon Christian’s death in 1927, Long Valley came back to Overhills, purchased by Windsor White and Percy Rockefeller. In 1937, Percy Rockefeller’s nephew, James Stillman Rockefeller acquired Long Valley, eventually replacing Christian’s house with his own and adding numerous buildings in the 1940s. Through the 1950s Long Valley tenant farming was managed by the Overhills superintendent. J.S. Rockefeller would maintain the farm as a private retreat into the twenty-first century.⁷⁴

With the Wall Street crash in 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression, Overhills came to a significant crossroads. Interest and activity by Harriman and others had waned. In 1932 the Shooting Syndicate closed and estate Superintendent Captain Frank Miller was dismissed.⁷⁵ The back nine holes of the golf course were abandoned around the same time. The polo field stood idle. J.B. Thomas no longer brought his pack of hounds,

leaving Percy Rockefeller to start his own. Financially, the Overhills Land Company had been operating with the good graces of Rockefeller's personal wealth for years. As funds were required from stockholders to pay taxes and other expenses Rockefeller was primarily responsible for advances made and from 1928 to 1934, the only stockholder advancing funds to the corporation.⁷⁶ Rockefeller's personal financing of the estate and his personal interest and leadership distinguished him from the others. Indeed by the early 1930s, Overhills had become largely the private country home of Percy and Isabel. Labeled by the local newspaper in 1932 as "the Carolina estate of Mr. Percy A. Rockefeller," Overhills rapidly evolved from a spirited, exclusive club to a secluded family retreat.⁷⁷

Another casualty of the Great Depression was the local nursery operation, though its doors were not closed for good. The Lindley Nursery Company sold its 1200 acres to Isabel Rockefeller in 1932, which she added to her personal holdings at Overhills.⁷⁸ Under a corporation titled Jumping Run Club, Inc. Isabel owned the old Nursery property and the Croatan Lodge. She used part of the former Lindley property to establish the Hope Farm Preventorium, a facility designed to provide free health care for local children threatened by or suffering from tuberculosis, consumption, and respiratory disease.⁷⁹ Young patients, many of whom came from homes in which tuberculosis had affected a parent, benefited from a daily regimen of study, recreation, rest, a healthy diet, including goat's milk, and occasional doses of castor oil. The Preventorium operated from 1934 - 1936, closing after Isabel's death. While Isabel was known for her generosity and closeness with Overhills employees, Hope Farm was perhaps her greatest gift to the local community. After it was closed, a limited amount of nursery stock and farming continued on the old nursery lands under Overhills management.⁸⁰

By the late 1930s, Overhills would become Percy and Isabel Rockefeller's legacy for their family. Percy died in 1934. Subsequently his son Avery approached the remaining Land Company stockholders, requesting their shares be turned over to his father's estate, in recognition of their debt to Percy Rockefeller.⁸¹ With the resulting settlement, the Overhills Land Company was dissolved and its shares transferred in 1938 to Overhills Farms Inc., a corporation established for ownership by the Rockefeller children.⁸² Isabel Rockefeller passed away in 1935, aware that Overhills would be left to her children.⁸³ With his sisters and brother-in-law Frederic Lincoln, Avery Rockefeller assumed control of the estate, emerging as a patriarchal figure for the next several decades. Thenceforth Overhills became a family holding and, with continued farming operations, entered a lengthy period of private leisure for the family.

In the decades following the deaths of Percy and Isabel Rockefeller, Overhills experienced a number of significant changes while sustaining some connections with the past and its status as a beloved vacation home for the family. Notable changes resulted from several factors, including World War II, the growth of the family, and the transition from the hunt and country club environment and sportsman lifestyle to a more intimate family retreat. Despite these changes, continuity was maintained at Overhills through the Rockefeller family, some of the key staff, and favored recreational activities.

Certain staff members who came to Overhills in the 1920s carried on at Overhills with lengthy tenures. Superintendent W.B. Bruce first arrived in 1921, working for Percy Rockefeller. He, along with his wife Thelma, exercised certain authority over the estate

from 1932 into the 1970s, maintaining stability while representing an obvious connection to the estate's storied past. Hired by Percy Rockefeller in the early 1920s, Bruce came to be a revered character by employees and Rockefeller family, four generations of whom passed through his tenure. Men like Archie Cameron, Willie King, and Edward Bruce, farm manager, stable manager, and carpenter, respectively, also spent decades at Overhills with their families. In later years this trend would continue. While some workers spent limited time at the estate, certain families became permanent residents. Thurman Washington and Bernice Morgan spent decades at Overhills. Maggie McDonald was a renowned cook at Overhills for most of her life, becoming particularly close to Avery Rockefeller and his wife Anna in her later years. Families like the Tylers and the Fraziers dedicated significant portions of their lives to Overhills, with multiple family members on the payroll, some farming, some working in the houses or stables. The Darden family ran the dairy from the 1920s into the 1940s. Atlas Simpson Davis, the farm manager who came to manage the Nursery in the late 1910s, stayed on at Overhills in the house he built and continued to manage farming in the nursery area through the 1950s.⁸⁴

While certain staff members and their families offered continuity, change was inevitable. In the late 1930s and World War II era, Overhills underwent a major contraction in size. With the settlement of Percy Rockefeller's estate in the late 1930s, Avery Rockefeller was forced to sell many of his father's assets to pay estate taxes. Later, as Avery grew concerned about war-related escalation of property taxes, he continued to unload large tracts of land with little concern for cost, preferring to keep "only Overhills and the farms."⁸⁵ From a pinnacle of over 40,000 acres in 1930, roughly three quarters of the estate was sold off. A large portion of this acreage would ultimately become a timber plantation on the western side of Overhills, eventually being sold to Fort Bragg as training area in the 1980s.

At the same time that Rockefeller was selling off land, he met the continuing challenge of financing the operational costs of the estate. On behalf of Overhills Farms, Inc., Rockefeller invested in a new Georgia-based grocery chain named Piggly Wiggly in 1939. Dividends from this investment would benefit Overhills for decades, providing funds for capital improvements and operating expenses. The investment was so profitable that Overhills eventually risked becoming a personal holding company. To avoid a tremendous tax burden, Overhills diversified its investments, becoming part owner of a local car dealership in the 1960s. The latter provided the occasional car for use on the estate but limited only revenue for operating expenses, being primarily an arrangement for tax purposes.⁸⁶

Impacts from World War II are noteworthy. Supplies were rationed, limiting operations and maintenance. Avery notes in his own brief history of Overhills that there was great difficulty in obtaining resources and coping with the Office of Price Administration (OPA) during the war.⁸⁷ Meanwhile Overhills granted maneuver rights to the Army, happy to avoid condemnation of land for installation expansion.⁸⁸ Troops moved across the property in training exercises, bivouacking in some areas. Paratroopers dropped into the Bain farm field and at least one glider and one cargo plane crash landed at Overhills.⁸⁹ In addition to the regular presence of soldiers, the massive expansion of

Fort Bragg impacted Overhills farming, creating a shortage of tenants. The farmers found higher wages helping to build the new barracks complexes on the installation.

After the war, Overhills existed largely as a private winter vacation home and farm. Quail hunting and associated habitat management continued on a greatly reduced scale from the days of the Shooting Syndicate.⁹⁰ Bird hunting survived as the interest of a few, namely Superintendent W.B. Bruce and eventually family members like Pat Rockefeller (Avery's son, Avery Rockefeller Jr.) and Robert Model (son of Faith Rockefeller). By the 1950s Avery Rockefeller had given up hunting and Bruce carried on the tradition, albeit in limited fashion. In the 1960s, inspired by Model, a brief, minor resurgence of hunting occurred.⁹¹ Most coveys were sought around farm fields instead of food patches. A steady corps of three or four retrievers and setters kept by Bruce carried the workload, in contrast to the forty dogs kenneled in the 1920s. Most birds were wild, though some were brought in for a few years. Fox hunting as a formal sport ended in the 1930s, though an occasional chase may have occurred as late as the early 1940s. Correspondence in 1940 suggests an informal hunt was led by Mr. Bruce, though by this time the hunt was by car. By then, the hunt stables housed dairy cows and the kennels were abandoned, used for the occasional dog show and later storage.⁹²

Over the years the Rockefeller family continued to expand and Overhills became a cherished vacation home for multiple generations. The children of Percy and Isabel regularly visited the estate in the winter months, now bringing their invited guests as well as their own children. Four of Percy and Isabel's children married and had children, and by the end of the 1940s more than a dozen grandchildren of Percy and Isabel had been born. Visiting parties typically ranged from two to four people and included immediate family and often friends. Most stays lasted a few days though some would extend for a week or more.

By the 1940s Isabel Rockefeller's Croatan Lodge was clearly the most popular place for visitors. Some of the other buildings fell out of use, and the Hill area evolved under Avery's direction, beginning in the 1940s and culminating in 1963. With its primary function lost, the Clubhouse was seldom used and it was expensive to maintain. Meanwhile Percy Rockefeller's Covert was utilized for family and guests for a while, and then for storage, but by the 1950s it too became expensive to maintain and less favorable for guests. Both buildings were torn down. In the early 1940s, Harriman Cottage became the permanent residence for W.B. and Thelma Bruce.⁹³

As the Clubhouse and Covert were lost and the family continued to grow, the Hill underwent an architectural transformation. Replacing major hallmarks of the Kent-Jordan and Overhills Land Company days, three ranch style houses were built between 1949 and 1963. While the layout of these buildings continued to partially ring the Hill, maintaining the original arc around the first and ninth holes on the golf course, the stylistic and functional departure from the old buildings was dramatic. Sycamore and Cherokee cottages occupied the general space previously taken by Percy's stately house, with a modest landscaped sandy path connecting Sycamore to Croatan Lodge that previously linked the Covert with Croatan. Relatively simple architecturally, largely functional in design, these two houses offered several bedrooms and baths to accommodate visiting family, but no distinguishing features. The last major residence to be built at Overhills, Bird Song was a

much larger ranch style house that was positioned close to the old Clubhouse location. With excellent views of the golf course, a rear terrace facing the first hole and the front door the 18th, Bird Song retained the conventional exterior appearance of the other ranches. It contained an expansive floor plan, including fourteen bedrooms and matching baths and an indoor pool. In addition to its scale, a more detailed interior with more elegant furnishings and decorations distinguished it from Sycamore and Cherokee.

Not only did the three ranch homes diverge drastically from the buildings of the club era, but their construction differed as well. Unlike Percy and Isabel's reliance on New York architectural firms for the Covert and Croatan, Cherokee and Bird Song were partly designed by Avery. Construction labor was truly local as Sycamore and Cherokee were at least partly built by Overhills staff, while Bird Song was built by a local man, Bill Shaw, with deep family roots in the area, including a personal history with Overhills.⁹⁴ The introduction of the modern ranch-style homes created a modernity and commonality that almost seemed to belie the historical character of Overhills. Ultimately, the majestic Croatan Lodge remained a stalwart symbol of the past and a popular destination for the Rockefellers. Bird Song became something of a counterpart to Croatan, particularly as a residence for Avery and Anna Rockefeller and their children and grandchildren.

Despite these changes, the Hill maintained its functional and symbolic importance as the residential heart of Overhills for the Rockefeller family. For them and their friends, a short walk from the Hill was a regular occurrence as, beginning in the 1940s and persisting until the 1990s, horseback riding clearly supplanted hunting as the preferred activity. Individuals rode on short and long rides based on skill and interest. Ponies and horses were available at the riding stable and in earlier years some were trucked to Overhills from Virginia and Connecticut for the family to ride during their winter visits. The numerous trails that once carried the likes of Percy Rockefeller and J.B. Thomas came to carry Rockefeller's great-grandchildren. A network of bridle trails, many cut in the 1920s and 1930s, covering approximately 200 miles was maintained.⁹⁵ The names of many of these trails survived by way of oral tradition passed down through the family and stable managers.

Golf received renewed interest at Overhills in the late 1950s, at least on behalf of the staff and some family members. Around 1959 the sand greens on the front nine were replaced with Bermuda grass. The back nine, which had been abandoned for decades, was re-established. This effort was largely that of the Overhills staff who attempted to follow the original outline,⁹⁶ though the new back nine only imprecisely resembled the original. The original Par 3 Hole #14 was removed and the original Holes #12 and #13 became Holes #13 and #14, respectively. The new Hole #12 was carved from the original Hole #11. Hole #15, which had a portion of its fairway converted to a polo field, was reduced in length when it was rebuilt. In total the rebuilt back nine was nearly 500 yards shorter than the 1913 layout. The course maintained its relative obscurity in a region known for the sport throughout the twentieth century. Nonetheless, it provided a popular spot for occasional rounds of golf by family and employees as well as a children's playground and aesthetic backdrop for bird watching or viewing the sunset.

Other popular activities in the throughout the later years included swimming in the lake, paddle tennis, floor tennis, and trap shooting. Winter water temperatures below 50°F

and water moccasins in the spring could not deter some of the Rockefellers and their guests. Paddle tennis was played on a court built just behind the Croatan Lodge and floor tennis was played on an asphalt court near the old Alabaster cottage location. While bird hunting occurred minimally, a new trap shooting course, located off the golf course, was built in the 1980s, proving popular for several family members and their friends. Strolls along a boardwalk elevated over the lake's shallow upper waters inspired some, especially the birders who visited.

For decades following the formation of Overhills Farms, Inc., agriculture continued to be a significant activity, contributing at least a minor revenue stream to operational costs for the estate. Like the rest of eastern North Carolina, flue-cured tobacco was a primary cash crop in the mid twentieth century.⁹⁷ Wood-fired stick barns were built by Overhills staff as early as the 1920s and into the 1940s. Cotton served as a second cash crop in the 1950s and 1960s. Wheat, corn, and soybeans were grown as well. The tenant farming system persisted, focused on tobacco. In 1951, fourteen tenant farmers worked an overall 92 acre allotment with individuals farming from three to ten acres.⁹⁸ While there was some turnover among tenants, some lived and worked on the estate for years, if not decades.⁹⁹

By the late 1970s farming began to change significantly. In 1979 the tenant farming system ended, and a new corporate farming operation was initiated. By this time many of the long-term farmers and their families had moved on, but those that remained simply converted to employee status, their residential privileges retained. Tobacco farming was mechanized, requiring fewer hands in the fields and bulk barns replaced the old wooden structures. Tobacco farming continued its predominance into the 1980s, but eventually became less profitable. In the 1980s hog farming became the primary focus of agricultural operations. Significant investment was made in a swine operation established in the southern nursery field complex near the old nursery manager's house. Some fallow deer were raised for a brief period as well. Strawberries proved to be a profitable, albeit brief venture, in the 1990s.

While changes had occurred over the years, the passing of Avery Rockefeller marked the end of an era. Avery first came to Overhills as a young adolescent in 1917 and continued to visit throughout his adult life. Following his father's death, Avery became the main leadership figure of Overhills for the entire family. Co-founder of Schroder, Rockefeller & Company, a New York investment firm, Rockefeller was a successful businessman who came of age at Overhills. He witnessed and participated in the hunting culture of his father's generation and grew into a conservationist and naturalist in his later years.¹⁰⁰ In addition to exercising a managerial role for the estate, Rockefeller and his wife Anna spent extended periods at Overhills in later years, sometimes staying at Bird Song for months at a time. By the late 1970s, Rockefeller had transferred his traditional leadership role, along with other asset management responsibilities, to his son Avery Rockefeller, Jr. (Pat). The transition from father to son was abruptly ended by Avery Jr.'s accidental death in 1979.

The final years of Overhills are marked most notably by transition, particularly in terms of estate management and, eventually, ownership. By the 1980s the grandchildren of Percy and Isabel Rockefeller became the senior family representatives. A great-grandson,

Christopher (Kim) Elliman, became the President of Overhills Farms, Inc. Elliman would oversee a reorganization of Overhills property and assets that resulted in the formation of four partnerships. He would also help administer strategies to increase revenue for the estate, including attempts to focus corporate farming on new, profitable ventures such as a major swine operation. The overall character and purpose of Overhills persisted throughout this time as winter visits continued. Eventually, however, the lack of a common vision within the family led to conflict and an end that few seem to have desired. Overhills entered into discussions with Overhills' long-time neighbor, the U.S. Army by the early 1990s. As the family was unable to reach consensus on a future direction for the historic country estate and farm, the Rockefellers decided to sell the 10,500 acre property to the Army. Fort Bragg purchased Overhills in 1997 in order to expand its training area.¹⁰¹

While the estate evolved in an era when the New South was forming, its exclusive club atmosphere followed by decades of a private insular character allowed it to exist relatively un-noticed by many, if not most people in the region. This sentiment is echoed by several people native to the area and residents of the estate. The physical legacy of Overhills is largely represented by thousands of acres of training land on Fort Bragg, which is mostly rigorously managed longleaf pine forest.



Figure 2.4: 1938 aerial photograph of the Hill and Entrance areas: A-Overhills Golf Course; B-The Hill; C-Polo field; D-Allee to polo field; E-Riding Stables; F-Overhills Lake; G-Atlantic Coast Line Railroad; H-Hunt Complex; I-Southern Entrance Road; J-Northern Entrance Road; K-Old Western Plank Road / Highway 24/87; L-Bain field; M-Coble house, Cameron house, Freight Depot; N-Pea patch area. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

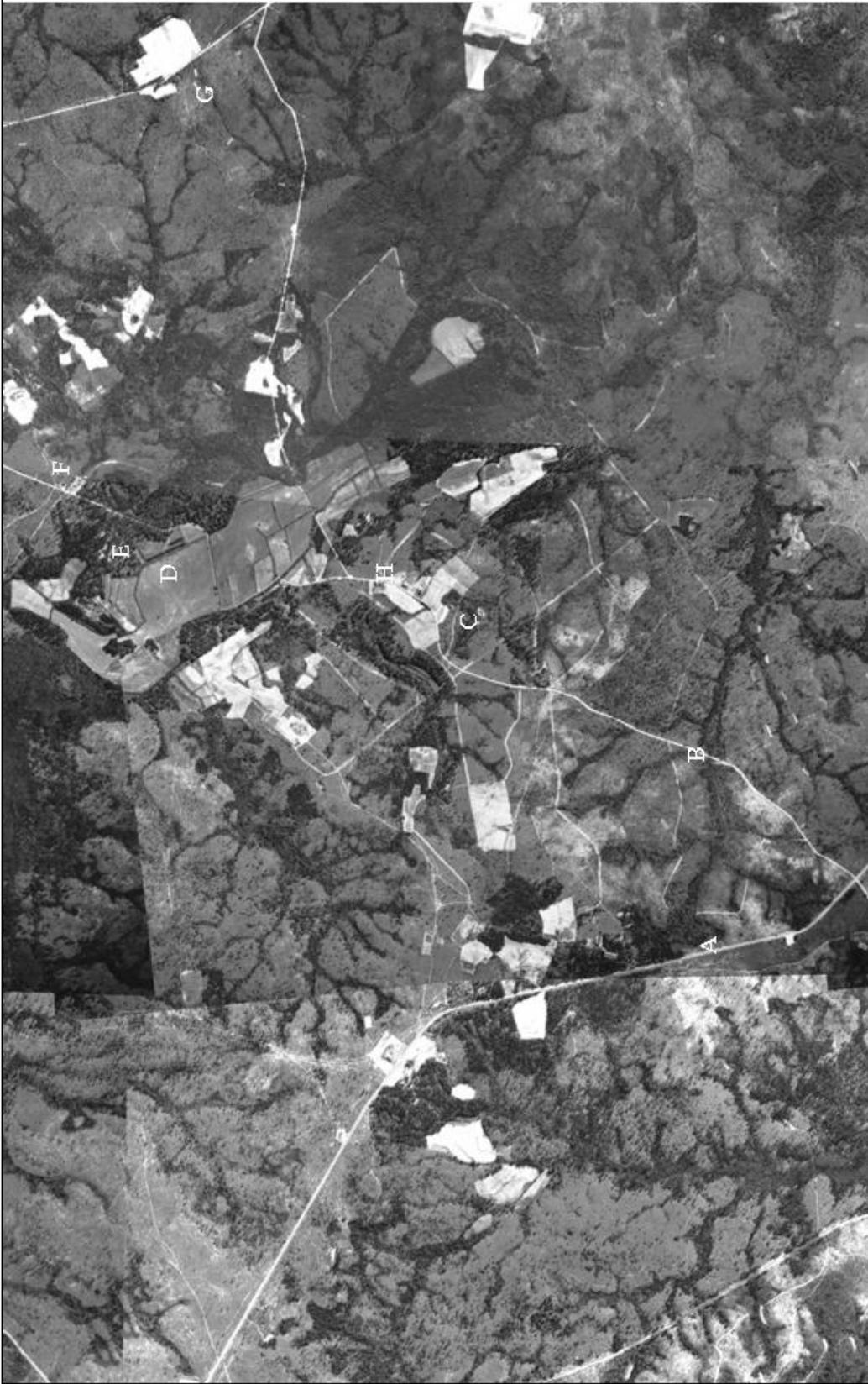


Figure 2.5: 1938 aerial photograph of the Nursery area: A–Old Western Plank Road, Route 24/87; B–Nursery Road; C–Nursery Manager’s house (The Davis House); D–Nursery stock fields; E–Lindley Nursery / Preventorium; F–Nursery School; G–Haire tenant farm; H–Nursery Worker’s House. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

¹In the western Sandhills a health and winter resort industry emerged in Southern Pines and Pinehurst in the 1880s and 1890s. In the former town hotels advertised a recuperative environment for consumption patients from northern states, while the resort of Pinehurst featured golf, polo and bird hunting. See Wellman, Manly W. *The County of Moore, 1847-1947: A North Carolina Region's Second Hundred Years*, Moore Co. Historical Association, 1962; Youngs, Larry R., Creating America's Winter Golfing Mecca at Pinehurst, North Carolina: National Marketing and Local Control, *Journal of Sport History* 2003, 30(1):25-45.

²Jonathan F. Phillips, "Building a New South Metropolis: Fayetteville, Fort Bragg, and the Sandhills of North Carolina" (unpublished dissertation, UNC-Chapel Hill, 2002).

³Stuart A. Marks, *Southern Hunting in Black and White: Nature, History, and Ritual in Carolina Community* (Princeton University Press, 1992), 46.

⁴Dayvd Ford Hood, "Overhills Historic District," Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (draft on file at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, 1992), 19.

⁵Piedmont hunt clubs included Climax Lodge, originally started by General John Gill and James S. Frick of Baltimore, later reorganized with Charles Steele, Robert Bacon, and John Pierpoint Morgan Jr. as members, the Clarence H. McKay lodge near Jamestown, the O.W. Bright Lodge near Whitsett, the John B. Cobb lodge, and the Brokow lodge and hunting estate. Hood, 18-21.

⁶The acquisition of southern plantations and farms to create hunt clubs contributed to a pattern of land conservation for wildlife that began in the late nineteenth century. As wildlife populations declined in the south due to hunting for commercial sale and land development, conservation movements were led by northern sportsmen. See *Adventures in Bird Protection: An Autobiography by Thomas Gilbert Pearson* (New York and London: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1937); Marks, pp. 45-61.

⁷A second, more short-lived home known as Mount William, purportedly stood in the Overhills area at "the site on which Overhills was built." The exact location of Mount William and Ardnave is unknown. See Lucile M. Johnson, *Hometown Heritage* (Fayetteville: National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, 1978.)

⁸Angus McDiarmid (1757-1827) was born in Islay, Scotland. He and son Daniel McDiarmid (1803-1874) are buried in the Long Street Presbyterian Church cemetery on Fort Bragg. Beverly A. Boyko and William H. Kern, ed. "Historic Cemeteries of Fort Bragg, Camp Mackall, Pope Air Force Base" (Directorate of Public Works, Fort Bragg, 7th Edition, 2007.)

⁹Will of Daniel McDiarmid (Cumberland County Wills, Book 3, pp. 122-125. Office of the Clerk of Court, Cumberland Court Course, Fayetteville); Deed of John D. Williams to John Y. Gossler and Rufus Hicks (Cumberland Co. Deeds, Book 97, pp. 505); Deed of John Y. Gossler and Annie E. Gossler to the Consolidated Lumber Company, (Cumberland County Deeds, Book 112, pp. 547).

¹⁰Hood, 9.

¹¹Hicks was a North Carolina native, 1849-1922, born in Dublin. See "Rufus Hicks," <http://www.familysearch.org>. Gossler was a native of Northumberland County, Pennsylvania. See "Philadelphia and Popular Philadelphians," by The North American, the Oldest Daily Newspaper in America, American Printing House, Philadelphia, 1891, pp. 176.

¹²Phillips, 2002. For an interesting portrayal of the local Sandhills population around the turn of the century as culturally isolated, somewhat benighted and constrained by historical factors and poor land with few natural resources see Maude Radford Warren, "The Land of the Pine Barrens," *Harpers Weekly* 2 (1912): 440-452. See also Robert B. Outland III, "Suicidal Harvest: The Self-Destruction of North Carolina's Naval Stores Industry," *North Carolina Historical Review* 78 (July 2001): 309-344.

- ¹³ Deed of Consolidated Lumber Company to William Johnston. See: Overhills Document Collection, 1901_002; *Fayetteville Observer*, March 21, 1901.
- ¹⁴ *Fayetteville Observer*, March 21, 1901.
- ¹⁵ Two newspaper articles suggest Edmund Johnston hunted in the area with some Greensboro sportsmen *Fayetteville Observer* 3-21-1901, and “The Croatan Club Succeeds the Name of Arranmore,” *Fayetteville Observer*, November 15, 1906.
- ¹⁶ For Woodward, see obituary, NY Times April 11, 1910; For Gill, see *Genealogical and Memorial Encyclopedia of the State of Maryland*, (New York: The American Historical Society, Inc.1919).
- ¹⁷ Gill, with J.S. Frick, also of Baltimore, started the Climax Lodge in 1899. Gill withdrew from the lodge in 1904, after which the lodge was reorganized by Frick and a trio of wealthy men associated with the J.P. Morgan firm—Charles Steele, Robert Bacon, and J.P. Morgan, Jr. Mary Lewis Rucker Edmunds, *The Photography of John Walker Fry: the Immediate World and Distant Vistas of a Victorian Gentleman: with an explanatory text including a history of Greensboro*, (Greensboro, North Carolina: Hunter Publishing Company, 1982). Likely representing significant investment by a Baltimore party, Gill was named receiver for the foreclosure sale and reorganization of the Cape Fear Yadkin Valley Railroad (CFYVRR) in 1894. See Roland B. Eutsler, “The Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 2, no. 4 (October 1925): 436. By 1906 he was president of the railroad. See “The Croatan Club Succeeds the Name of Arranmore,” *Fayetteville Observer*, November 15, 1906.
- ¹⁸ “Mr. Tufts Makes Big Purchase in Cumberland. Buys Croatan Lodge and 27,000 Acres of Land,” *Fayetteville Observer*, January 4, 1911.
- ¹⁹ “The Croatan Club Succeeds the Name of Arranmore,” *Fayetteville Observer*, November 15, 1906.
- ²⁰ Hood, 21-22.
- ²¹ Also involved was James H. Alexander of New Jersey, who invested in property to establish Buckthorne for years and who would visit Overhills in 1916. “James H. Alexander and Elizabeth Alexander to Buckthorne Hunt Lodge, Inc.” Cumberland County Deed Book 144 p.163.
- ²² Hood, 41. When Buckthorne Lodge Association land was sold to the Kent-Jordan Company in 1917, the lodge president was Richard Joshua Reynolds (1850-1918) who would move into his estate Reynolds later that year.
- ²³ Edmunds, 1982. Jordan’s involvement with the Croatan Club is surmised based on his relationship with Gill, the two being acquainted with one another at the Climax Lodge in Randolph County.
- ²⁴ Marks, 48-49. Hunting opportunities with information on lodging, game, guides and laws were advertised by the railroads.
- ²⁵ Hood, 20. Piedmont hunt clubs were opened up to northerners in part by J.P. Morgan and Co.’s reorganization of the Southern Railway.
- ²⁶ Parker, 77.
- ²⁷ Parker, 63-64. The Manchester Factory, started by the Murchison family, was in operation at least as early as 1843; The factory was burned in the Civil War. Fairley, McIver, and Roberson papers include correspondence with Pastor Fairley, who served as minister at China Grove Church in Manchester. Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Two cotton mills are also shown on *McDuffie’s Map of Cumberland County, North Carolina, 1884*. Copy on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources. By 1920 the mills appear to be defunct as census records for Manchester no longer reveal mill or factory jobs.
- ²⁸ W.P. Cumming, “Post Route 1896,” *North Carolina in Maps* (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1966), Plate XV. Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill; See Katherine Stillwell’s description of the Fairley store,

which lasted into the early twentieth century; oral history transcript; Fairley, McIver, and Roberson papers. North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.

²⁹ Parker, 77-78.

³⁰ Parker (1990, 91) notes the incorporation of Manchester and several other small towns in Cumberland County, most of which, including Manchester, had only “minimal municipal governments” by the 1920s; In 1920, census records for Manchester no longer reveal mill or factory jobs. Oates notes in his 1950 publication that the Manchester Mill was closed “some years ago,” p.441.

³¹ Aubrey Lee Brooks, *A Southern Lawyer: Fifty Years at the Bar* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950), 88-89.

³² The 1906 value was \$32,500 and in 1910 the land sold for \$75,000. John Gill & wife, et. al to Croatan Club of Manchester, January 4, 1907, Cumberland County Deed Book 138, pp. 316; Croatan Club, Inc. to Jas. F. Jordan and Leonard Tufts, December 24, 1910, Cumberland County Deed Book 161, pp. 117.

³³ “Big Preserve for Hunters: Tract of 22,000 Acres Bought by New Yorkers and Others,” *New York Times*, November 11, 1906; Cumberland County Deed, Croatan Club Inc. to J.F. Jordan and L. Tufts, 1911, Book 161, pp.117-124; J.F. Jordan and M.W. Jordan and L. Tufts and G.W. Tufts to Mercantile Trust and Deposit Co., 1911, Book 161, pp.125-136.

³⁴ Hood, 22; Woodward died April 10, 1910, *New York Times* April 11, 1910; Gill died on July 2, 1912, *NY Times* July 3, 1912; Gill may have maintained some involvement during the sale of Croatan to Jordan and Tufts as his trust company financed their purchase.

³⁵ Leonard Tufts and Gertrude W. Tufts to William Kent, 1911, Cumberland Co. Deed Book 161, pp. 378-385; W. Kent and wife and J.F. Jordan and wife to Kent-Jordan Co., 5/24/1911, Book 164, pp. 393-400.

³⁶ On the life of William Kent, see Woodbury, Robert L. “William Kent: Progressive Gadfly, 1864-1928” Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1967; For his personal perspective on his life as an outdoorsman, see his autobiography *Reminiscences of an Outdoor Life* (San Francisco: A.M. Robertson, 1929).

³⁷ Roderick Nash, “John Muir, William Kent, and the Conservative Schism,” *Pacific Historical Review* 36 (November 1967): 423-33.

³⁸ Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc., *Historic Architectural Resources Survey Report, Overhills Tract, Fort Bragg, Harnett and Cumberland Counties, North Carolina*, Fort Bragg Cultural Resources Management Program, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, May 2000, 15.

³⁹ Joshua Lindley, John V. Lindley’s father, started the first family nursery business called New Garden Nursery in 1841 in the Quaker community of New Garden, Guilford Co. John V. reorganized the business in 1877 as Pomoma Hill Nurseries (later J. Van Lindley Nursery). He also established Pomona Terra Cotta Company. See Hood pp.104-113; John V. Lindley was known as “a prominent and well to do Quaker” and member of the Board of Trustees for Guilford College at the turn of the twentieth century. Pearson, p. 60; Paul C. Lindley served on the Greensboro City Council and as Greensboro mayor, “Paul C. Lindley Loses Life By Drowning When He Falls From Small Boat Into Lake,” *Greensboro Daily News*, June 11, 1933, 1-2.

⁴⁰ “The Kent-Jordan-Lindley Enterprise in Harnett and Cumberland Counties,” *Fayetteville Observer*, August 30, 1911.

⁴¹ Hood notes that the growing fields at Pomona decreased through time as the city of Greensboro encroached on the site and commercial activity and greenhouse operations for the nursery increased there.

⁴² Diana Werling, *Historic American Landscape Survey Level One Recordation, Overhills, North Carolina*, submitted to the National Park Service, (Gainesville, GA: The Jaeger Company, 2006), 8-12. (Hereinafter referred to as HALS).

⁴³ “The Kent-Jordan-Lindley Enterprise in Harnett and Cumberland,” *Fayetteville Observer* (from the *Greensboro News*), August 30, 1911.

⁴⁴ The hotel was expected to open in late 1917. “Overhills Hotel to be Vanderbilt Inn,” *Fayetteville Observer*, July 12, 1916; OHD 1916_003, Overhills Document Collection, on file at North Carolina State Archives.

⁴⁵ Among other ventures, E.H. Harriman developed and controlled the Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, and Illinois Central Railroads in the late nineteenth century. He was known for his aggressive investment and management tactics and later in life was subject to considerable scrutiny and controversy. Upon his death his estate was worth roughly 70 million dollars. Rudy Abramson, *Spanning the Century: The Life of W. Averell Harriman 1891-1986* (New York: William Morrow & Co, 1992).

⁴⁶ Abramson, 1992. W.A. Harriman served as Governor of New York, Ambassador to the Soviet Union and Great Britain, and played a role in several United States Presidential administrations, including Truman, Roosevelt, Kennedy, and Johnson.

⁴⁷ At the time of his death, Rockefeller’s estate was estimated at nine million dollars. “P.A. Rockefeller Dies Here at 56,” *New York Times*, September 26, 1934; “Mrs. Rockefeller Left Trust for 15,” *New York Times*, August 30, 1935.

⁴⁸ “Mrs. Rockefeller Left \$4,397,340,” *New York Times*, July 10, 1940.

⁴⁹ Her obituary notes that “The activities of society and of women’s organizations did not occupy an important place in Mrs. Rockefeller’s life” and that her charitable work was largely private. “P.A. Rockefeller’s Widow Dies at 59,” *New York Times*, August 23, 1935; Aside from a complex portrayal of Isabel’s relationship with her own mother and children, Isabel Lincoln Elmer notes her “spontaneous, instinctive kindness to all with whom she came in contact,” *Cinderella Rockefeller* (New York: Freundlich Books, 1987).

⁵⁰ OHD1921_006, Overhills Document Collection.

⁵¹ OHD 1938_008, Overhills Document Collection—list of stockholders as of 1935; A “steel king,” Corey was a president of United States Steel Corporation from Pittsburgh, his fortune estimated at 10 million dollars. “Millionaires of Pittsburg, Twenty Years Ago and Now,” *New York Times*, June 2, 1907; Camp was a Yale classmate and colleague of W.A. Harriman, son of the father of American football, noted as a cinema producer in 1929, Abramson. “Milestones,” *TIME Magazine*, September 9, 1929; William G. Rockefeller was Percy’s brother, died in 1922. *New York Times*, September 26, 1934; Walter Camp was a classmate of Percy Rockefeller in 1900 at Yale. “Yale’s Athletic Plans: Walter A. Camp Chosen Head of the Association,” *New York Times*, April 28, 1912; Frederick W. Allen was Treasurer of The New England Trust Company (Trust Companies of the United States, United States Mortgage and Trust Company 1914) and Lee, Higginson and Co. of Boston. Robert D. Cuff, “Bernard Baruch: Symbol and Myth in Industrial Mobilization,” *The Business History Review* 43, no. 2 (1969): 119.

⁵² OHD 1928_018.

⁵³ Joseph B. Thomas, *Hounds and Hunting Through the Ages*, (New York: The DerryDale Press, 1928), 142.

⁵⁴ See James Howe, “Fox Hunting as Ritual,” *American Ethnologist* 8, no. 2 (May 1981): 286-7, for description of the in the tradition of sponsorship traced to English royalty.

⁵⁵ Roger Longrigg, *The History of Foxhunting*, (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1975), 216.

⁵⁶ Arnold Bruce Strauch, "Narrative of Arnold Bruce Strauch," August 2007, unpublished, Overhills Oral History Project, on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

⁵⁷ Professional photographer L.S. Sutcliffe, from Lexington Kentucky, was brought to Overhills to photograph Mr. Rockefeller, J.B. Thomas and friends.

⁵⁸ In Thomas records of 1928-29 season at Overhills, the most common starting location is the kennels (or Mr. Rockefeller's stables), but other locations include Henry Alderman's Farm, Fairley's Store, Harnett Junction, the Manchester Church, Manchester Depot, Nursery Crossroads, Mr. McFarlane's, Spout Springs. Joseph B. Thomas Hunting Diaries of 1913-1929, MC008, Box 1, Folder 14, National Sporting Library Archives, Middleburg, VA.

⁵⁹ January 8, 1923, the hunters eat at the camp, suggesting it was staffed with a cook. This camp was in use while Percy Rockefeller was there, staying at Covert, his stables and kennels built. In later times, 1928 Thomas records, the camp is used less often. See also: Joseph B. Thomas Hunting Diaries of 1913-1929, MC008, Box 1, Folder 13, Folder 14, National Sporting Library Archives, Middleburg, VA. While fox hunts often originated at the Hunt Complex, Godfrey references a hunt camp at Manchester in his 1923 diary; See Godfrey Rockefeller diary, Elliman Collection, Overhills Oral History Project, on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

⁶⁰ Howe, 288.

⁶¹ Thomas records, December 28, 1928. National Sporting Library, Middleburg, VA.

⁶² OHD 1926_030.

⁶³ In regular correspondence with the Superintendent, White was one of the most involved syndicate members. White and his brothers (Rollin H. and Walter C.) co-founded the White Motor Company, which originated as their father's (Thomas H.) nineteenth century sewing machine company and became a major truck manufacturer by World War I, supplying 18,000 trucks to American and Allied armies. A long-time resident of the Cleveland area and a graduate of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, White was president of the company at one time, transitioning to board chairman in 1921, around the time of his earliest involvement at Overhills. White's father was a member of the syndicate for at least one year. John Bell Rae, *The American Automobile: A Brief History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965): 124; "Windsor T. White, Auto Pioneer, 92: Ex-Head of Truck Firm That Began as Sewing Machine Manufacturer is Dead," *New York Times* April 10, 1958.

⁶⁴ Rosseau died at Overhills and is buried in Cross Creek Cemetery in Fayetteville. The funeral service was conducted by Rev. Alexander of Manchester, likely of the Church of the Covenant; "Famous Artist Dies Near Here" *Fayetteville Observer*, November 30, 1937; Steve Shipp, *American Art Colonies, 1850-1930: A Historical Guide to America's Original Art Colonies and Their Artists*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996); DeCourcy Taylor, "Percival Rosseau: 1859-1937" *Southwest Art* (November 1980): 86-91.

⁶⁵ What appear to be final touches on the course in its early days are recorded in an undated Ross sketchbook. Overhills Document Collection; For comparison of other Ross courses, see course descriptions in Sandhills Classics: Lee Pace, *The Stories of Mid Pines and Pine Needles*, Pine Needles Country Club & Mid Pines Development Group, 1996; Arthur D. Peterson, "Overhills: A Notable Addition to the Southland's Pleasure Resorts" *Golf Illustrated* (February 1917): 19-20; 1919 Superintendent report, Overhills Document Collection.

⁶⁶ Minor changes to the course seem to have occurred frequently in the early years as the front nine was already shortened by nearly 60 yards in the first ten years (OHD 1928_046). Later changes with the reconstruction of the back nine were more dramatic. Only a few hints of play by Harriman and Rockefeller occur in the Overhills Document Collection. OHD1928_046 and OHD1932_070; Godfrey Rockefeller mentions playing golf in a diary owned by Christopher Elliman; G.H. Walker

is identified in Peter Schweizer and Rochelle Schweizer, *The Bushes: Portrait of a Dynasty*, (New York: Doubleday, 2004).

⁶⁷ Rudy Abramson, *Spanning the Century: The Life of W. Averell Harriman 1891-1986*, (William Morrow & Co), 1992.

⁶⁸ A. Loftus Bryan to Leonard Tufts, 21 April 1921, Tufts Archives, Givens Memorial Library, Pinehurst, N.C; W.A. Harriman also competed in Pinehurst with his Orange County team from New York. "Harriman's Goal Wins," *New York Times*, April 7, 1922.

⁶⁹ Godfrey Rockefeller notes in 1923 a team competing at Fort Bragg, included "Averill, Grace, Camp, and an army man." Godfrey Rockefeller diary, The Elliman Collection, on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

⁷⁰ Godfrey Rockefeller's 1923 diary courtesy of Christopher Elliman.

⁷¹ January 4, 1923, the old hunters come up; January 27, 1923, Godfrey visits the fox hunters camp, the "nice old fellows"; see Jackson's reference to Buckthorne Lodge hunters; also Brooks notes that Percy Rockefeller "invited me and a few others of the old guard fox hunters as his guest for a week." Thomas, 91.

⁷² Management based on his primacy in correspondence, but see Virginia Strauch's timeline of Overhills History. Courtesy of Arnold Bruce Strauch. Overhills Oral History, on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

⁷³ HALS, 12-13.

⁷⁴ Hood, 121-124.

⁷⁵ Miller was dismissed by Percy Rockefeller in 1932. OHD 1931_023; Some tension between Miller and Rockefeller and Pryor is indicated by oral history and personal memoir. Kim Elliman interview; A Brief History of Overhills, by Virginia Strauch, manuscript donated for the Overhills Oral History Project by Bruce Strauch.

⁷⁶ OHD1938_008, Overhills Document Collection.

⁷⁷ Rotogravure Section, *Fayetteville Observer*, 1932.

⁷⁸ Deed of Lindley Nurseries, Inc. to Isabel Rockefeller on February 23, 1932. Overhills Document Collection, 1904_001; See also Harnett County, NC Deeds, Book 59, pp. 243. Under a corporation titled Jumping Run Club, Inc. Isabel owned the old Nursery property and the Croatan Lodge. July 15, 1935 deed ISR conveyed seven tracts of land acquired from Nursery with three tracts purchased from Harry K. Crandall; July 17, 1935 Overhills Land Co. conveyed Croatan Lodge site to ISR, which she conveyed to JR Club, Inc on August 8, 1935. Deeds from Overhills Document Collection.

⁷⁹ See "Certificate of Incorporation: Hope Farm Preventorium, Incorporated," May 28, 1934. Overhills Document Collection, OHD 1934_003. State of North Carolina, Record of Configuration, Book no. 2, pp. 576.

⁸⁰ The Preventorium only made use of the northern nursery complex along Jumping Run Creek.

⁸¹ In his memoir, *A Brief History of Overhills*, Avery notes 5 remaining stockholders in 1935; a 1935 list of stockholders includes a total of ten names. Avery also notes that National City Bank wanted to sell the Overhills Land Co. but agreed in 1935 to allow the family to keep the estate as a winter home, provided the bank was indemnified against loss. The actual dissolution of Overhills Land Company and incorporation of Overhills Farms Inc. occurred in 1938. Overhills Document Collection.

⁸² November 14, 1938 deed Overhills Land Company to Overhills Farms Inc., 30,757.5 acres conveyed in 4 tracts, largest tract 30,550 acres. Overhills Document Collection.

⁸³ "Mrs. Rockefeller Left \$4,397,340: Estate of P.A. Rockefeller's Widow Goes Principally to Relatives in Trust Fund," *New York Times*, July 10, 1940.

⁸⁴ Davis died in 1966 and is buried in the Church of the Covenant cemetery in Spring Lake, NC; “Personality of the Week” article written by his granddaughter, Dorothy Ferrell, published on June 30, 1966, *Spring Lake [NC] Times*.

⁸⁵ OHD 1941_058.

⁸⁶ Avery Rockefeller, *A Brief History of Overhills*; Transcript of oral history interview. Kim Elliman. Interviewed by Jeffrey D. Irwin and Heather McDonald, 28 August 2006, New York, NY. Overhills Oral History Project. On file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources, Directorate of Public Works.

⁸⁷ Avery Rockefeller, *A Brief History of Overhills*. On file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Transcript of oral history interview. W. Edward Bruce, Jr. and Barton Bruce. Interviewed by Jeffrey D. Irwin and Kaitlin O’Shea, 15-16 February, 2007, Fort Bragg, NC. Overhills Oral History Project, on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

⁹⁰ While some food fields continued to be planted, no records indicate the amount of intensive efforts to import, raise birds and control predators as in the 1920s.

⁹¹ Transcript of oral history interview. Bob Model. Interviewed by Jeffrey D. Irwin and Kaitlin O’Shea, 11 July 2007, Fort Bragg, NC. Overhills Oral History Project, on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources; A hunt log records bird hunting between 1964 and 1969. The hunting parties typically included William Bryan Bruce, Lotes Holmes, and Bob Model, occasionally Mr. and Mrs. Harder and others. 1,120 birds were purchased over the course of three years, 1965-1967. Overhills Document Collection, Plantation Hunter’s Log; Lotes Holmes mentions sowing some patches with lespedeza for quail, likely in the 1950s or 1960s in his oral history interview, transcript of oral history interview, Lotes Holmes and Imogene Holmes, Interviewed by Jeffrey D. Irwin and Kaitlin O’Shea, 30 March 2007, Lillington, NC. Overhills Oral History Project. On file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

⁹² Correspondence in 1940 includes a reference by Bruce to a fox hunt “in the car” and a request to put out food for “the surplus foxes,” after the shooting season had ended. OHD 1940_033.

⁹³ The popularity of Croatan is based on oral history interviews and guestbook entries. Symbolic of their importance at Overhills and their closeness with the Rockefeller family, W.B. and Thelma Bruce moved from the Clubhouse to the old Harriman cottage in 1942. See correspondence from W.B. Bruce to A.R. in OHD 1942_054, Overhills Document Collection. In the 1980s, a Superintendent Jim Flood lived in Cherokee cottage.

⁹⁴ The Covert was designed by the architectural firm of Cross and Cross, which designed several prominent skyscrapers in New York; the Croatan Lodge was designed by Hiss and Weeks, another prominent firm in New York, and built by Reinecke-Dixon Construction Company of Fayetteville.

⁹⁵ 1919 Superintendent report; Described by Cpt. Miller in 1931, the rides were 30 yards wide, allowing plenty of room for good pea patches and fox hunters. OHD 1931-023, Overhills Document Collection.

⁹⁶ Transcript of oral history interview. Lotes and Imogene Holmes. Overhills Oral History Project.

⁹⁷ John Fraser Hart and Ennis L. Chestang, “Rural Revolution in East Carolina,” *Geographical Review* 68 no.4 (Oct. 1978): 435-458.

⁹⁸ OHD 1951_066, Overhills Document Collection.

⁹⁹ An example of lengthy tenure, Albert Goins lived and worked as a tenant farmer at Overhills for thirty years (Lorraine V. Aragon) 2000, Fort Bragg, Cultural Resources Program.

¹⁰⁰ “Avery Rockefeller, Investment Banker and Conservationist,” *New York Times*, May 23, 1986.

¹⁰¹ In the end, the estate consisted of a corporation (Overhills Farms, Inc.) and four partnerships.

CHAPTER THREE

TRAVELING TO OVERHILLS

Throughout its history Overhills was a unique destination for small groups of travelers, whose origins, objectives, and methods of travel changed over the years. In its formative days as a hunt club, Guilford County hunt parties came by rail to the village of Manchester. In later years, shooting syndicate and company owners and their guests rode in Pullman cars on an overnight ride from Manhattan to Sanford or Fayetteville where a chauffeur waited with an automobile. Eventually airplanes replaced trains in transporting guests and family to North Carolina. From the 1910s onward, Overhills staff dutifully arranged visits and escorted guests from train stations or airports to the secluded estate. For many of the employees, the seasonal visits brought anticipation, preparation and planning.

Where was Overhills?

Traveling the paved roads near Overhills, even the state route that bisected the estate, there were few signs of its existence. Hidden miles down dirt roads, amidst thousands of forested acres, small clusters of houses, stables, barns, and farm fields stood inconspicuously in Harnett and Cumberland Counties. Few people, even locals, ever knew about Overhills. Fewer still could tell someone how to get there.

Pat Penny

I used to say it was in a place where God couldn't find you on a foggy night. It was hard to tell somebody how to find Overhills. There was no good landmark to tell them where to turn off [Route] 87. When I was living there, there was a road that went in right beside the post office that led down to Overhills, but they shut that road down. So then you had to go further on down and turn but there's no good landmark as to tell them where to turn because it's just miles of nothing but trees at that time.

Bob Model

I always said it was in the Sandhills and it was wedged between Pinehurst, Southern Pines, between Fort Bragg, Fayetteville, and Sanford. So every[one] knew about Fort Bragg. Everybody knows about Pinehurst. So you say it was in the Sandhills, wedged in the area adjacent to Pinehurst and Southern Pines and that lovely rolling country.

Florence Short

And where was it? There was always trouble describing where it was to give friends directions - and they would inevitably end up at the trailer park. I found that trailer park one time and it was called maybe something like Holly Hills. A lot of my friends got to the trailer park. And it was kind of hidden on purpose, but it was the first dirt road leaving from Spring Lake. And so I think that had some notoriety too.

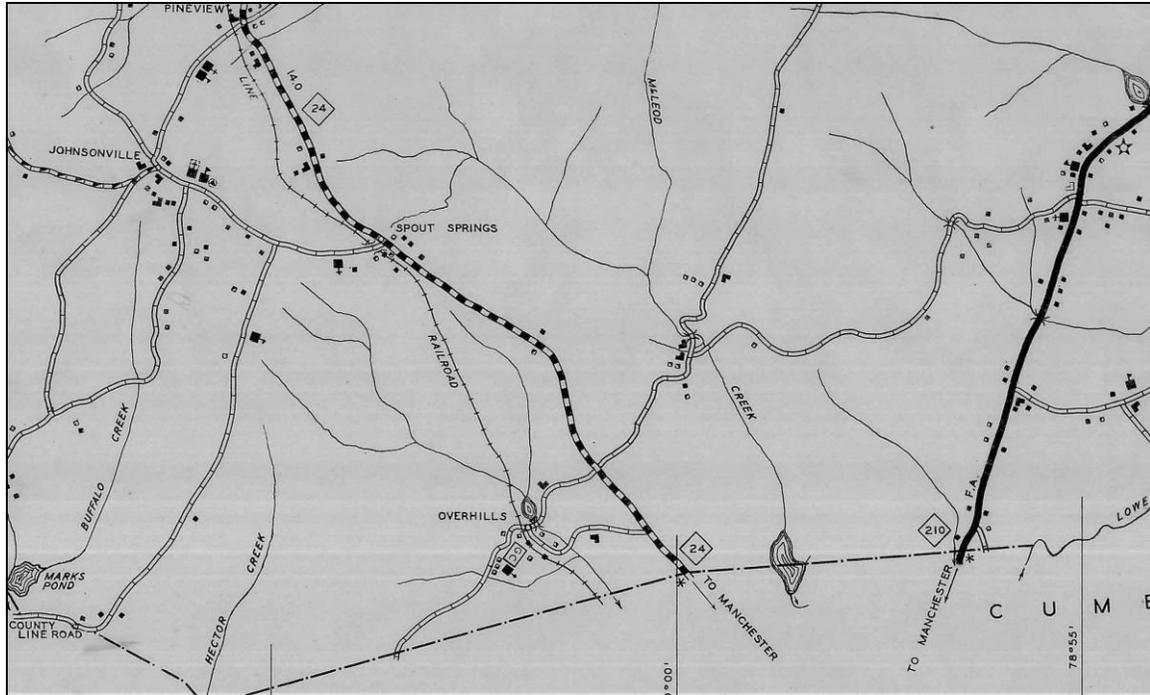


Figure 3.1: 1938 Harnett County Road Map with Overhills identified. This map also shows the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, Old Plank Road (Route 24/87), and the unimproved entrance roads to Overhills.¹ Created by the State Highway and Public Works Commission. Courtesy of Paul Webb, personal copy.

Tommy McPhail

Good gracious. [It was] land adjoining Fort Bragg or Spring Lake. I said if you were coming up [Route] 87 when you run out of houses and before you get to Spring Lake, that's Overhills. I'll tell them [who ask about Overhills] I've lived about everywhere that could be lived on Overhills, which, I have, you know. But I'd say that was the first part of my life, this was the middle part of my life, and that's where I ended up at. This is the Davis farm, the Preventorium farm, and the Hill. Someone who has lived in the area would know because they'll know some of the other places. But say if I was talking to you, met you and was telling you about Overhills, I'd have to show it to you. Some of [the people around here] didn't know about it. Like now, I can talk about it to folks who have lived around within 10 miles of it all their life; they know nothing about the place.

Sandy Hemingway

[Before working at Overhills] I had heard that there was a place owned by the Rockefellers. It was a certain mystery. And actually it retained that almost the whole time I was there, even the 13, 14 years I was there, even toward the end. People would say, where are you working? I'd say Overhills and they'd go where? Who? Nobody really knew much about it. I mean you go down 87 or you go down Vass Road, you really don't see it. There's no indication, nothing. They tried to warn me a little bit, what I was going to.

Katherine Stilwell

[My school friends], they knew that we were from [Overhills], that we had to be transported. Everybody rode a school bus but we had to come so far. It was 17 miles from where we lived to Anderson Creek School. You were riding 30 something miles a day. It's no wonder I have headaches. But people did not think much about it. I didn't think they did. I don't know. I never thought that I was any different than anybody else. And I did not regard the Rockefellers as unique. They were Rockefellers and yet it was the way my parents translated it to me I'm sure. They were just an employer and the fact that they were millionaires didn't excite me.

Dorothy Yantis

We never mentioned where we lived. Daddy said, you just don't talk about where you live or anything. You just don't because they don't want anybody to know they're out there. They never would let them pave the roads so the dirt roads stayed there. And they had the influence over the state not to build the roads

[I didn't talk about Overhills much at school]. [Other students] knew where we were because some of them would ride the bus and all but we just didn't talk about it to outside people. And they would come there. Back then they had high school boys that drove the bus. And they were always driving recklessly and we'd end up in the ditch and we'd never even get to school because the roads were dirt and slick from rain and sleet and snow or whatever. So they knew that we lived there and people would come out to my house and say, you live so far back in the woods that they had to pump the sunlight in. I thought it was really nice. They only saw our house, that was the first house that people would stop at to say, where is Overhills? And I'd say, "You're in it." And they'd say, "Where do the Rockefellers live?" And I'd say, "There's gates and you're not allowed so you'd better turn around and go back because my dad will be home and he'll chase you out." They would just always turn around and go back. And Daddy would say, just don't mention it and people just won't be up here.

Freeman Tyler

Well, we were told: "You don't tell people about what's out there." I told them I'd live at Overhills and that's as far as I go. I wouldn't tell nobody unless it was a real close friend or relative, somebody that I'd meet here and there, I wouldn't tell them exactly where I lived but I would tell them that I lived at Overhills. That place was kept so secret out there. There's people that lived here all their life and didn't know what was out there. People born and raised right here didn't know what was out there until Overhills made the papers. Everybody got the printing everything about Overhills in the papers. That's when most of your folks in the neighborhoods around here finally found out what Overhills was all about and where Overhills was and that kind of stuff. A lot of people didn't even know it was out there and that's the way the family wanted it kept. Mr. Rockefeller didn't want everybody knowing Overhills was out there and that it was owned by the Rockefellers and the type of people that was out there. Because let's face it, we live in a bad world, and there was very little security out there. The only security that was out there was the folks that

worked out there. We mostly knew everybody that was coming in and out of that place. And if we see somebody that we knew wasn't supposed to be there we'd hurry up and escort them out of there, get them out there. I mean, I've called the sheriff on people more than one time on people that was in there and had no business to be in there. People up at the lake would walk, actually park their vehicles out on 87 and walk all the way into the lake, especially these soldiers flying around out here and see the place out there. Curiosity. They come out trying to find everything that was out there. We had to run a lot of people from out there. But we tried to keep the place low key.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

I remember I went off to college, the other guy that lived down below us, a Spence boy, he was a year ahead of me, when he first went off to North Carolina State where I went, he would tell everybody he was from Fayetteville because he said they wouldn't know where Overhills was. I would tell them Overhills. And then I'd go back to Overhills a lot when I was at college and I'd usually take one of the guys there with me, go down there, spend the weekend at home go back.

Glodean Robinson

You know it used to be so thick and wooded. They lost a lot of trees. But as a little girl we used to ride the bus there. So the school bus used to go down there and make that circle around. Once you hit Overhills, it could be bright daylight on 87, soon as you hit that dirt road it was like dark because the pine trees were so tall and so many it blocked the sun and could be just like a little dark cool place that you was going into. And can you believe a lot of people never knew Overhills was there? A lot of people never knew that it was there. They never locked their house. The only time the houses would be locked up would be when the family would leave. But when they would be there everything was open. They never locked no doors. They'd come in and they had so many valuables but really they never had any problems because no one knew that they were there. It was just like their little secret world.

By Train, Plane, Automobile

From passenger trains to car rides to airplanes, the journey to Overhills is remembered as part of the Overhills experience.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

Earlier in my life[time], they came down primarily during the wintertime. It might be starting Thanksgiving or something like that when the weather was starting to get cold up north. They'd probably be there until springtime. And various families would be in and out at that time. And at that time there was only the Croatan which was the main guest house they'd come in. So you'd have various ones coming in at different times to utilize that house. I don't recall any of them ever using, they might have, Percy Rockefeller's house. Most of them later on would fly into Raleigh and they'd go to Raleigh to pick them up and at times pull the trailer. They had a lot of luggage so you put the luggage in the trailer, I was telling you, it had the top to it and bring them back in the car. If there was a

lot of them they'd send two cars up there to do that to pick them up and bring them back. Before that a lot of them used to come in, my father told me, to Sanford by train and you'd pick them up in Sanford. In early times they could take the train down from Sanford and get off in Overhills at the passenger station.

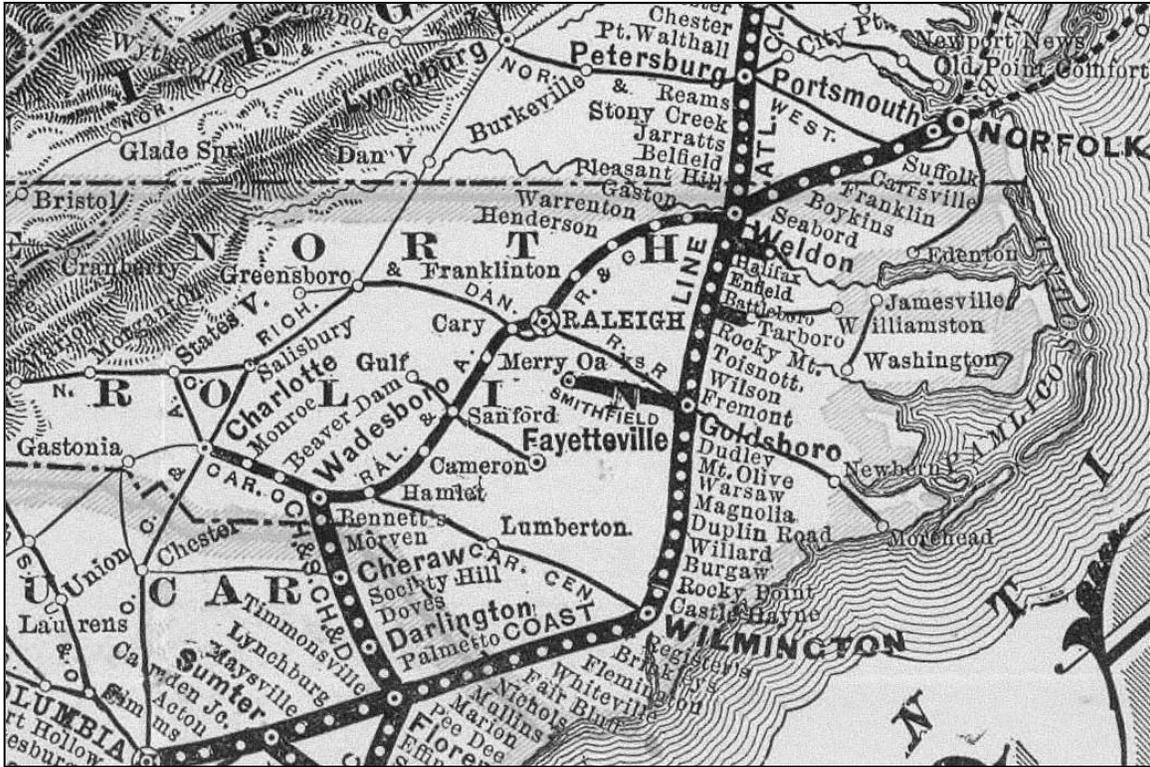


Figure 3.2: “Map of the Atlantic Coast Line of Railways and Connections,” 1885. The Fayetteville to Sanford rail spur, along which Overhills was located, was still a part of the Cape Fear & Yadkin Valley Railroad at this time. Courtesy of David Rumsey Collection.

Ann Elliman

Going down on the train, the anticipation was enormous and we would go the day after Christmas and at Easter Break. Meeting the cousins on the train racing around, having a special dinner in the dining car that we ordered, and getting out at Sanford and looking, peeking out and looking at red clay, that North Carolina red clay, which was marvelous. And then driving to Overhills and having breakfast in the Croatan dining room.

Florence Short

We would go to Penn Station and take the train in a compartment and at Washington D.C. they would always add cars and take on cars and so we would be going back and forth, back and forth. And then very early in the morning, Percy and I, we would be on the top bunk and our nanny, Nanna, would be on the bottom. We could open [the windows] and see the red sand and the smoke and the little cabins you'd see and that was all very exciting. And then we'd go to Sanford. A car would meet us in Sanford. And then on the return it was always wonderful because the train was always be late into Penn Station. You know Penn Station, the old Penn Station? So then we'd miss school and that was exciting.

Bob Model

The first time I went to Overhills and I'd love to check the guest book at Croatan, but I think it was the Christmas holidays of '47 - '48. And in those days it was a train ride from Pennsylvania Station in New York to Sanford. You get on the train in the evening and you'd get off in the morning at Sanford. We were met there by usually Archie Cameron. He was just a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful person.



Figure 3.3: Percy Rockefeller (center) arriving at Overhills, ca. 1920. Other men are unidentified. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

I remember it was cold and I remember just arriving. And I was young. I was born in '42 so that would make me five at the time. It was just a wonderful ride back from Sanford to Overhills. In those days there were two entrances into Overhills and we would take the first one, which was closed off, and then we'd come around by the lake and there was a house



Figure 3.4: A ca. 1920 view of the golf course from the water tower adjacent to Harriman Cottage. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

as you were coming in on the right hand side that overlooked the lake. It was a lovely location. I think it's probably gone and I can't remember the name of who lived there. In those days it was still standing. You could see the lake overlooking. It was on a high piece of ground.

There were two entrances into Overhills. There was that road that came around by the lake and the other that came down by the post office and by the kennels

and the stables. Now the stables are still standing. I don't know if they're still standing today, but they were still standing. The kennels were right on that road. It was changed around a wee bit. Oh that was closed as well and they put the straight road through.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

The main road, a dirt road, that used to go through Overhills used to come around at the end of hole #1, between hole #1 and hole #2, came across the golf course right there and then it turned and came down through a row of pine trees, almost by the Clubhouse. It would go right through where Bird Song sat. I remember a sign up there pointing that way to Manchester and that way to Vass. And if you swung off from that road to the right you just came right down in front of the Clubhouse.

But you never saw a car go by. Once in a while in the late '30s, early '40s a car may have gone that way. But then very early they detoured from around where you didn't go by the Clubhouse anymore. They cut it from where Mr. Coble's house was located. You know Mr. Coble's house, you start at the top of the hill and I don't know if the road is still there or not. That went down on from him straight on across the end of the golf course. That was a new road put in, a bypass ticket away from the Clubhouse.

The old road used to be, I think it's still there, you went to the left from Mr. Coble's down to the foot of the hill and it goes up and down and runs into the golf course and turn left. That road that goes down the foot of the hill to the golf course used to go straight on. That's when they didn't [use] the second nine holes; it didn't come over that far. And of course the Bird Song house wasn't there. And it went right straight on and down around the side of hole #1 on the golf course, right outside the pine trees and right around the end of the golf course and kept going right on in to Vass.



Figure 3.5: Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, passengers unloading luggage from the train, ca. 1920. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

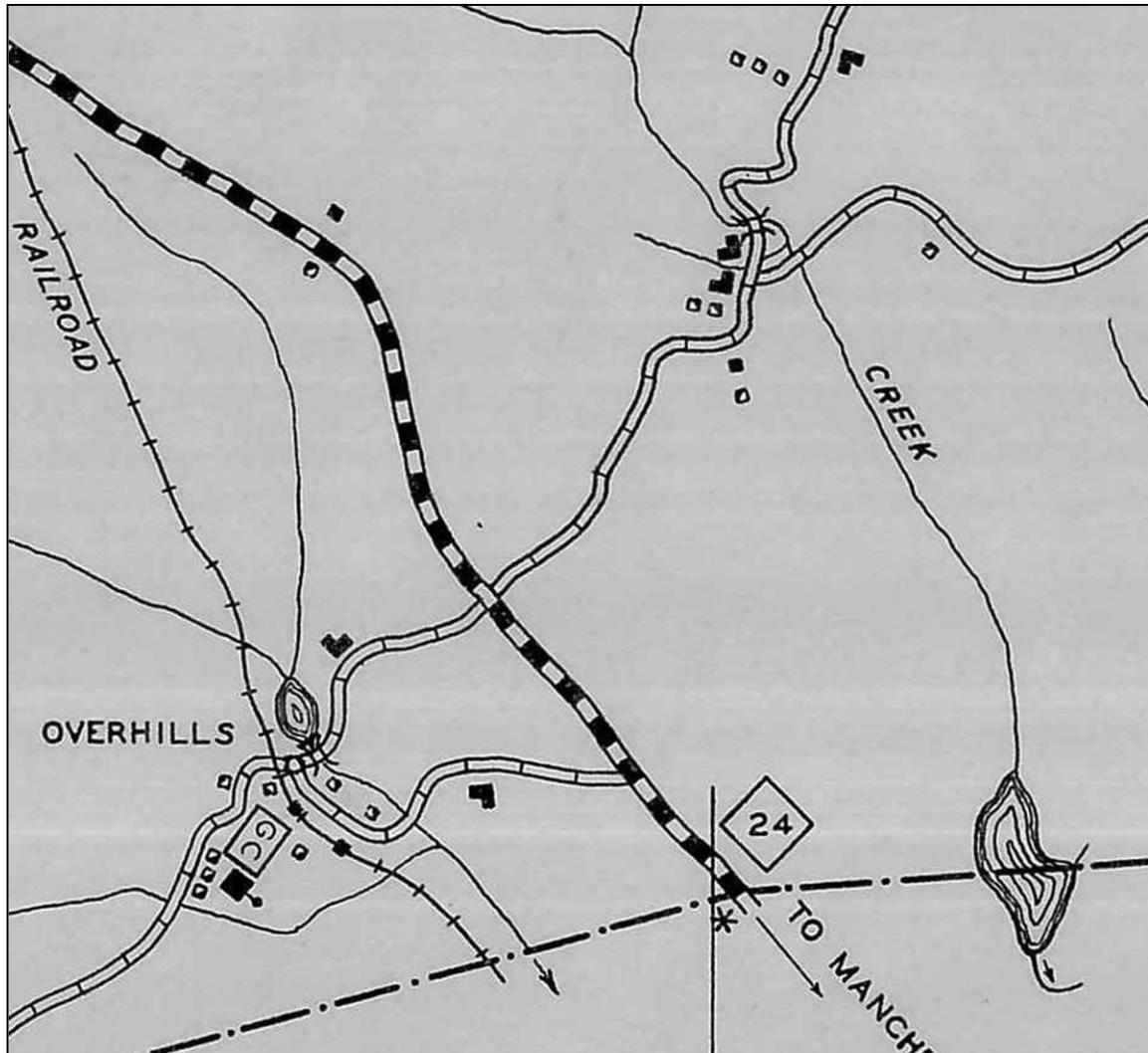


Figure 3.6: An inset of a 1938 Harnett County road map shows the Old Western Plank Road (Route 24/87), the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, and the two entrance roads to Overhills, from the highway. The grouping of structures to the east (right) of Route 24/87 represents the Nursery or Farm side. The “Overhills” label indicates the hill side near the lake and golf course. Created by State Highway and Public Works Commission. Courtesy of Paul Webb, personal copy.

Preparation and Anticipation

For Overhills staff members the upcoming winter season brought the promise of a steady number of visitors, all of whom would need travel arrangements, accommodations, meals, and leisure time.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

I don't know of any change, anything different, other than if it's the beginning winter season when they're coming down they bring the crew in to open the house up, that's the Croatan. When they closed it up they a lot of times put sheets over stuff like pictures, maybe the windows and doors, I don't know what all. But they had to go through and open the house up. That might have started a week early. And of course they had to start

buying up the food and stuff like that. Other than that type of activity I don't think it made any difference to the people that maintained the grounds and other work going on around there. I think it went on just like usual. I know at the horse stables, the horses would be back there if they'd taken them any place during the summer. They would be all groomed and combed down and ready to support that activity when they came down. The saddles deep oiled or waxed, whatever they do to them. I guess they kept that going all the time. And those type of things, preparation. But I don't know of any other special activities that go on for it.

Ronny Holmes

Well, your focus changed whenever they were here, I believe. Your job was to keep them happy and make everything right or whatever they wanted. Everything looked good. I would tell you - whether there was any more work or not but - the focus certainly changed. And that started probably in October. Used to be they never came in September, never October, maybe mid October but always November. It always started in November and that was the season. And it would go October/November, December and Mr. and Mrs. Avery would be here through the winter, some back and forth, but then when spring hit, Easter break, boy it just really picked up then. Everybody and his brother came down. And then that was through March, April and then nothing went on - early on nothing went on much in May, April/May, end of April, end of May, nothing went on here. It was too hot, getting too hot. Nothing in the summer, nobody ever in the summer. It was too hot.

Dennis Washington

There was definitely anticipation. [My father] wanted to make sure things were spotless. That lower level was swept daily. The saddles, we used to put diapers on the saddles to keep dust off of them. And all of the chrome, the stirrups and all of that, we would polish the stirrups. It looked really good. Anybody who worked for him at the stables they embraced that or you wouldn't last long. He'd get somebody. He was demanding that way, but there was definitely an excitement when Mr. Rockefeller would come. Anytime that Mr. Rockefeller would call that house and say Thurman, I'm coming to ride tomorrow at eight-fifteen. You know what, he was ready to go. His boots were always polished and there were a lot of times I had to polish his boots for him. But boots were polished and when he got up the next morning he was ready to go. There was definitely an excitement. You can understand why. Here was the man who would ultimately be funding everything that we did. So Mr. Elliman, same kind of thing.

Glodean Robinson

[Getting the houses ready meant] dusting and making sure the beds are done and decorating with flowers, shopping. We had to keep the houses up. In the summertime we'd have to put out the [de]humidifiers and stuff because it would so humid that it would mess up the wood furniture. So we had to make sure that the [de]humidifiers and everything were put out. And once a month someone - we would take turns between Gladys, Rosie, and I. We'd go and check, walk through the houses and make sure there were no leaks and nothing, making sure everything is okay. We only worked whenever they came. I think the

guys mostly worked because they did the farming and all the other chores taking care of the houses but the ladies, we only worked whenever they come to town.

Carolyn Lucas

[Mrs. Bruce] was fabulous. She used to buy their groceries for them and she was a character. She was a sweetheart. She would buy all their groceries for them and make sure that the girls kept the houses clean and she overseen that. So when they hired me just kind of part time, I wasn't working at the time and it gave me something to do and it helped me

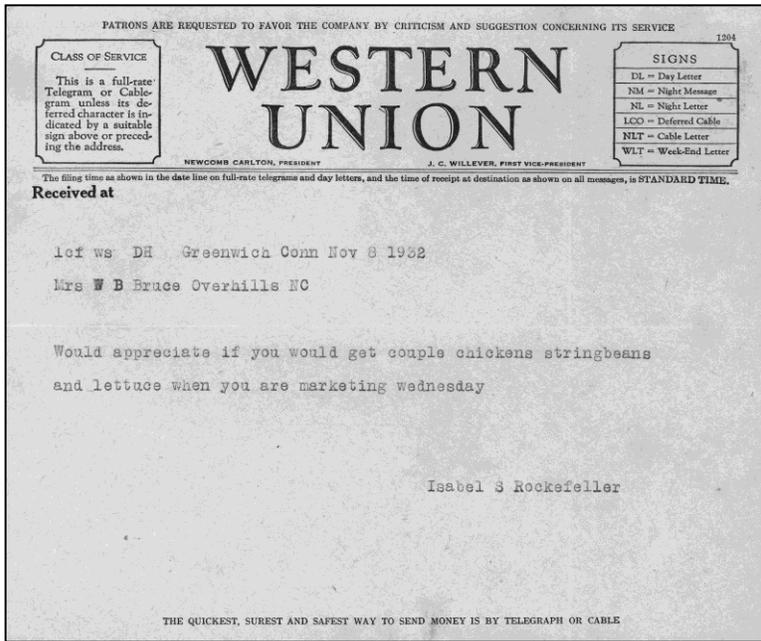


Figure 3.7: 1932 Telegram from Isabel Rockefeller to Thelma Bruce requesting grocery items. “Would appreciate if you would get couple chickens string beans and lettuce when you are marketing Wednesday. Isabel S. Rockefeller.” Overhills Document Collection, North Carolina State Archives.

and it was real, it was a treat. I mean I enjoyed it. The only thing I didn't enjoy was walking over to that grocery store. Man, that's when Big Star was out here in Spring Lake and I'm telling you I have come out there before with \$600 worth of groceries. And people would look at me because I couldn't tell them what I was buying groceries for. The manager knew but I couldn't tell them. I'm buying for a group of people or something, and most of the time that's what I would tell them and I wouldn't tell them who. But sometimes the families would, it would be two or three families that would

come and stay at different houses. And they always had to have chocolate chip cookies made from scratch. And they had to have brownies. You always had to have chocolate chip cookies and brownies and fruit. You always had to have fruit. You knew that but what they [would] do, they would call down to Sandy Hemingway who was the bookkeeper in the office and they would tell Sandy their menu. Or they would write their menu out what they wanted the girls that worked at the houses to cook for them when they would come down. I would get the menu, the girls would make a list of what they needed from the store and then I would go to the store. A lot of the times I would go by myself. And some of the times one of the girls would go with me, because that was a job. I'd get a grocery cart slam full and I'd park it over here and go get another. Now I hate to go to the grocery store. I guess that's the reason.²

Sandy Hemingway

They would call me. I had this huge calendar. [They would] call me [to] find out who was where when. Then the next thing I would get would be the arrival time and departure time and then I would line up the cars. We had a lot of cars. And when it got real busy we just would go down to the dealership and get all the extra cars that we needed, because usually they would want a car. And then the next thing would be: we'll call you tomorrow with the menu. And they would start. For lunch: now they could only choose certain things. Mrs. Bruce had them so well trained. She was a hoot. But when you were on Overhills you will eat what Overhills prepares. It was a fixed menu. But it was leg of lamb, fried chicken, roast beef. Sunday you always had standing rib with Yorkshire pudding. If you had the leg of lamb then the next day you always had shepherd's pie. It was such a routine. Breakfast, they always put out a side board with all of the sausages and eggs and cut up fruit. They could order their eggs if they wanted fried eggs or something. But everything else was out. They would just chow down. The cooking that went on was unbelievable. I went to Carly C's in Spring Lake. They used to love to see me coming. A lot of people couldn't fathom a grocery cart with nothing but milk and orange juice in it. You have to consider how many people you're feeding and how many houses. Of course when they come in there are certain things that they wanted in the ice box. I need to have cranberry juice. You have to remember that that went to that house. And that had to go in that house. Always cookies. Chocolate chip cookies and brownies were always in the cookie jar when they came in. Always. I bet I bought 10 billion toll house chocolate chip packages while I worked there.

Jo Ann Locklear

And then when I was up there, started up with Miss Carolyn, me and her would get together and we'd have to go to the grocery store and we would go out to the Big Star. She'd say, come on Jo Ann we got a crowd coming in. I said, alright Miss Carolyn. And we'd get together and we'd go to Big Star. We'd come up out of there and people look at us and they start at the cash register, you can take them, I don't want them, I don't want them. We'd come up there with like six, seven hundred dollars worth of food, four or five buggies of food. Me and Miss Carolyn we'd separate. She'd say alright you get this one, I get this one. I said okay. She said we get two buggies a piece. She said you go down this aisle, I'll go down this aisle. Me and her be constantly bumping into each other. We'd go up there and they said all together? I say, yup. They look at me and Miss Carolyn and it's like, oh Lord have mercy.

Tommy McPhail

First thing we'd do: this is before the road was paved out here. I remember when all these roads were dirt, in the '60s they were dirt. We'd actually get out, this is the side of the farm that I worked on. Our job was to start on the roads. We'd pick up all the paper on the sides of the roads. They'd ride down, coming in from the airport, they wanted it pretty. We had everybody meet at the hill and we'd get wood up for them and carry it to the houses. The golf course: [we'd] make sure it was spic-and-span. Rake around the houses, driveways, whatever. Everything was picture perfect for them when they got here.

¹ Only two area maps are known to identify Overhills' location. In addition to this 1938 county road map, a 1916 Harnett County soil survey map shows the location.

² Carolyn Lucas adds: "Sometimes Bernice would help." Transcript of oral history interview. Carolyn Lucas. Interviewed by Jeffrey D. Irwin and Kaitlin O'Shea, 30 October 2006, Spring Lake, NC. Overhills Oral History Project, on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources, Directorate of Public Works. Overhills Document Collection: OHD1937_049. On file at North Carolina State Archives.

CHAPTER FOUR

A SENSE OF PLACE

An expansive pine forest dissected sand trails that connected the seemingly random clusters of buildings and farm fields gave Overhills its distinctive landscape with a somewhat unruly character. The greatest order established in the layout of buildings came with adherence to existing features, including natural topography, a railroad, lake, creeks, swamps, and old sand trails, making it more akin to a farm in its design and physical evolution than a town or planned estate. Its geographic boundaries expanded and decreased over the decades, peaking at 40,000 acres in the days of bird hunting and the chase, condensing to 10,000 acres in later years. The network of dirt roads and bridle trails that traversed the property was never paved with asphalt. The historic character grew with time. Those who knew Overhills understood the rather informal landscape arrangement and recognized the many landmarks on the property.

A Family Side and a Farm Side

The massive rambling property of Overhills can be divided into roughly two main sections. The dividing line, at the time of Overhills' emergence, was Old Western Plank Road. Once made of native longleaf pine boards in the nineteenth century, the dirt road of the early twentieth century became the paved state highway (Route 87) in later years. Conditioned by the presence of the railroad, lake, and a comfortable ridge, the western side of Route 87 was the family side, or Overhills proper as labeled on historic maps. Here the original country club was established, including the Clubhouse, golf course, kennels and stables as well as a rail station, depot, and employee's cottages. Roughly three miles to the east the nursery agricultural complex concurrent with the country club balanced out the estate. In contrast to the family or resort side, the eastern half of Overhills took its character from decades of farming.

Stillman Hanson

It was just Overhills. And other places would be different. We're going to the stables or we're going over [to] the pig farm. That was always a big outing, we'd have to go look at the pigs.

Kim Elliman

There was this division between those who worked on the Hill and those who worked on the farm. We saw the farmers less frequently than the people who worked on the Hill.

Carolyn Lucas

It was like a vacation for him [Avery Rockefeller]. Sometimes he would come down, if I remember correctly, sometimes he'd come down for like a month or something like that. Most of the time if he came down, he and Miss Avery, they would stay like three weeks or a month and maybe even longer sometimes that I'm not aware of. So somebody that lived over there on the other side where Mr. Rockefeller would stay, would probably know better how to answer that than I would.

those two guys kind of shared the responsibility of looking after their part. Thurman looked after the Hill. Elmon looked after the Farm or this side of the road. They butted heads a few times, but there was just two groups. We had a big meeting and said there's one Overhills, you all work for Overhills. You're not divided. You used to think, man if you could get over there, I'm on the Hill, man. They didn't have to work as hard over there.

Bonnie McPhail

They mostly took care of the people when they came in and the houses and like I say, the golf courses and the horses and kept everything up over there, make sure everything was for them and we basically took care of the farming on this side.

Florence Short

Well we'd just call it the Nursery I suppose. You go over to Nursery and then Long Valley.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

The Nursery area had a big barn over there and they sort of had their own equipment in the Nursery area. They had a truck and some other equipment they had the Nursery for farming around that area. The main part of Overhills, I mentioned that earlier around the gas pump where they kept most of the main equipment they had like trucks, tractors, and everything, and they had their own wheat picker, grain picker.¹ They'd take it around and pick the grain wherever it needed to be. They would keep that there at the sheds around the main gas pump near the golf course.

Dennis Washington

Okay, Bernice Morgan had his grandkids: Wanda Turnage, Shirley Turnage, and Ruth Ann Turange. There was Bruce Campbell and Jacob Campbell. Then there were the Holmes kids, Sandra Strickland, and the Bull kids. And that was pretty much it, the concentration of kids that were in Overhills property, that little nest of families. And then getting scattered out a little further you had Tommy and Sheila McPhail and they were on the other side of 87 off Nursery Road.

Houses on the Hill



Figure 4.2: The Hill, shown in the early 1920s. From left to right: the Clubhouse, Harriman Cottage, and the Covert. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

At the heart of Overhills was a collection of buildings and a golf course. This compilation represented the earliest concentration of activity and investment in a club as well as the permanent residential and recreational core of the estate throughout its history. Tucked deep into the private pine forest, over a mile from the nearest paved road, the Hill area served as the early lodging area for club owners and guests as well as the Rockefeller family's residences. Nearby were employee cottages, riding stables, and the lake.

The first residence built on this area, called, "The Hill," was the Overhills Clubhouse, as part of the Overhills Country Club. With it, two similar bungalows were built for the servants accompanying the club members. Adjacent to the Clubhouse, in the 1920s more houses began to ring the Hill: the Harriman Cottage, Percy Rockefeller's Covert Cottage, and Croatan Lodge all arranged in an arch open towards the first and ninth holes on the golf course.

Featured here are recollections of some of the oldest buildings that stood on the Hill: the Clubhouse, the Covert Cottage, and Croatan Lodge. Memories of the first two, which were both demolished by the early 1950s, are limited by the distance of time. Croatan, symbolic of Overhills history for many and architecturally the most substantial building, is prominent in many memories. After the Clubhouse and the Covert were demolished, Avery Rockefeller had three ranch style houses built to accommodate the families during their Overhills visits.



Figure 4.3: A ca. 1938 bird's eye view of the Hill area. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

Clubhouse

The single most symbolic building of the Kent-Jordan era was the Clubhouse. Built in 1913 at the center of the Overhills Country Club, the large craftsman-prairie style building overlooked the golf course. The Clubhouse offered a kitchen, living room, library, gun room, golf room, 13 guest rooms upstairs, and a superintendent's apartment. Winters in the 1920s were the busiest seasons here as visitors would awake to breakfast, spend the morning about the estate, and return to find clean linens, a meal, and a comfortable place to pass the evening. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Clubhouse also served as a venue for Christmas parties, square dances, and wedding receptions. The Superintendent, Frank N. Miller followed by W.B. Bruce, and his family lived in the superintendent's quarters. By the late 1930s, the Clubhouse was seldom used. It was demolished in 1947.

Louise Alabaster

Well it was all real rustic. The whole thing was rustic. And they had lots of bedrooms upstairs and they were all, they were just kind of Spartan like. But that's what they wanted. They wanted a contrast I guess of what they had in New York or wherever the other homes were located.

Dorothy Yantis

Oh I wish you could have seen it. You went in through the back of the house and the office was on the right hand side. They had teletype back then. That was right on the right side. And then beyond that was the big dining room and then beyond that was the kitchen. Then you would go in, you would go to the left and the front of the Clubhouse overlooked of course the golf course.



Figure 4.4: The Overhills Clubhouse, late 1920s. Courtesy of Louise Alabaster.

There was a big room there and they had a huge hewn out log right in front of the fireplace because they liked everything natural back then. So they had the log and this gigantic fireplace and right up over it was a moose head. It was this huge moose head. It was kind of intimidating when it was lightning and thundering. That's why it reminded me of that hotel in *The Shining*. Then the other rooms had deer heads

and all kinds of heads, especially over the door. Then when it would be thunder and lightning and the shutters and everything, it was just like, gadzooks. We'd be all there by ourselves, Dot Bruce and myself. But we would be having a good time. They were all gone somewhere. But they'd always come home at night. We just had so much fun. But the

Bruces' living quarters were on the other end. And they had a gigantic bedroom, just a humungous bedroom. It was like from the front to the back on the end. It was just like a big hall back then. I don't know they had used it for before, but that was their bedroom. And Dot's bedroom was a small one and it was there. And we were safe in there because there were no heads and we could just lock all of the doors. And then they had this gigantic veranda out front with white wicker chairs all over the veranda out front. We would play out there. But that would be mostly in the summer when we had the big thunderstorms.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

The Clubhouse to me was always an interesting place. The Clubhouse had one big room in it, that's what I call the living room, with a big fireplace and a big moose head above the fireplace with big antlers. And facing the fireplace was a big sofa. And in front of it was a stool, a foot stool, it had like a log that must have been six feet, seven feet long with the top part of it cut off so it was flat like you cut it in half. Then two little logs on each end that would curve to match the curvature of the log. And this thing set in it. And there was a foot stool. I can remember sitting in there a lot up near the fireplace or we'd play games in there on the sofa and the stool. At that time Monopoly was becoming popular so I can remember playing Monopoly there. And my aunt and uncle lived there. The first time I can remember anyone living any place it was in the Clubhouse. And he was the overseer of Overhills then at that time. And the Clubhouse on the first floor back towards the end where the Harriman house is located, was across the end like a long room that was used for a living room and it led out onto the front porch of the Clubhouse.² And then a room beside it was used for a bedroom and so forth.

And Overhills, in addition to that room, had the big library room with shelves along one side with books in it.³ And then it had a gun room to where it had the racks down where people would keep their guns. I guess if when you were there as a member of the stock club or hunting club you could leave your guns there. And it had all these cabinets down below where you keep the shells and boxes of clay pigeons they'd use for shooting practice. The clay pigeon shooter was located over there not far out on the golf course from Croatan. All of that was on one side of the living room. And then if you go on the other wing going down you'd go through first the office of Overhills was, one room. That's where Uncle Bryan had his office. And also the book keeping. I think for a while that Bob Gurganious was in that office as well as doing the postmaster work. I don't know who did it before then. And then as you continue down the hallway you come into the big dining room that had the tables and chairs. And then off on the angle going down to the angled part of the Clubhouse, you went into the kitchen.⁴ I was always impressed going back into the kitchen. The cook would be there, Macy, and [he] had this great big long wood cook stove also where you do the cooking. And up in the ceiling it had this chandelier light of course it was electric at this time. But prior to that it was one of the chandelier lights that had a chain hooked to it on the side wall and you could let it down. It was one of these gas lanterns that you used before electricity or in case the electricity went out.

And downstairs under that it had a basement in it where it had the boilers and stuff. And under the kitchen it had a garage and I can remember them keeping the truck in there that had the firefighting equipment on it. They had a truck. And a trailer that had a top on it you could lift up that you could go meet the guests with in Sanford. And they put all the luggage in this trailer and they put the top down so if it was raining it wouldn't get wet. That trailer in there and the firefighting equipment stayed in there. The firefighting equipment would be like, ever see the tanks you wear on the back of your back and it had water in it and it had a hand pump you could shoot out a stream of water.

Katherine Stilwell

The main room in the Clubhouse was where we square danced. The entry you could come in from the side or the front and they cleared everything of course and sometimes there would be 50 couples on the floor for a square dance. It was a tremendous room. Now it had columns. That was the only thing that made it difficult but you danced around them. And the kitchen went back into the dining room and I can get confused about hotels that I've been in but I know the kitchen and the area from the kitchen to the dining room was a long corridor. But the Clubhouse was the center of activity a lot of the time.

Patricia Penny

Alright, to walk up the steps on the front porch – the porch was unbelievable. It was really huge and all the way from one end to the other was the most gorgeous wicker furniture. The whole thing was furnished, just absolutely elegant. And then as you walked in the big front doors there was a huge lobby that had a tremendous fireplace right in the center over on the backside. But the thing that I remember most about that room was over that fireplace was a gigantic moose head. And I don't know the story of that because it certainly was not something that was shot down on that property. I hope. And in front of the fireplace they had a pine bench that looked like they had had someone go out in the woods down there and cut down one of the long leaf pines about this big *[arms form a circle to show the width of the pine tree]* oh I guess this big around. And they shaved it down and it had been sanded and shellacked with the top slice taken off of it and they made this monstrous long stool. And that was in front of this fireplace. I can remember we kids used to get up on the stool, jump up, and see if we could touch the moose head. Off of that main lobby there was a huge library that some taxidermist had mounted several pieces of wildlife I guess that had been shot down there. And then they had a huge gun room and a room for golf clubs. Upstairs was all of the bedrooms. There was a big dining room and a huge kitchen. It was neat.

At that time [late 1930s – early 1940s] nothing was going on in there. No one ever stayed in there or anything. And shortly after them moving over and living in Averell Harriman's house they tore it down. They had a big auction sale, and sold off all the stuff in there and I can vaguely recall that when they got everything cleared out they had a big square dance in there in that lobby for all the people that lived there. It was fun.

Covert Cottage

Percy Rockefeller hired Cross & Cross Architects of New York City to design a personal residence for him at Overhills. Commissioned in 1917, the house was finished by 1921. The largest house on the Hill, a Colonial Revival with Tudor influence, included a basement and three floors of living space with bedrooms, sleeping porches, a kitchen, pantry, and living room. The Covert was constructed with steel beams and poured concrete, which family lore attributes to Percy's fear of house fires.



Figure 4.5: The west elevation of Percy Rockefeller's Covert Cottage, shown in the early 1920s. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

After Rockefeller died, the Covert was only occasionally used and maintenance costs escalated; for these reasons, Avery Rockefeller ordered the house to be demolished in 1954. While the Covert stood longer than the Clubhouse, its more exclusive use by Percy, his immediate family and friends resulted in few modern memories.

Andrew Jackson, Sr.

Mr. Percy Rockefeller, he built a big home. At one

time it was supposed to have been the nicest home in Harnett County. It was made with tile. It was fireproof. When the crash came it got pretty tough for the rich people and they had to tear that thing down for tax purposes, to reduce their taxes.

Ann Elliman

It was a funny setup. [The dining room] was a narrow room with a very narrow table and there was always a bunch of fruit on it. So you'd walk in the house and you'd smell this fruit on it which was great. [The table] was a refectory table [from] a monastery [in Italy]. It was an old monk's table, long and narrow. It was used as a spillover house because I remember going there, sleeping with friends of mine because there was no room at Croatan. Nobody did [claim it.] Everybody [preferred to go to] Croatan.

It was all much bigger than it looked. From the front it didn't look very big and then it sort of spread out. The rooms were smaller than Croatan as I remember. Croatan was a much lighter kind of a house. [The Covert] had a tile roof and the children, the grandchildren were in the back. Presumably out of the way.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

Percy Rockefeller's house was there when I was there. But I can't remember the year they tore it down. I remember I was in school. I remember they had a time tearing this house

down from what they thought it was going to be. They thought they could blast it and tear it down but it had concrete floors in it and built up wood floors. Daddy said they would blast that thing and it had all these rebars running through it, steel rebars. And it wouldn't



Figure 4.6: Rockefeller's private home, ca. 1925, in snow. The water tower is to the left. Courtesy of Louise Alabaster.

fall apart. They had to get a welder out there with an acetylene torch. Somebody had to cut all those rebars so they could get the stuff to fall down in chunks to haul it off.

Patricia Penny

That place was – they could not tear it down. They had to hire a firm to come in from Charlotte with some sort of a crane. My dad was telling me about it. He said the walls in this thing were solid cement. They

said no tornado in existence would have ever have torn this place down. He had to bring in this crane with this big wrecking ball and swing it at the sides to get this place knocked down. I remember it had a tile floor, red tile floor in the front part.

Bob Model

In those days [1940s] everybody stayed at Croatan. That's where we stayed. And the Covert was derelict and my guess is that nobody lived in there after my grandfather died [1934]. And as I said, my Uncle Avery did take down pretty much all the things that his father had built. The kennel was taken down because it was wood and it needed a lot of repair and there wasn't any fox hounds anymore so there wasn't a need for that. And that came down in the 1950s.

I remember when Sycamore was built as an overflow and when the Covert came down [1950s], the Covert and the Clubhouse came down, at some point there was going to be not enough room for all of the family to enjoy Overhills. But in those early years everybody sort of took turns coming down. My mother and Avery were very close and Croatan had been built by my grandmother for the grandchildren.

Cookie Model

I definitely remember the Covert being torn down and my mother crying, Mrs. Bruce and my mother standing there crying. I have a picture of Mrs. Bruce and myself in front on the steps of the Covert. I probably don't have major memories except [being] very sad when it was being torn down - no, nothing vivid except my mother's sadness.

Florence Short

All I remember of the Covert was the foundations. You could still find the foundations and then there was somebody that lived down there, a little house by the Covert and every time we came to Overhills we'd have to say hello to her. And then before we left we had to say goodbye to her. And she offered us cookies and one time I said I didn't want one and my mother told me how rude that was. I don't know who that was but I know my mother was always angry about tearing the Covert down.

Alabaster House

A small, white bungalow sat behind the Covert, connected by a walkway. Serving as the home for Percy Rockefeller's valet, Albert Alabaster, and family, this house was a wood frame, one-story building, with a wine cellar. Once the Alabasters left Overhills, the house served another employee family before being used for storage until its demolition in the 1960s.

Andrew Jackson, Sr.

Mr. Alabaster. He was Mr. Percy's and he had a house right below Mr. Percy's big house, but they tore it down. He had two sons and a daughter, and the oldest one was the same age as I am. They sent us both up – Mrs. Harriman paid our expenses to spend two months



Figure 4.7: The Alabaster house, ca. 1923. Courtesy of Louise Alabaster.

at the boys' camp, all expenses paid.

out front had a fish pool, you know a pool that had silver fish in it. I used to like to go down there and see those.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

And then right below his [Percy Rockefeller's] house [the Covert] was the house where his butler lived. That was Mr. [Albert] Alabaster. And Mr. Alabaster's house had a wine cellar in the basement where he kept the wine for Mr. Rockefeller. I can remember his house

There was a man that used to keep the lawns up and prune the shrubbery and stuff like that, McCoy. You've heard his name? He lived on 87 up near Spout Springs. He had a farm up there for years and he'd come in everyday by car. He had an A model car. But later on he sold his farm and moved into the house where Mr. Alabaster lived. Downstairs it had a shop area and that's where he kept the lawn mower he used for the area. He had one of these motorized big Toro lawn mowers with the real type. He'd cut the lawn around the houses that you wouldn't get to with the golf course. And he pruned the shrubbery around the horse barn and the shrubbery up around the houses. And that's what he did full time,

he just kept that going. But after he left, moved out, or maybe died down there, I don't anybody else lived there after that, at least that I know of. But he worked for Overhills.

Cookie Model

I can remember when I was a child and the Alabaster house. The woman made the best sugar cookies you could possibly imagine. She must have been making butter or cream or something. It smelled so dreadful that you'd have to hold your nose when you walked in, but you didn't want to eat the cookie because you couldn't taste the cookie because it smelled so badly. So you'd say you had to wait for it until after lunch so you didn't want to ruin your appetite because it smelled badly.

Ronny Holmes

Well they knocked it down when I was here, but I don't know when anybody quit living in it. But it was an old haunted house. We accused it of being haunted. But we would play in it. Not two stories up; one and one down. Man that thing was haunted. Cement walls in it.

Croatan Lodge

By the late 1920s, Percy and Isabel Rockefeller's family had grown to include young grandchildren. To preserve some privacy in the Covert and create more space for the new generation, Isabel hired Hiss & Weeks Architects of New York to design a new lodge. Reinecke Construction Company of Fayetteville built the Croatan lodge in the summer and fall of 1928. Built of masonry and steel like the Covert, Croatan was designed more like an inn than a house, with numerous bedrooms and open sleeping porches. Ethel Peterson, an artist in residence, painted the girls' and boys' bathrooms on the third floor with whimsical designs of birds and dogs. Isabel furnished the house with antiques. As the decades of Overhills progressed, Croatan remained a family favorite for a place to stay while visiting, making it the best remembered house at Overhills, for family and staff alike.



Figure 4.8: Croatan Lodge, ca. 1930. Courtesy of Sandy Hemingway.

Florence Short

It is the most beautiful house. And people tried to duplicate it in their own and it's never duplicated. What people try to duplicate is the window seat because we all loved the window seat but then they make the mistake, they don't remember correctly. Behind the window seat there's the windows and everything. The children would be there. We'd be

playing cards and reading or games or something. And then by the fireplace there were two sofas. So the adults would be having cocktails or something like that and the kids would all be at the window seat. Between the window seat and the window there was a register of heat so it was always comfortable there. When people have tried to copy that they forget about that heat being there so then in the winter that window seat is too cold. But the rooms were the most harmonious dimensions I think. While I hadn't been there for five years when I was in Texas, I was just struck by the beauty of the living room and the wide, I remember the wide planked floor boards. And it was just beautiful. It was just very satisfying. Occasionally people would visit and think it was not up to snuff, like there should be - I don't know - better carpeting or something. But you see they were just ignorant because the carpeting was made out of rag rugs. And people, I can remember my mother doing this too - this was the days before nylon stockings and you'd have rayon stockings and then they'd save the rayon stockings and all that would go into the rugs. And



Figure 4.9: Croatan living room, ca. 1950. Courtesy of Ann Elliman.

there was a whole bunch in the attic. I took a picture of that on the video and my sister took them to New York but there was dry rot and they could not fix those rugs. It was beautiful. Every room was different, it was just different. Every room was distinctive and every room was beautiful.

Isabel Elmer

It was very comfortable, that main living room was just so comfortable. And we had a great big window

seat. And we did a lot of reading. It was a wonderful room because you could have different sections with people doing different things. In the winter the fire was always going and that was wonderful. And the piano was always there and when I was a child it was a player piano. It was just a very comfortable room. There was a big table behind. In the middle of the room they had two sofas, big sofas for three people at least. And then the fire. And then behind the sofas were two big tables, big tables. And they were probably antique, they were probably good. I remember a spinning wheel in the room, not that it was ever used. But comfortable chairs like this, it was a very comfortable room. People felt very comfortable there.

Ann Elliman

Croatan was different in that it was furnished in antiques and a lot of say, early American antiques. Not all were rustic but they were fine, fine antiques. They were appropriate to the place and the style of the house. Then of course she bought a lot of things from Jugtown,

which was just starting to be known then. And we ate off Jugtown plates. What was that – tobacco spit, that sort of brownish color that they have. And I don't know how much lead was in there but we often ate from that. She had bought some beautiful blue bowls, a couple of which I have, of a color that they don't know how to make anymore. They're just lovely. And the rugs were mostly rag rugs, which she bought locally or in the region, area, community. And the quilts on the beds were also bought down there, so she did her best to help the economy and everybody absolutely adored Croatan and the living room was one of the most special places to be that I ever can remember.

Bob Model

Well when you go up the stairs on the left hand side there's a little group of three rooms and we always had a nurse and so she slept in the middle room. I slept in the room nearest the bathroom and my sister slept in the room that was off the porch there where they had the two beds. And that's where I slept. That little room was the room that I stayed in.

Florence Short

And then the grandchildren cried too much with earaches and so then Croatan was built. And then one of my friends I remember them saying, you hear about couples having separate bedrooms. Well Posy's grandparents, they had separate houses.

Ann Elliman

Going back to the '40s, where there were more of his friends and my aunt and uncle and so on, when we were all still at Croatan, it was a marvelous mix of ages with children and adults. Somebody would usually be on the piano in the Croatan living room playing songs. Adults would be talking and there would be cocktails and the children would be playing "kick it" or card games or whatever. It was just a wonderful mix of generations that we didn't have as much later on. Those were really special times that I remember.

Glodean Robinson

They used to have such the cutest little dishes in there and little cups and sometimes after dinner they would like to be served coffee. Now they had all these quaint, cute little coffee pots and all these little coffee miniature cups and they'd like to have their coffee. After they leave out of the dining room, in the living room we always have coffee set up. If they want tea, we set that up for them. But they had such the cutest little dishes at Croatan.

Jo Ann Locklear

Beautiful, beautiful. All them hardwood floors in there. And each room had its own design. Each room had its own name to it. Everybody had their own room and stuff. You had to go up there and set the room up 'cause that's the only room that they would take. And then like at Croatan they were upstairs in the attic that's where the lot of times the children would sleep with the, they would bring in their own nanny and stuff and they would take care of the kids up there.

Carolyn Lucas

The big old fashioned two story – that’s a beautiful place, three story really. I love that place. That was my favorite over there, was Croatan.

Rosie Tyler

I liked Croatan. Croatan was my favorite. It had three flights of stairs. It was very interesting. Have you ever been in it? Very interesting. The people were very interesting. That was one of the reasons I liked working for them. All of them was very nice.

The Ranch Houses



Figure 4.10: The ranch houses on the Hill. Left to right: Bird Song, Cherokee, Sycamore. Courtesy of Fort Bragg.

By the mid 1950s, the removal of two prominent structures on the Hill (Clubhouse and Covert) left a large visual gap on the Hill and created a shortage of lodging for Rockefeller family members and their guests. In order to alleviate the shortage, Avery Rockefeller designed two ranch houses, Sycamore in 1949 and Cherokee in 1954. Avery & Anna Rockefeller and their children stayed in Cherokee until 1962, when Avery’s largest ranch house, Bird Song, was complete. Sycamore and Cherokee were small ranch houses situated near the footprint of the old Covert Cottage. Bird Song took a place near the old Clubhouse and was a vast, rambling twelve bedroom ranch house with a later indoor pool wing addition. These ranch houses, combined with Croatan and Harriman, came to represent Overhills and the Hill area for the Rockefellers and employees more than the Covert and the Clubhouse, relics of an earlier time.

Bob Model

My mother always like Sycamore. At one point before she died we moved to Sycamore and stayed at Sycamore. People liked staying at Sycamore because it was quiet. You’d walk over for breakfast, but really all that [went]; when the next generation started coming down, things got more complicated. But again it wasn’t overused through the ‘70s. People would either come at Christmas or Easter and then after my mother died and Avery built Cherokee I’d stay over there with them sometimes and then when they built Bird Song, I’d stay over there at Bird Song. So I kind of moved out of Croatan. And Croatan my sister and her kids always stayed there and the Lincolns always stayed at Croatan. The Averys moved from Cherokee over to Bird Song. Ann Elliman, she liked staying at Sycamore and Faith Conger always liked to stay at Sycamore as I recall. But that’s sort of how Avery organized it. His kids would all be at Cherokee then at Bird Song.

I remember when Sycamore was built as an overflow and when the Covert came down, the Covert and the Clubhouse came down, at some point there was going to be not enough room for all of the family to enjoy Overhills. But in those early years everybody sort of took turns coming down.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

When the Sycamore house was built that was built as an annex to the Croatan. It had a little kitchen but it didn't have a kitchen and the dining room like the Croatan did. So it had this big walkway between the two where it was intended that to be the annex. People would stay there but still could go back and use the dining room at Croatan.



Figure 4.11: The newly constructed Sycamore Cottage with the Covert in the background, ca. 1950. Courtesy of Kim Elliman.

Florence Short

The Blagdens were very good friends with my parents and in later years you might have heard that. Harry Blagden had had some heart trouble and a stroke and they lived in the Adirondacks, which is too cold for someone with heart trouble. You're not supposed to be in the cold weather or something. Anyway so with Mother's suggestion and everybody's agreement they spent several winters in Sycamore for the whole winter.

Lotes Holmes

And then as the family grew they built a little cottage called Sycamore right next to it and that was built just before we moved there, I think in '49 I believe it was. The family still kept growing and then they built another house called Cherokee, it was next to that. And then I think in 1964, maybe the first part of 1963, Mr. Rockefeller built Bird Song, the cottage that he lived in, he and his family mostly and their friends. Then that left the other members of the family to use the other parts of the house. The most popular little house there was the Sycamore. It was a three bedroom house and they all seemed to love that little house. They enjoyed it and it was sort of to themselves. They enjoyed that right much mostly and then Mr. Rockefeller's friends mostly came to Bird Song over there. They built onto Bird Song part of the maid's quarters and things like that. After that, a year or two later, they built a little swimming pool, the pool house that was there.

Bill Shaw

Well what I did, work I did there started about 1962 and off and on till maybe the '70s. Have you seen the big house that we built? Have you seen it? I believe they called it the North Carolina cottage when it was built. It's the newest one there. We built that. I

thought what was always odd about it, 12 bedrooms, 13 bathrooms. I'm pretty sure it hadn't changed too, asbestos shingles on the side. But it was special. Not like the old asbestos shingles you usually find around. Had a backing board behind it, beveled backing board to make a shadow on it somehow or another. I forgot exactly how that worked. Never seen nothing like it.

Kim Elliman

The birds in Bird Song that [Miss Pete] painted, the canvases in the bathroom were amazing. [They were] just phenomenal. And then she also painted lots of wastebaskets of birds and fairies. I actually have some of them in my house.

Sandy Hemingway

Bird Song didn't have the charm that Croatan did. And then Mrs. Bruce left. The Harriman Cottage was named for Averell Harriman. That was kind of a nice cottage to stay in. There was Sycamore. There was a little one over here. Cherokee wasn't bad. Sycamore, nobody particularly cared for that. Bird Song it was rambling, it had that long hallway. The living room was kind of charming but it just didn't have that cohesiveness that Croatan did. Croatan had that marvelous living room with that big fireplace and oh! you could just stay there forever. And it had that beautiful deck, I don't know if deck is the right word - porch. So they would all vie for that one and figure out. But Easter and Christmas, you got what was to be had. Just be lucky that you found something. But the older generation [had priority].

William Hanson

You felt sort of slighted if you didn't get to go to Croatan but hey Sycamore, Cherokee were there. You'd share, you'd wait in line, you'd be patient. There was no feeling of ownership.

Kim Elliman

For a long time the family was served principally by two houses, Croatan and Cherokee. After Bird Song was built, Croatan and Bird Song were the principle residences. Basically Overhills had a head cook and a second cook. If there was one kitchen going, usually they had a cook assisted by a second cook. If there were two houses occupied they each had just one cook and a maid. It got to the point, though, that after my grandparents built Bird Song and they lived there six months a year, Overhills had two teams to do the cooking.

The extent to which the family occupied more than two houses, the cooking logistics became complicated. Usually even if you stayed in other houses, you ate in either Bird Song or Croatan. My parents loved to stay in the Harriman House. They would eat in Bird Song if I were there. And if people were in Cherokee, depending on where their closer relatives were they either stayed and ate in Bird Song or in Croatan. We tried every once in a while sort of shifting food out. If there were a lot of people it just didn't work as well.

Overhills, North Carolina: A Post Office

The earliest postmaster at Overhills on record is John F. Bowers, beginning March 19, 1914.⁵ Bowers received mail via the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad deliveries to the post office in the passenger station.⁶ By 1943, Vernice H. Bruce, wife of Overhills carpenter W.E. Bruce, became acting postmistress and W.E. Bruce constructed a small post office for his wife on the public road across from the kennels, below the Edward Bruce house.⁷ It operated in this spot from 1944 - 1976, seeing various modes of mail delivery. The Overhills post office continued until June 18, 1976 with Vernice Bruce as the postmistress. After Vernice Bruce retired, the post office was discontinued at Overhills and residents erected mailboxes near the former passenger station.

A list of Overhills postmasters is as follows:⁸ John F. Bowers, 3-19-1914; Nicholas R. Lewis, 8-26-1916; Robert J. Gurganious, 11-20-1917; William S. West, 2-2-1926; V.O. Turner, 6-2-1933; Robert J. Gurganious, 8-8-1935; Mrs. Cora D. Shaw, 7-27-1942; Mrs. Vernice H. Bruce, 10-25-1943.



Figure 4.12: Sabra Coble and Walter Edward Bruce, Sr. with Katherine Coble in front of the Overhills Post Office, ca. 1925. Courtesy of Ed Bruce, Jr.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

She [my mother, Vernice Bruce] was primarily a homemaker up until the time she became a postmaster. And then when she became acting postmaster, the post office was located in the passenger station which was over beside the railroad track, about a mile from our house. And she would go over there and Mrs. Shaw was the postmaster at the time. She worked for a while until she became acting postmaster. Then a little while after that she became postmaster. The mail used to come in by train to the post office there at the passenger station. And the passenger station earlier, when Mr. Gurganious was there it was also a telegraph station and a passenger station and a post office. And people would come and go by train in the early part of the '30s. That sort of played out later one. But anyway the mail stopped coming in by train and it would come in by vehicle. When Mother became postmaster, then my father built a little post office beside our house, where she could just be at home and walk down to the post office and put the mail up, send the mail out. She did that from 1943 until 1976 when she retired. That was her primary job.

I don't really know when [mail stopped coming by train], but it had stopped by the time she'd taken over being postmaster because after that it came in – whoever had the contract for bringing the mail in, it would come down from Sanford. I know he [the mailman] had



Figure 4.13: Vernice Bruce in front of the Overhills Post Office with the Bruce family dog, late 1940s. Courtesy of Patricia Penny.

a car to start with, then he had a pick up truck he'd bring it in. He'd stop by the little post office on the way and through ours and down onto Spring Lake and go to Fayetteville and then in Fayetteville he would turn around and come back, but not necessarily stop at all the stops again. The stop at Overhills was primarily one time a day. There was a period where it came by bus. One of these mail buses that would run, oh gee, I don't know, it's up above Sanford down Highway 87 into Fayetteville and it went on down below Fayetteville. And then it came back up. And my mother had to meet the bus at Highway 87 to pick up the bag and throw her bag on. And it was a bus, it was like a little post office inside. Open the bag and do the sorting. I don't know how long that went either.

The [new] post office was probably built around 1943. And he [my father] just moved the boxes from the front section you might say of the post office, they had the window in it for the postmaster and the post boxes over and just incorporated it into this little building that he built. It was right beside the road. Right beside the, about a mile, let's see - the kennels were probably not quite a mile from Highway 87.

Patricia Penny

The post office was very interesting. You'd be driving down this dirt road out there in woods. No stores, no nothing, but here's a post office sitting out in the middle of the woods.

That [the post office] was their social life. They would come up each day about the time that the mailman was due to come and they would all sit there and talk. I don't recall what they did in the wintertime because the place was so little that there was no room for them really inside. You might could have gotten one or two but that's all. But they would all sit out and talk. It was interesting.

Carolyn Lucas

We were on a Fayetteville telephone, right. We were on a Cameron address and we were in Harnett County. See that would blow your mind because Cameron is in Moore County.

But yet the mailman would turn around at our driveway when we lived over here. We were on a Cameron address. And we were on a Fayetteville [Cumberland County] telephone. We lived in Harnett County but we had a Cameron address. Is that a good one or what? [There was not a post office] when I was living there but I remember it when I was a kid and used to ride the school bus. I remember a little post office over there. I remember. I don't remember the name of the road, because it over there on the Hill side. It was over there. I remember when it was a post office over there. You go through the gate, I'm assuming it's still - and you go down the road and it's a nice gray house kindly up on the hill. You know the water tower was there? There was a gray siding house, something like the siding on this house. A nice house up on the hill. The little post office was right there sitting beside of that main road. That's where the post office was.

Rosie Tyler

[When the post office was gone, that's] when they changed everything and put mail[boxes] over there at Bernice at the stables. Before it was, the post office, you had your own number and you had a key and she would open it for you. If you missed her, you just missed your mail because she would close it up at four o'clock every day.

Kennels & Stables

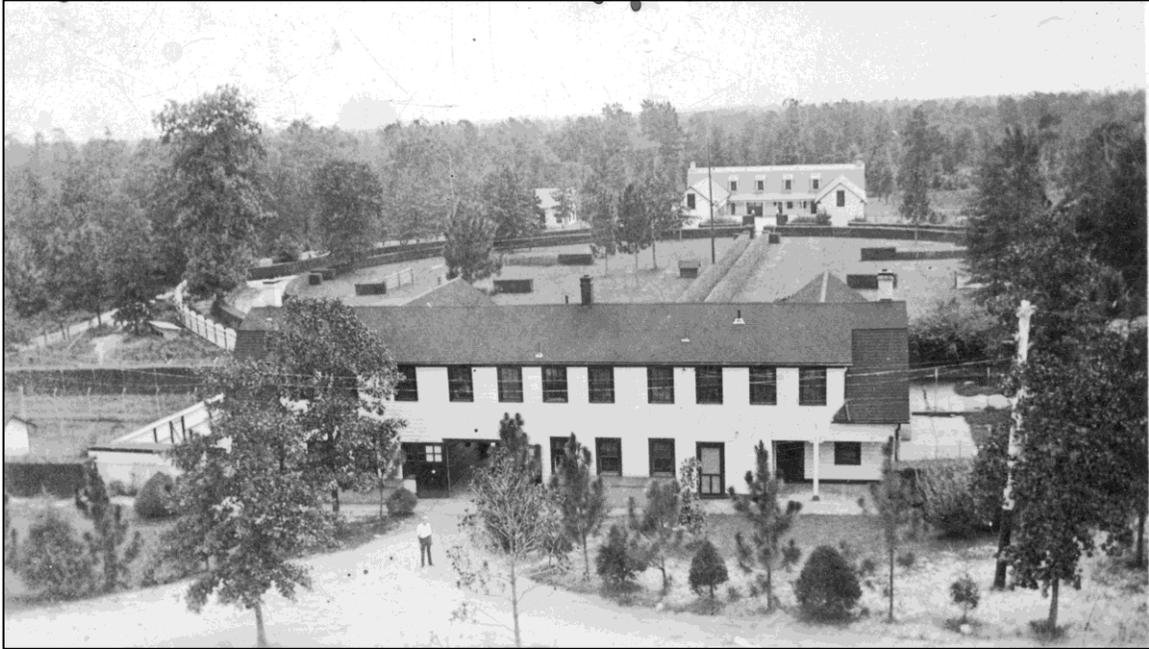
The hunt complex featured kennels and stables similar design standing opposite one another across the Circus, a formal landscaped circular riding area with jumps, hedges, and gateways framed by concrete pylons. Percy Rockefeller commissioned J.B. Thomas to design the dog kennels for him based on Thomas' Huntland estate in Middleburg, VA. The original frame stables burned in 1927 and were reconstructed using brick. Reinecke of Fayetteville rebuilt the stables, the same company that constructed Croatan Lodge. The use of the kennels and stables changed depending on the decade, from fox hunting to a dairy to storage to vacancy to a residence.

Kim Elliman

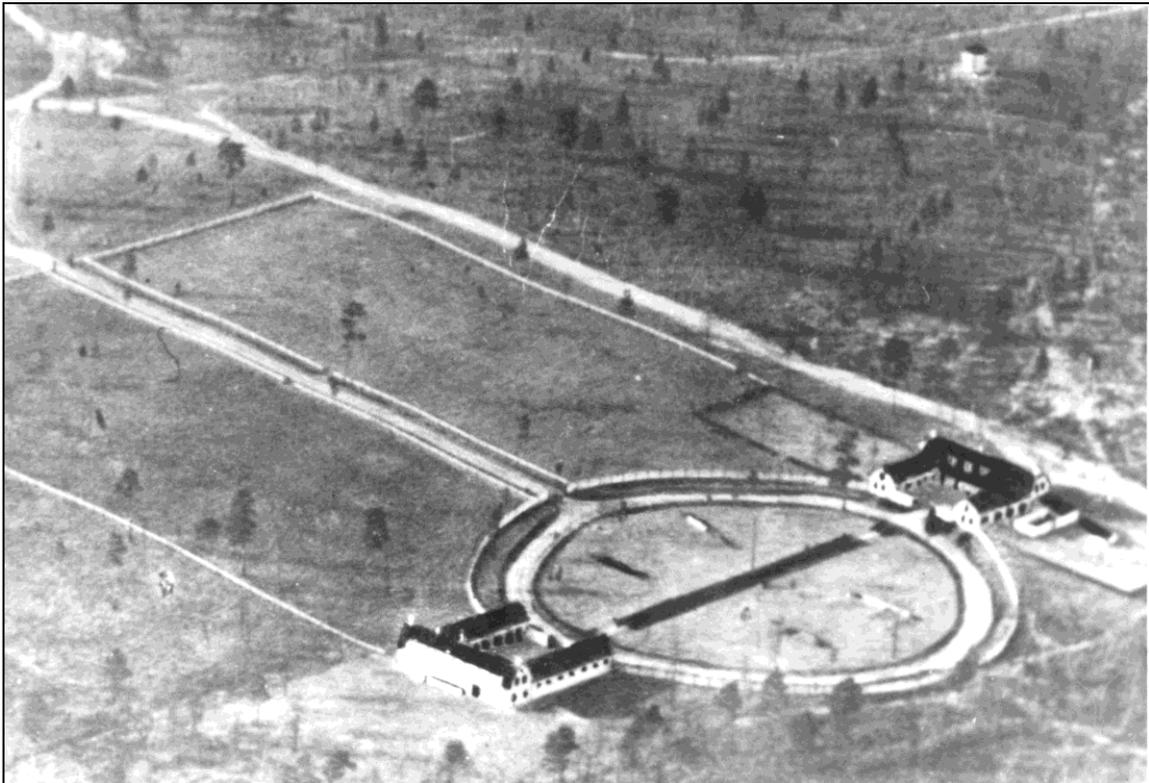
My grandfather told a story - there was controversy about where the Hunt Stables ended up. Upon leaving Overhills once, he had left instructions that it should be actually closer to the houses at the intersection of the Bruce Road and the railroad tracks. He wanted it far enough away so you didn't hear - this is Percy - the dogs barking but close enough so it was really walking distance. And he thought that where it ended up was too far away. He had wanted it closer.

Rudolph Singleton, Jr.

There were two stables. I didn't exactly live above it. They were the stables connected to the house and that formed a 'U' shape figure. It would be like a good size two story brick house with wings which consisted of stables and courtyard between those stables. And as you go into Overhills, from Fayetteville there's a home now almost in the woods which is the closest to Fort Bragg, it's the easternmost building. We lived in that one. The one that's most visible, that's over near the railroad tracks is the one I did not live in.



Figures 4.14 and 4.15: Above, The Hunt Complex, view from water tower, kennel in foreground, ca. 1930; Below - aerial view, ca. 1930. Courtesy of Ed Bruce, Jr. and North Carolina State Archives.



Ed Bruce, Jr.

My father, I mentioned to you earlier, lived in the kennels. This half of the kennels, like right there, was where Johnny Shaw and his family lived. And that was a residential area like a regular house. And this part over here, you went in from the center court to a door that took you upstairs and the upstairs, I'd call it like a dormitory type style. It did have a kitchen.⁹ A family did live there later, rented it. But it had rooms up there and my father had the room on the end that had the windows out the end looking at this part down here at the dog lot and the building where they kept the two horses and some of the carriages and some maintenance type stuff. And also in



Figure 4.16: An Overhills Hunt employee with hounds at the kennels, ca. 1930. Courtesy of Ann Elliman.

this area over here, they had a gas pump down here and [that] serviced that area of Overhills just like the gas pump they had over near the golf course where they keep the trucks and the tractors, serviced that area over there. And the gas tank stayed there, it was not in use when I was there, rusting away.

Inside the kennels, it had a concrete floor inside the U-shape. Then you had the doors on one side that went into the working area. On the other side there are doors into the dog lots. See it's just like a court like this one right here. And you see the columns right there? Alright this one had the same thing in front but it had two big doors you could shut right there. And they could turn the dogs out from one of these dog stalls into this center area. Then on this side of the building that went down, the end room down there it would be one of these rooms here, had a great what they call dog dipping bath in it. Think of it being like a bathtub about that long and that wide and that deep. They'd put a chemical solution in there, pick the dog up, hold the eyes and everything, and dip them. That's the way they dipped them at that time, controlling fleas and ticks and stuff like that. And then if you just let them run loose in this center court it had the concrete floor in there and then back into their stall. This part down here, that was a garage that went through to the inside court into here, but this part over here underneath what I call the living area upstairs, the dormitory style, had a big kitchen in it to cook for the dogs. I can remember a great long wood cook stove and the person that did the cooking there,¹⁰ we called him Uncle Henry. A black man, he was the nicest man. I used to love to go in there. Of course I was very young at that time because the dogs didn't last too long, I don't think.

After she [Isabel Rockefeller] died, I don't know when they would have went out. But I can remember the dogs being there and going there. He'd have that little wood cook stove fired up and they had aluminum trays, I have some of them. That big, that wide with a rim on them about that. And he'd be cooking something like cornbread and they'd cut it up and that'd be some of the food for the dogs. They sort of lived first class, I understand. And the dogs would be stamped inside the ear with a special branding iron. It had an O with a H through it. My father had that branding iron. It was in his [woodworking] shop, but it burned down so I guess that was lost. And they would do that because when you're running the dogs maybe all of them wouldn't come in right then [at the end of the hunt] and people pick them up. They'd go out looking for them and say, "No that's my dog." So they'd lift the ear up and look at the inside. If it had O-H on it, "No that's our dog." Let's see, in addition to the big kitchen there [at the kennels] it also had a big storage room into it with various cabinets and bins where they kept the supplies and stuff I guess. Then it had another big room right off from the kitchen and I don't really know what they used that for. I can remember we had a couple square dances later on when the kennels wasn't going in the area.

Rosie Tyler

After we quit farming we moved over, it was called the Woodrow Place. That's what they called it then. There used to be a kennel over there, a dog kennel and they had horses in there. And you'd probably seen there, over there. There's two stables over there. We lived - before you get to the bridge, up on the hill and down and around. We lived there 27 years. When we left there, Overhills was sold. All our children were born there on Overhills. We had Sheila, Joseph, and Mary.

Tommy McPhail

The [Bull Family] stayed in the house I'm talking about - the house we stayed in last over there, there's a white house down below. That's where they stayed. Woodrow and his family stayed in the old dairy down there. The old house across the road, the old big house. See the post office was right there. There used to be the dog kennels right there beside the road. It was all torn down. It's all torn down now. But I do remember that being there and I remember someone staying in that house but I don't know who it was. Since I started school probably. But I remember that big old house sitting there and then the dairy down behind it. What I'm saying is down below the water tank. There's a place back in there and I'm calling that the dairy. I understand it used to have cows and stuff there. Because the old grain silo still standing or part of it or at least it was. That's where Mr. Woodrow Davis stayed, he and his family stayed there. And Hubert Tyler and his family stayed there later on. That's what I'd always called it. But there may be another name for it. They may have done something else with it before my time. I know exactly what you're saying. I remember saying there was a dairy back up in there, but gracious that bound to have been years and years and years ago.

The Stables became a Dairy

Emblematic of Overhills' self-sufficiency, the Overhills dairy began in 1925. Operated by the Darden family, the dairy was small, meant to service only the Overhills visitors and residents. The small stable held about six or seven cows. Once the fox hunting operations closed, the dairy moved to the hunt stables in 1937 and operated until 1942. The Pomona Terra Cotta Silo was also moved.

Ella McPhail

Cows, well they had horses too but I think they gave it away. The dairy was over – I don't know how to get to it now. It was only a little bit further from where the big houses and all is. It was before you got to the railroad there, back on the right was the dairy. One of my friends, we started school together, and I used to go to her house a lot. Her daddy looked after the dairy. Troy Darden.

Dorothy Yantis

That's where they [the Dardens] lived, yes. Okay, now I know. It seemed like at one time there were apartments or something during the war. I'm not sure, but yes. In back of that was – I can remember. Hunt stables.

Kim Elliman

We only used the Riding Stables. The hunt stables were by that time employee housing. They were not used at all. The kennels were not used at all.

Patricia Penny

Yea, the Hunting Stable. Oh that had been shut down by the time I was old enough to remember anything. There were no horses there. The Dardens lived there and he had milk cows and provided milk for them – people.

Lindley Nursery

The Lindley Nursery Company originated near Greensboro, North Carolina, with the Overhills branch opening in 1911 and developing into the primary growing fields for nursery stock by the 1920s. Although the Nursery closed its doors during the Great Depression, the complex of fields, barns and workers' houses continued to serve Overhills for decades, defining the eastern section of the estate.

Andrew Jackson, Sr.

The Nursery was this side across 87 to the east about five miles from Overhills. Mr. Lindley had a nursery on the creek. It ran through there. It was great, big level bottomland in there. And Lindley Nursery, he had come down there and bought that thing. They're up in Greensboro. He had become a very wealthy man. Mr. A.S. Davis ran the thing and all the shrubbery – they grew shrubbery and they'd bring it on a wagon to Overhills and put it in a great big box and ship it from the Overhills railroad station. The Overhills people

bought it. They bought that out. So they own that now. Yea they still run it [in 1990] but they don't have - they have mostly crops now like soybeans, corn, tobacco. Long after the crash about the time my daddy was leaving there, they started in the farming business. Of



Figure 4.17: Lindley Nursery one year apple crop at the Overhills branch, 1920s. Courtesy of Greensboro Historical Museum, Inc.

course they already had one farm they used a lot. They had their own cows and they had a man to milk the cows and bring the milk around to all the families every morning. They started up at Spout Springs and bought some land up there, farm land, and they started growing tobacco. They grew tobacco for a long time.

The Lindleys had a nice home there. They used to come down there, fall, sometime, I don't know when. He was not a hunter. But anyway they used to come and bring the family. They had a nice home there, screened porch all the way around. Somehow or another Mrs. Percy Rockefeller, I think, She got a buzz about helping the local people that had TB and stuff like that. She went and got some nurses and they ran it for a while, but I don't know much. But of course that by that time I was in and out a lot. But I do know that she had what you call a sanatorium or something, but I don't know.

Dorothy Yantis

The Davises were in charge of the nursery. Woodrow was one of the sons that came afterwards. And then there was another one. I forget his name, but he was over there. We would go by the nursery to pick up people that worked over there and to go to school. I think I started school when I was six and we had to go this long long way, on the bus, on the dirt roads, everyday. It was so far over to Anderson Creek. We would stop there. But I knew they grew a lot of trees and they always referred to it as the Nursery and the Davises had that. They went to school with us and they rode on the bus and I knew them. I grew up with them. I think there was Lillian and Nellie.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

I've heard of the Nursery. And I guess when Overhills bought that land or Percy bought that land, it was a nursery at that time. But I think a lot of the shrubbery that they got at the main part of Overhills came from the nursery. Even around the house that was built for my father and mother, they put all the shrubbery out about one time after they was through with it and I think it all came from over in that area at the nursery.

Well used to go through there [to the Nursery area] on the bus everyday. But about the only time I went over there during the day would be with my father if he was working over there. Like I said, I helped do some maintenance like paint that house, Mr. Davis' house. The water tower used to be out back. And also I helped my father - well let's see, those people didn't have electricity over that way until I'm not sure, probably after World War II. The power company was REA or something like that, made distribution lines.¹¹ So I helped my father wire for example, electrically wire, Mr. Davis' house and the house that is right down below him, those two houses where I mentioned Simp Davis and Woodrow Davis used to live. I helped him wire that, electrical wire. And across the road from where those two houses were located there was another house over there, probably 200 yards in front of it back in the woods beside the field. We electrically wired that one. So there was four that I helped do the electrical wiring on over there, plus the maintenance on them. And that'd be the primary times I'd be over there.

Patricia Penny

I used to sometimes ride over there [to the Nursery] with my Daddy in the evening if he had to go check on anything. Mr. Davis I think looked after the Nursery. They still kept that shrubbery there for a while. They came along at some point and added cattle, like Black Angus, that type of thing down there. But I'm not real sure about who looked after them. They didn't have a whole lot [of shrubbery] there. They were phasing it out. But they did keep enough so that when they need to have stuff planted around the houses over on the estate they'd go over there and get it. But I don't think they kept it up for very long. [Mr. Davis] looked after that side of it. He lived in - there was a big two story yellow looking house at that time.

Bob Model

The Nursery was everything on the other side of 87. That was where the Davises were. That was what we called the Nursery. Now you're going to ask me, why was it the nursery. Because I think we grew trees there. In fact we did grow trees. You know where the old Davis house is? Okay I know that the road is paved now, but when you come out of there and you go straight across, you know before you go across the river [Jumping Run Creek]. Jumping Run, of course it is. Because that was called the Jumping Run Club. Anyway when you go down that road there that bit of land in here was the Nursery.

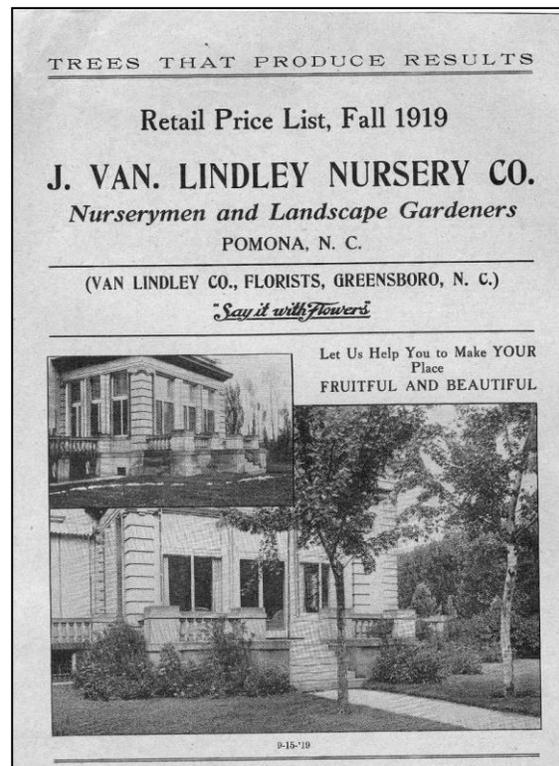


Figure 4.18: 1919 Lindley Nursery brochure cover. Courtesy of Greensboro Historical Museum, Inc.

Tommy McPhail

[The creek] was changed, we changed it some. I'm not saying moved, but we changed it. They started back here in what we call the old Possum Bottom. Got them a drag line and came all the way through just to get more water to flow out. But we spent many hours draining and putting in pipe and stuff. [We] finally got it halfway right. [To drain it] we came in and put another ditch on the other side of the field. The biggest part of the field out there, all of it has underground pipe in it and it's supposed to drain into the ditch. Basically that was it. See as a boy, they said that place started out as a peach farm down there. The peach trees were taken up and it turned into the nursery, the old nursery part. At that time it was just smaller sections and there were ditches all through that place, smaller drain ditches. That's how they kept it drained in the past. When Billy came in we wanted to clear all that out and make one big field. So that's what we started doing with that. We took out all the ditches, all the hedge rows and everything.

[The Nursery Bottom field is] the one up above up it [the Preventorium Farm]. That's [Preventorium Farm] what Daddy farmed when I was growing up. We never farmed any of the Nursery Bottom; that was Overhills' land. The land that the farmers didn't use, back then farmers didn't farm as much land. Daddy probably in his little farming part he probably farmed say 50 acres of land. And what land that the other farmers didn't use the company would plant something on it or do something with the land, not just lay the land out. They'd put out bird patches or they'd have a few beans or corn or something for sale.

Hope Farm Preventorium

After the Lindley Nursery Company closed in 1932, the land along Jumping Run Creek returned to Overhills. At the hands of Isabel Rockefeller, the Hope Farm Preventorium adapted the two-story Paul Cameron Lindley house as its hospital and used several other former nursery structures, including a laundry and goat dairy.¹² Its incorporators included Mr. W.B. Bruce of Overhills, Mr. A.S. Davis of Overhills, Dr. Paul P. McCain of Sanatorium, Mr. E.W. Reinecke of Southern Pines, Miss Lutie Murchison of Manchester, Miss Annie McCormick of Manchester, and Miss Elizabeth Gainey of Fayetteville. The children were cared for by Miss Margaret McQueen, a registered nurse, and Miss Flora McQueen, a Harnett County Welfare Officer.

The young patients, many of whom came from homes in which tuberculosis had affected a parent, generally benefited from a daily regimen of study, recreation, rest, regular doses of Cod Liver Oil and a healthy diet that included goat's milk from a dairy on site. Formally established in January 1934, the Preventorium closed in 1936, shortly after Isabel Rockefeller's 1935 death. Known amongst Overhills employees for her giving nature, the Preventorium would be one of her greatest and final gifts to the local community.

The concept of a preventorium emerged in the early 1900s as a branch of sanitariums, which treated adults with tuberculosis. Preventoriums did not have standard care, each one varied depending on the patients. Most offered rest, fresh air, a healthy diet, sunlight, school, and 24 hour care by nurses.¹³

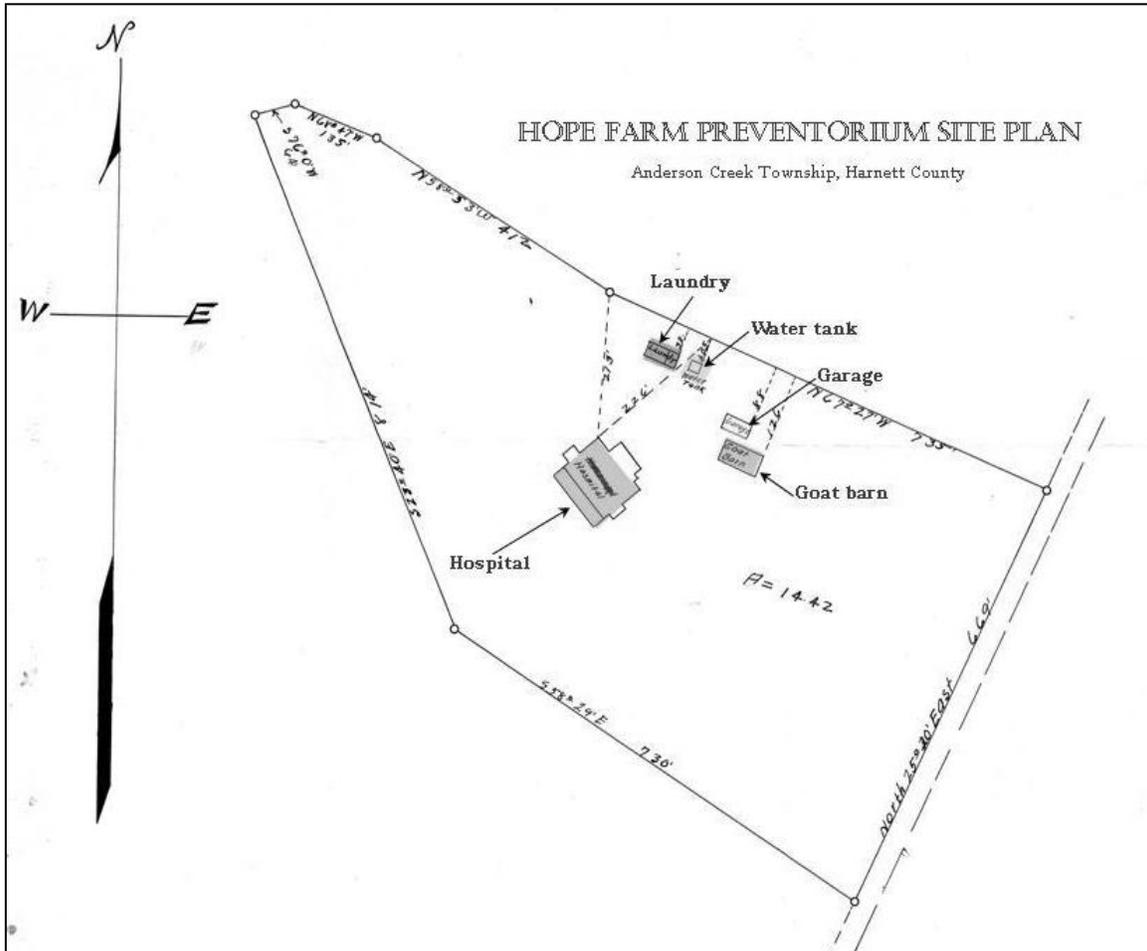


Figure 4.19: Hope Farm Preventorium Site Plan, labels added. Overhills Maps Collection, Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

Robert Morgan

As we would say down here, I was somewhat puny as a child. In fact they wouldn't let me ride a bicycle or anything else. And Doctor Shaw in Fayetteville, I don't know how I got to him but that was the only hospital in the area. He was my baby doctor. I never heard the word pediatrician until I got to be a college graduate. He said, apparently from what I can remember, that I had rheumatic fever. I don't know how the Preventorium found me. But I do remember that it was a Ms. McQueen. I remember distinctly that she took me out there because Doctor Shaw recommended it.

And I remember the house that you described. I haven't had time to go out there and find it. And I remember that there were a number of we boys and we slept in a big room, a nice room with cots and so forth on one side and the girls were on another side of the house. And there was a little red building. That was the shower room. And there was a registered nurse there. I remember she took us out there to give us showers or to make us take showers. I remember playing down - if I remember right there was a little hill down below the house. They made sure that we exercised and we did so and so. And we had a nurse

there, registered nurse who looked after us I guess because Doctor Shaw thought that we were sickly. Then we went to that private school. Has anyone else told you about the private school? I think it was in an old church building right up the street there.

We went there and my mother – see I was the baby in the family. My mother and daddy just couldn't stay away and every Sunday they would come. Of course I had never been away from home. So every Sunday that they came I would just cry and want to come home with them. So about the third Sunday they gave up and brought me home.

Ella McPhail

She [Mrs. Isabel Stillman Rockefeller] would foot the bills. I don't guess they had what they call insurance now but she did foot the bills if you had to go into the hospital and things like that. They paid for it. When I came out of the hospital, I was sick for a long time and I guess I kindly what you might say run-down or undernourished or something. I don't know what you'd call it, but anyway after I came out of the hospital she had a colored nurse to come out and stay with us for a while and help my sister out 'cause there was six of us children. My sister had three children. My mother and father died when I was small and there was three of us. I think I was about five when my mother died and my sister was eight [years old] and my little brother was three [years old]. My older sister she had three children, along kindly in the ages of us. And she took us three children and raised us. Mrs. Rockefeller was real good to help out, and my brother-in-law he worked on the farm at the time, on the place for wages. He didn't farm or anything, he just worked for them. She [Mrs. Rockefeller] would take us to town every so often and buy us things. And every summer everyone that lived on the place and worked there she would have a place at the beach where she would take two families at a time and spend a week. We thought that was a treat because we wouldn't have gotten to go if it hadn't been for that. After I got over my sickness later on they had – opened up what you call a preventorium out there. It was in this two-story house. And she would keep eight or ten children at a time, get them back on their feet and doing better. I don't remember how many months I stayed there, but I know I went to school there, a teacher taught us and I made my grade the year I stayed there.

They had goats because the kids had to drink goat milk. I know I said when I got grown, I was never going to drink no more goat milk and I didn't- I thought it was something. Well I don't guess it tasted as bad as I thought it did but I didn't like the idea of the rest of the kids in my family getting to drink cow's milk and I had to drink goat milk. Even after I went home from there they gave us a goat and I still had to drink goat milk. I couldn't get away from the goat milk. There was two things we had to do was drink goat milk and take cod liver oil. And I said I'd never do that when I grew up. And I didn't. Children have some odd ideas, but I'm sure it did me a lot of good to get the attention that I needed there.

Every so often. Doctor Shaw, the one in Fayetteville is the one that used to come out. 'Course it's not the same Dr. Shaw I'm sure that's still there now. But he would come every so often and check the children and see that everybody was okay. Kind of like it is when

you go to a clinic. Take your temperature, weigh you, and all that stuff I guess to see - they called it under-nourished children because they said when I had the pneumonia, I was sick for a while and when I got over it I couldn't walk without holding onto something. I was kind of weak. They wanted me to get back on my feet. And then when I came out of the hospital for a while before I went to the Preventorium, she had a nurse to come out and help out.

Katherine Stilwell

The McQueen sisters ran the Preventorium and we thought that was a

wonderful thing for Ms. Rockefeller to do because tuberculosis was pretty widespread at that time and you had to go to an institution to receive treatment. So she originated the Preventorium because of the disease and the McQueen sisters, one of them was a nurse or maybe both of them. I know one of them was. Margaret and Flora were their names. And they were friends of my mother and they would come to visit and that's how I knew more about it than I would have except for the fact that we knew them. Ms. Rockefeller was just a gracious woman. She wanted to do all that she could for humanity. She loved people I'm sure.

Employee Houses

Numerous employees and tenants lived scattered across Overhills in small houses and cottages, many of which were built in the 1920s. Several clusters existed in different areas of the estate while some tenant farmer houses were more solitary. Employees and tenants lived free of rent charges and heating bills. Featured here are select houses on Overhills.

Florence Short

Their apartments? You know I don't know [how they were heated]. I had thought it was coal but it might have been wood. And that was in the tack room. There were certain conventions of what spaces you went into and what you didn't on everybody's part. I don't

OVERHILLS HUNT	
OVERHILLS	
N. C.	August 31, 1934.
HOPE FARM PREVENTORIUM INC. OVERHILLS, N.C.	
In account with: A.S.DAVIS,	
<hr/>	
T _O : PURCHASE 1 SMALL EWE GOAT FOR DAIRY	\$2.00 ✓
PAID BY CK#42 AUGUST 31, 1934	
<i>A.S. Davis</i>	
A.S.DAVIS.	

Figure 4.20: A receipt indicating a goat purchase for the Preventorium dairy. Overhills Document Collection, North Carolina State Archives.

know. It's one of these things. I mean nobody ever talked about it, but one of my friends, actually my neighbors down there. They were at Overhills some years ago and so Joyce went down to iron some of her clothes down in the basement where the laundry is. "Joyce you don't do that. That's their space. You don't go unannounced there." So the same would be true of the apartments and the stable. That's not for me to go into. It's private space. So there was a whole lot of things like that probably never articulated.

Freeman Tyler

If you hired on there with a trade, no matter whether it was carpentry or whatever it may be, if you hired on as a stable hand that was considered as a trade. Ain't just anybody that knows how to work horses, how to take care of them. So those boys were offered a place to stay. We were given free housing as part of our package to work with Overhills. We were given our lights, our water, our heat, that kind of stuff was also part of our package.

The employee that worked there for Overhills got insurance that the company paid 100 percent on you. If you wanted it on your family then that would come out of your pocket. Another thing they'd done, if you hired on with a trade, like at the stable down there they had one guy that was in charge. Thurman, when I first came onboard, Thurman actually lived upstairs at the stable. As he climbed up the ladder they moved him from there and they moved my brother down there to the stable, Jerry, next to me. He became the stableman so they gave him a truck to drive, same as they did me. Since I was a carpenter they gave me a truck to drive. They keep the truck up. You didn't have to pay one penny for the use of that truck. They bought the gas, the oil, the tires, whatever was needed for that truck. But it was your truck and you kept it 24/7. They also give you two weeks. First year there they give a week off with pay. Second year and thereafter they give you two weeks off with pay.

They had a 401(K) program with all of their employees and they contributed to that 100 percent. The employee was not asked to put anything in; that was just something they'd done. The other nice thing that they'd done that they didn't have to do: they had a loan program where they would loan their employees money if they got in a little bind and needed a little bit. They would loan you money and you pay them back the same dollar amount that you borrowed from them. They didn't charge you interest or stuff like this. If you needed a new washer and dryer you go up there and tell the manager what you needed and they'd go down a buy and you just pay them back a little bit each payday until you got it back.

You can't beat it. It's something you'll never find, I'll never again in my lifetime - that kind of a setup. But, still, I know it was a lot they were giving us a lot but when I went to work there I started out at \$125 every two weeks, which ain't a lot of money. But I figured it was a place to start and with all of the benefits the company was giving us I figured I could survive. It wasn't easy, but I survived. And the longer I was there the money started getting better.

Edward Bruce House

W. Edward Bruce, Sr. began working for Overhills in the 1920s, first at the Overhills Hunt kennels and later as a carpenter and electrician for decades. In 1932, Ed Bruce, Sr. married Vernice Harris and the Rockefellers commissioned a house for the newlyweds, located on the hill above the hunt complex. Ed Bruce died in 1966, but Vernice continued to live in this house until 1976, after which it was remodeled and served as a home for other local families.

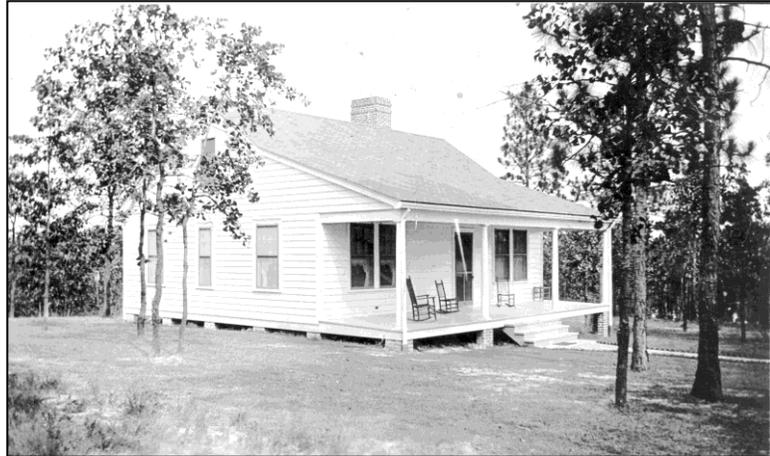


Figure 4.21: The home of the Walter Edward Bruce, Sr. family, ca. 1932. Courtesy of Ed Bruce, Jr.

Patricia Penny

We only lived in the one house, which was right up from the little post office which you have not seen because it's no longer there. But it was up from where the kennels were, up on the hill. Sit up there at our house and see the kennels. And on up the hill above us was where the artist resided, Mr. Rosseau but that place was later torn down. You haven't seen that either.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

When [my parents] were married, the house for them was built at the foot of what I call the water tank. I was born the end of that year in '32. I was born and raised in Overhills in the house that is at the foot of the water tower. And of course that's the water tower at the time that was over in the area where the kennels and stables is located for the fox hunting horses. It was up the hill from the kennel and it was the closest house to the water tank up there at the kennels, above the kennels. Right now you have a water tank up there that's a steel water tank up on legs. And at the foot of that water tank towards the kennels, 50 to 100 yards, there's a house there. And that's the house that was built in 1932 for my mother and father when they got married and the house I was born in.

And the upstairs is a bedroom you get to by going up the steps and across through here. But that's what that is. That was our house. That's the garage right there, coming down the hill and coming into it from the side right here. And this is the wash house. You go in that door and mother had our washing machine in there. To get hot water, you'd have to run these little coal fired stoves, so big off the floor, about like that. You'd fire it up and they had a water jacket around the stove that heated water and it had a water tank sitting back in the back that way you'd get hot water to do your laundry. [My father's smoke house] was down here behind his shop. There was a chicken house. We never used that. I

don't know how that was used in Overhills. He built a room in that to hang up the hams and the shoulders and stuff from the pigs. It [has since] burned down.

Betty Deer

Diane and I used to have to stay with Mrs. Bruce after Mr. Bruce died. We took turns staying with her at night. I slept in that little bedroom or she did when she stayed because Mrs. Bruce was scared to stay by herself. And there was a little path going down to our house and every morning you'd have to get up real early to get ready for school and it would still be dark and I would be like, oh God I'm going to run as fast I could so nothing don't get me. There was a little path going down. And I told Diane when we used to go to the post office and take Momma lunch when she was filling in for Mrs. Bruce, there was a tree right out here that we got too close to and there was a wasp's nest. We got like wasps all over us. It's pretty funny what you remember.

Rosseau Cottage

Percival Leonard Rosseau, a renowned painter of hunting dogs, spent winters with his wife, Nancy, at Overhills in the 1920s and 1930s. They stayed in the house and studio located up the hill from the Hunt Complex. No photographs and few records remain of this house, built ca. 1925. A few neighbors recalled the studio.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

And up the hill from this house would be up this house on the top of the hill, that house doesn't exist anymore. But that was a studio built for Mr. Percy Rosseau. And he did canvas painting in there. And that house was built especially for him because on the north side, to get the northern light it had a big row of windows all the way across the side of up about six or eight feet off floor starting. And inside of that room was like one big room with a cathedral ceiling. And that's where he would do his paintings and he did a lot of paintings for scenery and Overhills, a lot of them to do with what I call bird hunting or the bird dogs in the field and the houses around the area, especially the older houses. He'd do scenes like that. So they were right up the hill from where he lived here.

That's in front of the studio right up above our house. That's my mother when they got married.

Patricia Penny

He was not over there where the primary estate was. It was a typical artist studio, very different. It had a big window in the little area where he painted to let the natural light come through. And on up on the hill from us was where the artist resided. But he was not living; I think he had died before I was born. I don't ever remember him. But his wife lived there for a years that I can remember. She used to walk down the little path to the house a lot. She was real nice. [She would] bring her little dog, her little cocker spaniel. And we used to hate to see her coming with that dog because he would chew up my brother's little

rubber blocks. I can remember one day the dog was running around our living room and had a heart attack and died.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

She [Mrs. Rosseau] came down and she told Daddy that he could the coal burning stove that she had in her room to keep it warm, which Daddy grabbed and took because we was heating the house then by fireplaces. We had two fireplaces and a wood cook stove in the



Figure 4.22: Vernice Harris Bruce stands on the steps of the Rosseau Cottage on her wedding day in February 1932. Courtesy of Ed Bruce, Jr.

by employees that had once worked there, like down at the kennels when they shut that operation down. They rented out the buildings and most of the time it was rented by Fort Bragg soldiers and their families.

Coble House

One particular area along the railroad tracks south of the Hill gradually disappeared from memory for most people. Insurance maps from 1927 depict an area near Muddy Creek that had four employee houses: the McIver, Cameron, Coble, and Lowe dwellings. Adjacent to the Cobles was the original Overhills dairy. The Baine barn and agricultural field were nearby. Katherine (Coble) Stilwell lived in the Coble house with her parents from 1923-1933.

kitchen. That's how we heated the house. So he moved this coal stove that she gave him down and put it in the living room, boarded the fireplace up and put a hole in it for a smoke stack. And we heated the coal from then on.

Walter Bull

There was a house on the hill over here when we lived here but I don't know when it was torn down. If you asked me, I thought it was out [t]here. There was a military guy that lived in there that rented it for like 18 months. I remember him, that's been gosh, probably in the '50s. So I don't know who else lived there after that. They would rent homes out. Like they rented the old dog kennels. Military families stayed there for a couple years. In fact they were there when we went there to Okinawa.

Patricia Penny

A lot of the buildings on the property were rented out after they were no longer used



Figure 4.23: A 1927 fire insurance map showing the group of employee houses along the railroad, south of the Hill. Top, left to right: McIver dwelling, dairy barn, Coble dwelling, Cameron dwelling, Bain barn. Bottom, left to right: school house and Lowe dwelling. Overhills Document Collection, North Carolina State Archives.

Katherine Stillwell

I lived in two homes. The home that I was born in was the home that was down near the dairy. [Our second home] was up near the Rockefeller homes, near the golf course, up above the lake. I was 10 or 12 when we moved into that area. They moved people about sometimes depending upon family. And I was an only child so we just moved into a smaller house. [The first house] had spacious rooms. My mother was a wonderful seamstress and I can remember she sewed. She had a pedal machine – all people did in that day because we didn't have electricity. We had running water; we had a bathroom. I grew up with a bathroom. We had a tank beside our stove, our wood stove which heated water; you know when you built a fire in the stove the water got hot because you had a pipe going to it. You didn't have any hot water if you didn't have a fire. It was my responsibility to clean out the fireplace and to wash the lamp chimneys and I didn't like either one.

We had kerosene lamps and it had a wick in it and you lift the wick at the top and the kerosene of course was soaked. And the chimney covered it to keep the fire from escaping.

They became smoked and they had to be washed. So I washed all of the lamp chimneys on the weekends. We had electricity in the house that's still standing but we did not have electricity for several years when I was a child. We had a big fireplace that you took tremendous pieces of wood to build a fire. We always had a big woodpile. It had a screened in porch on one - part of it was screened in and the other part we had big rockers and my mother had big ferns I remember. It was one story and big spacious rooms. The flooring was oak flooring and the walls were paneled, you know just paneling. My mother made wonderful drapes. I remember she just draped those windows so easily. I remember she would also cover our furnishings when they needed it.

Archie Cameron House

Archie and Annie Cameron moved to Overhills ca. 1919. Both were locals, having grown up nearby. Archie came to work at Overhills a mule skinner and went on to become W.B Bruce's right hand man as the Farm Superintendent. Archie and Annie raised their four children in this house, which was originally built in the early 1920s. The Camerons lived here from ca. 1930 until Archie's death in 1975. After Annie moved to a different house on Overhills, the Locklear family moved into this house.

Dorothy Yantis

[From our house] you could see the lake. You could see the lake back then [and] the depot station.

Walter Bull

[The house] looks just about like it was. It hasn't changed that much. It looks the same on the outside. I remember the old porch. They lived here for a long time. I don't know how long. Dorothy [Yantis] can tell you exactly, but they must have lived here for at least forty years. And even though it was much more open back then nobody locked their houses. You could walk back here and the house would be unlocked. I remember a fireplace. There wasn't a stove. There was a gas stove. There was also a gas stove in the bathroom back here. This place was cold. In the wintertime my granddad would get up. There was actually a wood stove in the dining room and he would



Figure 4.24: The Archie Cameron house, ca. 2003. Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS).

light this up so he could go in the bathroom and get ready because it was cold here in the winter.

Kathy Riley

I remember sweeping it and sweeping. I think this [screening] was put in later because I would sweep it all the way to the edge and my grandmother would come and say there's more pollen. If you were sweeping pollen it was still yellow.

Davis House

When Atlas Simpson Davis moved to Lindley Nursery to serve as Nursery Manager, ca. 1911, he built this two-story Colonial Revival house for his family. The Davises and their descendants lived in the house until the 1960s, after which it served as the home of the Overhills Farm Manager and his family, including the McPhails, the Rays, and the Lucases.



Figure 4.25: The Davis house (Nursery Manager's house) at Lindley Nursery, later Overhills Farms, ca. 1992. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

Carolyn Lucas

That was the big farmhouse. That was what they called the old Davis house. When we went there they remodeled the house. The house needed major work done to it. We got to pick out everything. The only thing that they asked us to keep original was the stairway and we did because it was beautiful.

They put paneling and back

then the paneling was real big. So they put paneling in all the rooms. And my husband and I and the manager, which was Billy Spruill, at that time, we went and picked out the paneling for the house and we they let us pick out light fixtures. They let us pick out the linoleum, we picked out the carpet. So they let us do the house just like if it was ours. The only thing they asked was to leave the stairway, original. It's beautiful, it was beautiful. It was really a beautiful home. When we moved there it was my husband and I and our two daughters. And our oldest daughter graduated that year from high school and our other daughter, she was two years younger.

Tommy & Bonnie McPhail

Tommy: See up here? The big house, I wish we could have went in; it's been remodeled. See where the bathroom is now is not where the bathroom was when I stayed there. You went in there, on the porch there, went in that door turn back to the left that's where the

bathroom was. Now the bathroom is on get to the end of the house turn and come back through the bedroom. There's a washroom or something it seems like now.

Bonnie: Basically the bathroom was like one big room and they went in there and put a tub and had a washing machine in there and you had the commode. And basically – it was huge, it had a fireplace in it. It was another bedroom but they just happened to make it into a huge bathroom. You could iron there and everything.

Tommy: [I'd] run down from upstairs and run to the kitchen, big old wood heater in the kitchen so you can get warm before you go to school. I won't forget. I'll tell y'all this story quick. I came in one night, had a few spirits or two seemed like and everybody had gone to bed. I came sneaking in. It had a long hall. Walking down the hall turned to go upstairs, got to the second or third step and tripped. Daddy's room was the room right [there]. What's wrong with you out there? Oh nothing, I just tripped.

Nursery Worker's Cottage

When A.S. Davis built his house, he also had several smaller workers' cottages constructed close to the fields where their labor was needed. Two similar houses stood next to each other, just a few hundred yards from the Davis house. One burned in the 1970s, but the second continued to serve as an employee residence, serving some of the Davis children, Bonnie & Tommy McPhail, and seasonal workers in the later years of Overhills.

Carolyn Lucas

Tommy and Bonnie, they used to live there [in that little white house]. But they moved and then they provided them a house on the hillside even though Tommy worked on the farm, different ones like a Michael Patterson, he lived down there in that little house with his wife. And two or three different ones that would work on the farm and help on the farm. They provided them a place to stay and they'd live in that house.



Figure 4.26: The Nursery Worker's Cottage, ca. 1992. Courtesy of the North Carolina State Archives.

Tommy & Bonnie McPhail

Tommy: This was my honeymoon cottage. We stayed here for a few months till my dad passed away. Then we moved to the big house with Momma for a while, got her settled in.

When I went to work full time we came back to the house. And that's when Woodrow and them come in and lower the ceilings and put up the paneling and all.

Bonnie: In fact we stayed down here two different times. We had moved back up in the house. The first time we were down here it was like that and the walls were like that too. High ceilings. Made it lower for heating reasons. We were getting modernized, we didn't have carpet on the floor then but we just had like vinyl. And sometime or another somebody's put a heater there. We didn't have one. We had a heater in here. This is still the same. Same sink. I remember in here I had painted my doors like a yellow with a white around. And then I had the cabinets that were painted. It was all matched up. Of course the floor was a different color back then too. It looks smaller than it did. It was yellow, daisy looking on the floor. But there's been several families that have moved in here since we've left. I know we were staying in here when Tommy was working in Fayetteville and we wanted to invite his boss man and his wife and another fellow out to eat. And they came out here and they said, oh we just love your little cottage. But if you could just picture it back then, everything was just so different. The walls here have been painted, whereas before it was the paneling. We used to have the bathtub that set up on the legs and then like I said, we got modernized, which was good. It was more convenient and that's what everybody had then. Now you would give anything just to have tubs on the legs.

Tommy: The floor plan's the same. Kitchen, our bedroom right here and then the bathroom and then our son's bedroom was over there in the front and then the living room was over in the front.

Bonnie: I still have dreams about this house from time to time, living here just like it was yesterday. And I remember we got our phone and I was so happy. It was right here on the wall. Finally I got a phone here. I guess I was just kind of - I was used to being around neighbors. But being out here so secluded it was kind of scary for me at first. But Tommy always lived where it was secluded, but not for me.

Haire Farm

On the eastern fringe of Overhills, beyond the Lindley Nursery, was the Haire Farm, a tenant farm dating from the 1930s. Named for the original occupants, later residents included the Burgess family in the 1940s and Elmon and Carolyn Lucas, who were tenant farmers in the 1960s. Glodean Robinson and her family lived in the small cottage house in the 1990s.

Carolyn Lucas

[To get the house we lived in when we tenant farmed, you] go up here about a mile to the caution light, go straight out this road. Have you been out this road up to the caution light? You take a left and you can't hardly see. It's a little old country house. There's pine trees and all grewed up. It's off from the road [Ray Road]. You can see it, that's where we tenant farmed with them. You go to the right [on Ray Road] and you're going past the two schools. At the caution light you go to the right and that's the old Chinaberry Farm. And you go past two schools and then you go to the left and that's where we used to live. And you can hardly see it because the house is [overgrown.]

I know the Haires lived there at one time. We used to call it the Haire house. And they used to live there. They tenant farmed with Overhills for years there.

Glodean Robinson

I used to live in that house in Olde Farm, I guess it was on Olde Farm Road. There was a house. There's some trailers and then there was a white house that sits back in a field with some barns around it. That's the house that I lived in. Okay you go down Ray Road and there's the flashing light at Overhills Road. You make that left. And after you pass the trailers you'll see a field. Sometimes if it's grown up you can't really see the house but the house sits back down. They used to have tobacco there. They used to grow tobacco in that field. [It had a screened-in porch.] It was white and trimmed in blue because we painted it like that. I moved to that house in '89.



Figure 4.27: The Haire Farm tenant cottage, ca. 1996. Courtesy of Fort Bragg.

Riding Stables

The riding stables were built ca. 1920 and soon after remodeled to include an employee family apartment on the second floor, above the tack rooms. Well-known stable managers lived in this apartment with their families, including Willie & Essie King, Thurman & Louise Washington, and Roger & Mary Mitchell.

Dennis Washington

[Living above the stables] you smell hay a lot of times, especially if it was freshly cut. So when the guys would go out, harvest the hay, bale the hay, and bring it over on the trucks and back the trucks up to the haylofts. We had a machine that you could put the bales on it was like you could drop the bales right from the truck. And then it would dump them right into the hayloft. Then we would take like a hook and grab the bales and drag them the length of the hayloft to stack them. So for a couple of weeks after the hay was cut and it was fresh, you smelled hay. That was probably one of the things I remember that I just didn't like, just didn't care for. After a while once the hay is dried out and it goes from being green to brown, it was not a factor anymore. But I just remember it seems like how much - I remember the amount of emphasis my pop kept making sure the place was clean. The stables were clean, the stalls were cleaned daily. You've got this cart and you'd go in and take your pitchfork and go in and clean out all the horse poop and shake out the clean straw and load up this thing. We'd lead it around it to the back and you may have seen this



Figure 4.28: The Riding Stables, ca. 1992. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

big concrete thing behind the stables. It was this huge thing they used to make compost so that compost is actually what Bernice would take once it composted. I'll tell you, in winters when all of the methane gases started to heat up, you could actually see steam come off of it and it would get very hot. Once it composted and it became like a powder they would actually take an end

loader or something and put it onto a dump truck and take it around the flower beds like around Bird Song and Croatan. And that was the fertilizer that they would use to keep the beds nice.

Townsend Farm

In 1924, Percy Rockefeller purchased the Townsend Farm from descendants of the original owners. The farm's namesake remained and the Townsend Farm became one of the many tenant farms on Overhills. Located off Vass Road and set down by the Lower Little River, this farm and workers' residences included two large fields, at least three houses, several tobacco barns, and a small fenced cemetery with three headstones belonging to the Townsend family.

Freeman Tyler

I was in about the fifth grade or so back then when I first lived at Overhills. We lived at the Townsend Farm years ago. I remember living in that house and all we had was an outside bathroom, toilet. We didn't have an inside toilet. We didn't even have running water in the house at that time.

When I came on board, the house, they had just moved the house that used to be way back in the very back of that field back there. They moved it from where it was at and moved it up by the little cemetery. As soon as I was hired, Thurman actually took me back and showed me the house, him and Billy Spruill and asked me if I would mind moving back there. I said, "Well, no, I'll be glad to move back there." "Fix the house up," he said. "It's got to be rewired, plumbed." Didn't even have a bathroom in the house. The whole house sat back there for years and it had an outside bathroom. So I went back and built the addition on to it, put in a bathroom, remodeled the house, rewired it, replumbed it, the whole nine yards. Matter of fact, it didn't have any plumbing in it except a little sink in the kitchen and they did have running water to that. So I remodeled it and then they moved me back there.

Dennis Washington

It was an old gray house. It had some siding on it, gray. Once you got to the bottom of the road there's a house to your left. You take a sharp left and you follow the road. It runs parallel to the river for maybe a mile and then you take another left and our house was just right there and there was about three houses there together. When you get to the bottom of the hill, there's a huge field to the right of you and the house was to the left



Figure 4.29: One of the houses at the Townsend Farm, ca. 1996. Courtesy of Fort Bragg.

and then like I said, if you continue on the road you end up in the river so you took an immediate left and then it paralleled the river for about a mile and then you took another left and there were three houses there in another cluster right together.

Tommy McPhail

[That's] where Ralph [Freeman Tyler] stayed. See this little house here has been remodeled to death. But it used to be you go way back behind that big field. It was sitting back down in there at one time. Then they moved it up there and remodeled. And that's the old house.

¹ Ed Bruce adds that they had combines used at times on the farms. Transcript of oral history interview. W. Edward Bruce, Jr. and Barton Bruce. Interviewed by Jeffrey D. Irwin and Kaitlin O'Shea, 15-16 February, 2007, Fort Bragg, NC. Overhills Oral History Project, on file at Fort Bragg (NC) Cultural Resources.

² Ed Bruce clarifies this thought to say: "And they lived on the first floor of the clubhouse towards the end where the Harriman house is located. There was a long room across the end that was used for a living room and it led out onto the front porch of the Clubhouse." Ibid.

³ Ed Bruce clarifies this sentence to read: "Also on the first floor of the Clubhouse, it had the big library room with shelves along one side with books on it." Ibid.

⁴ Ed Bruce clarifies: "And then going through the dining room and slightly to the right, you went into the kitchen." Ibid.

⁵ Harnett County Public Library, "Harnett County Post Office Records," <http://www.harnett.org/LIBRARY/Harnett%20County%20Post%20Offices.htm>, accessed December 2007. (First published in the *Sanford (North Carolina) Herald*, July 26, 1977).

⁶ Transcript of W. Edward Bruce, Jr. interview.

⁷ Around 1937, Superintendent W.B. Bruce wrote to ACL superintendent L. Crocker that Overhills no longer used the station building for the post office. It is not known where the post office was located at this time. In May 1942, W.B. writes again, asking permission to reestablish the post office in the railroad station building.

By June 1944, WB reports: "We asked the postmaster at Overhills to let you know that this station was discontinued as the post office. This was done last fall..." OHD1942_138. OHD1942_158.

⁸ Harnett County Public Library, "Harnett County Post Office Records,"

<http://www.harnett.org/LIBRARY/Harnett%20County%20Post%20Offices.htm>, accessed December 2007. (First published in the *Sanford (North Carolina) Herald*, July 26, 1977).

⁹ Ed Bruce adds "and living room." Transcript of W. Edward Bruce, Jr. interview.

¹⁰ Ed Bruce adds that Uncle Henry did the cooking for the dogs. Ibid.

¹¹ Ed Bruce clarifies "extended their power lines." Ibid, transcript of W. Edward Bruce, Jr. interview.

¹² "Preventorium Will Open Soon: Mrs. Percy Rockefeller Donor of New Institution Near Fayetteville," *The (Raleigh, NC) News and Observer*, March 21, 1934.

¹³ H.E. Kleinschmidt, M.D. F.A.P.H.A., "What is A Preventorium?" *American Journal of Public Health* 20, no. 7 (July 1930), 715-721.

<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=1555984>

CHAPTER FIVE

A SIDE LINE

The rail line at Overhills had a unique history of its own. Originally built by the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railway, the side line that ran from Fayetteville to Greensboro by the late 1800s brought the early hunt parties that would ultimately influence the creation of Overhills. By 1916 a passenger station and small freight depot were constructed at Overhills. In the mid 1920s Overhills visitors traveled by rail on an overnight trip from New York City to Sanford via the Seaboard Air Line or to Fayetteville via the Atlantic Coast Line. From either stop they would take a side line to the Overhills station or ride by automobile. Freight shipped to Overhills in the 1920s and 1930s included foxes, hounds, and kennel supplies. By 1935 the side line would no longer serve passengers, but it would continue to carry freight into the late 1960s.

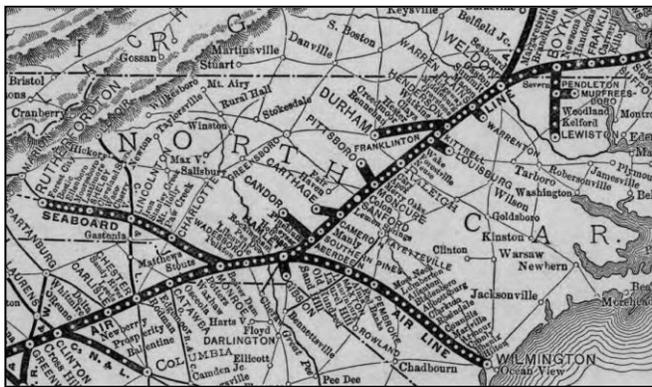


Figure 5.1: “Map of the Seaboard Air Line and its Principal Connections, 1896.” From Stanley G. Fowler’s *Farms and Farm Lands Along the Seaboard Air Line* (Portsmouth, VA: General Passenger Department, 1896).

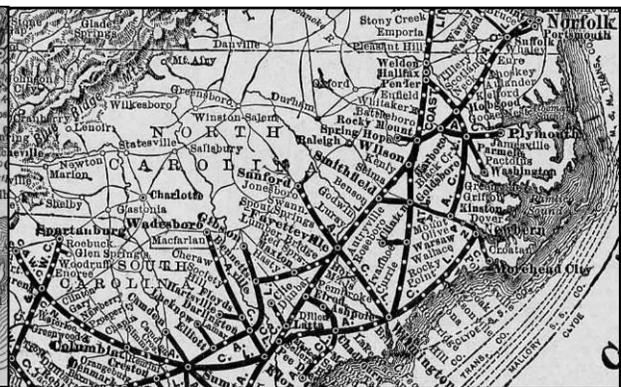


Figure 5.2: “The Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and Connections, 1914,” inset. From *The New Encyclopedic Atlas and Gazetteer of the World* (New York: Collier, 1914).

The railroad passed through the western portion of Overhills near the Hill, flanking the west side of the lake headed north bending into a straight route south towards Fayetteville. In addition to the passenger station and freight depot, the riding stables, polo barn, dairy and several workers cottages were within sight of the tracks. Even after the rails were removed by the Seaboard Coast Line in the late 1960s, the railroad bed remained in place, serving as a horse trail and enduring historic landmark.¹

Andrew Jackson, Sr.

Well that was there in the beginning. This was a side line. It started at North Wilkesboro, came from Western Salem, to Greensboro to Sanford to Fayetteville to Wilmington. Now the Harrimans would bring their club cars and they would switch off either at Sanford or Fayetteville and get pulled up to Overhills and shipped off on the side line there on Overhills. Sometimes they’d leave those cars there sitting there all winter with maybe two or three people just sitting in there.

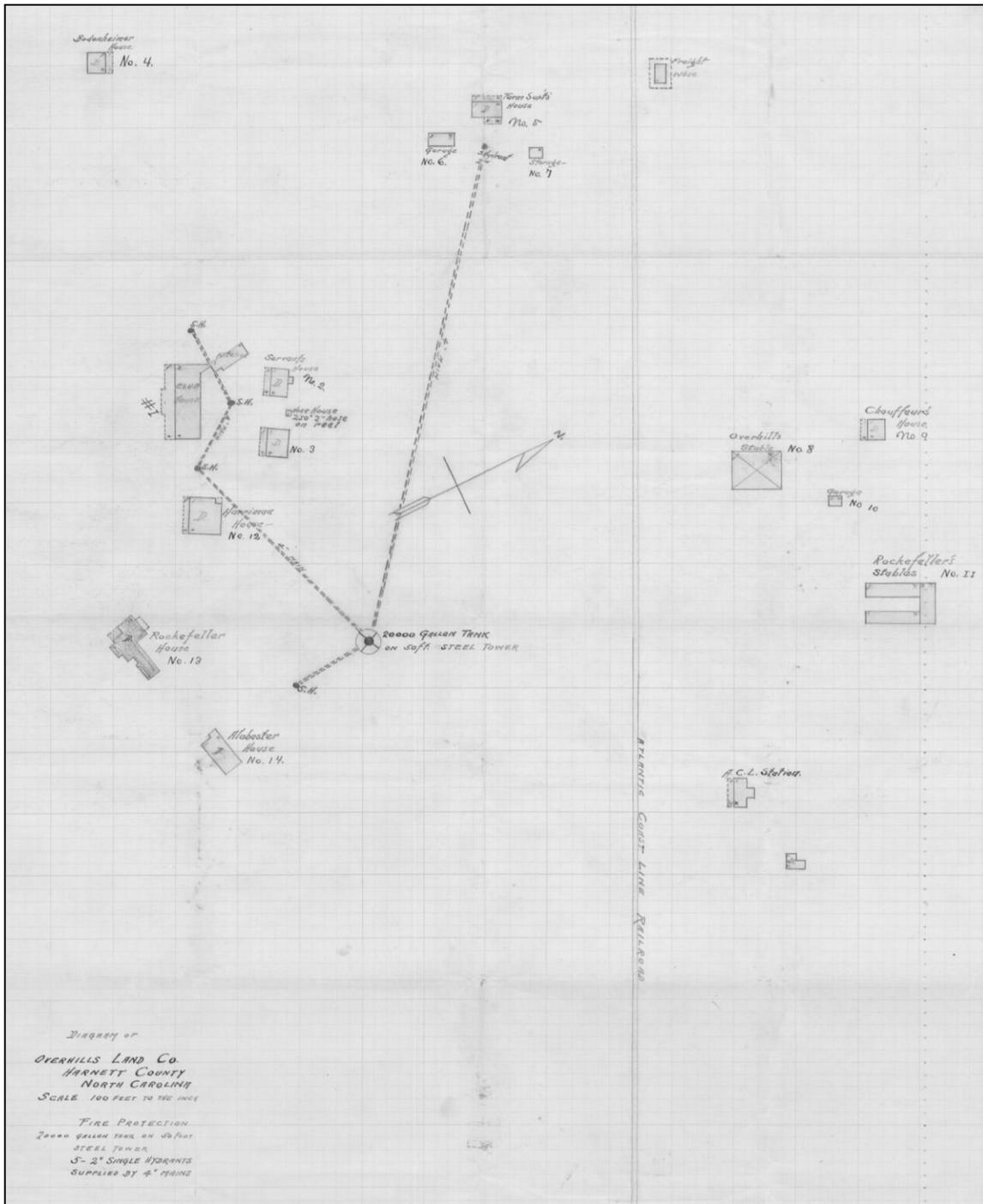


Figure 5.3: Fire insurance map, ca. 1927. Line dividing the left 2/3 and right 1/3 of the map represents the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. On the left is the hill area and on the right are the passenger station, stables, and polo barn. Overhills Document Collection, North Carolina State Archives.

Cookie Model

Jeff Irwin: We've heard that and that there was a side rail or something.

Cookie: Yes. That still had dropped off stuff or that was still – I can remember moments or loading and it changed and there were cars. There was definitely something going on there, still in my young young thing. And then the big thing when we were kids because trains still went through was putting pennies or putting straight pins to make scissors. And the stop, look, and listen signs, Mr. Bruce was very adamant about those. Did I ever say *[speaking to her sons]* and you all laughed at me when I'd say, watch out for the trains and the stop, look, listen sign was there.

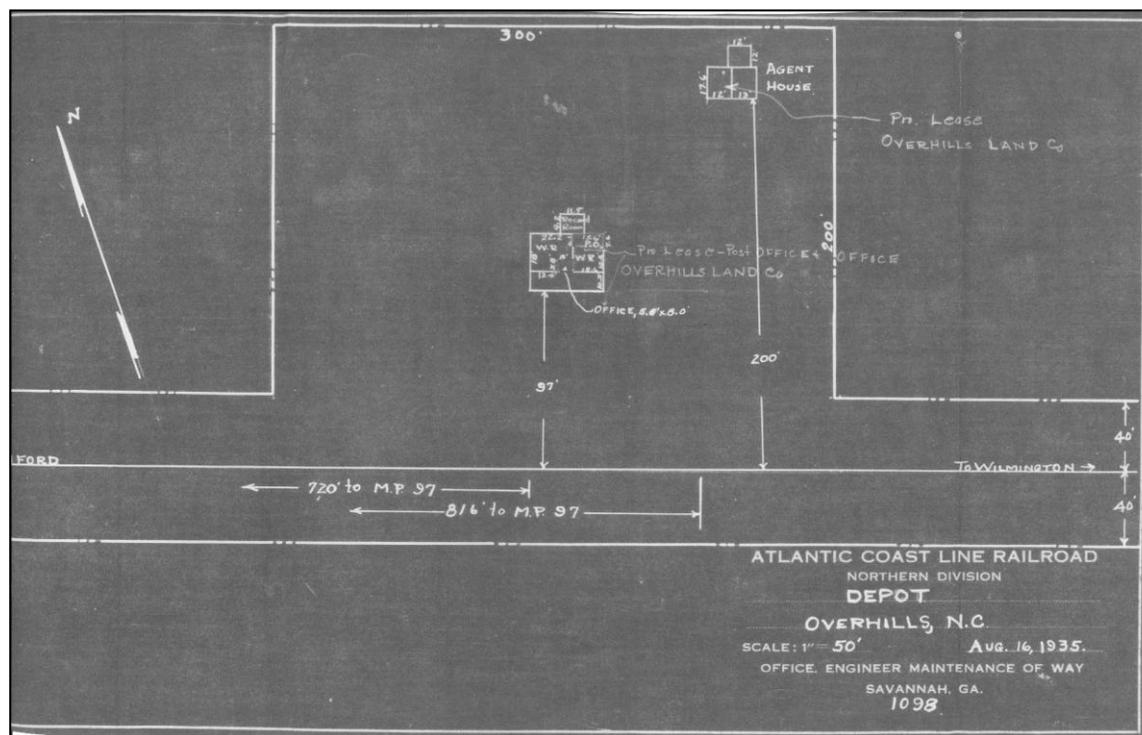


Figure 5.4: Atlantic Coast Line Property Map indicating the rail right of way and the ACL property, being the Overhills post office and the agent's house, 1935. Overhills Document Collection, North Carolina State Archives.

Bob Model

There was that sign, “Stop, Look, Listen” and the railroad, the train would come by as I recall twice a day. And it’s the same track that comes through Fort Bragg and it was run by the Atlantic Coast Line and it went from Sanford to Fayetteville. And I can remember that it was always a steam engine, it was one of the last places a steam engine was used. But I can remember the old puffers up until the early 1950s and then it went to a diesel. But it was wonderful and I can remember there was something magic about the old steam engines. Over time things changed. I can remember walking down there and I can remember the train tracks when they were there and the train would come by twice a day. As you were walking down the stables you would try to get there at a time when the train would be coming so you could watch the train and wave at it and I remember that.

Kim Elliman

There were these signs at the railroad track and I think where I think some of them may still be there, the stop-look-listen. But it was really imprinted on us because you'd think you hear the trains but I mean I guess there was more than one close call about someone just [ignorant or spaced out]. If you're coming down from the houses toward the stable you just come out of the woods and there's the track.²



Figure 5.5: Overhills Passenger Station, 2003. HABS.



Figure 5.6: The Atlantic Coast Line tracks, view to the south through Overhills, ca. 1960. The passenger station is in the background on the left. Courtesy of Ed Bruce, Jr.

have been about 13 years old. So that would have been '67, '68, '69, somewhere in there. And that was sad. I loved the train. I still love trains. I used to hear the train, hear the horn blowing and I would run to go see the train. Still love it.

Ann Elliman

Well in those days, it did stop, it let out passengers initially. Then that went. Then it became more of a mail train and this gadget that you could throw off the mail, somehow they would pick it up without really stopping. It would slow down and this would happen and then go on.

Pat Penny

We used to hear the train go down the track at night. Not during my life span it wasn't [a passenger train]. I think at one time it probably was. I think that's probably how they got down there. But during my lifespan they were flying in and out of Raleigh Durham airport. Someone from the place would go pick them up and take them back. It was a freight train. It was usually around ten o'clock at night because we always had a dog that would howl when the train came down the track. During my lifespan I don't think the train stopped coming through at all.

Dennis Washington

I used to love the train, loved the train coming through there. The Atlantic Coastline stopped, I must

Ronny Holmes

Sixty-seven is when the train went. I think that's when it quit. I was 11 years old when the train quit. Man we have smashed so many pennies on the train track. If you'd take a Geiger counter from where the train track ran right there right on up you could still find pennies. We put everything on the track there was to put on the track. Wonder it didn't derail. And it did have a derailment, not because of us, somewhere along the line sometime. [The train rolled through] always slow, real slow. It never stopped, but it stopped in the old days. Daddy can maybe tell you about if it stopped whenever he first came here. I don't know. See people used to come from the train. The train stopped right here and they would get off and on. But that was - I don't know when all that quit. We always picked them up in the airport at Raleigh.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

Well I played down around the railroad tracks not around the station necessarily. We used to walk the tracks some and along the side of it we used to catch our animals, tadpoles and frogs and stuff like that in the ditches alongside the railroad tracks. We used to like to sit along the side of the bank when the steam engine came by, the train. That was right impressive because it was a lot of energy, you could hear it coming and shaking everything. We'd see if we could sit in the side of the ditch there while it went by. And too, the railroad track went across the lake. It had a trestle up in there in the middle of it where the water went under it to the other side or came from the other side to the lake. I can remember a couple of us would be fishing up there and we'd take the dare about let's sit underneath the trestle while the train goes by. And we'd get off the track and we'd crawl down on



Figure 5.7: Rail line along the lake, ca. 1960. Courtesy of Ed Bruce, Jr.



Figure 5.8: Abandoned railroad bed, 2003. HABS.

this big cross-tie down below while the train goes by. Of course if you're on it while the train goes by you can't get off unless you jump in the water.

Walter Bull

The train would come by at night and I think one time during the day like at noon or something because we'd be fishing up there on the trestle and you know how the train comes through. I'd be scared to death. We'd be down on the edge of it fishing and the train comes through and it starts



Figure 5.9: Atlantic Coast Line Freight Station, ca. 1992.
Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

rocking. It was a freight train and once in a while it would stop up here at the depot and drop off fertilizer and then also they drop these cars off and people would come in from outside areas and drop logs off so then the train would haul them off for pulpwood or whatever. But I don't think that was Overhills people that were actually doing that. I think it was other people.

I can't remember the guy's name, but the fertilizer would come there by train carload and there were three of the black workers

unloading it. I was down there with my granddad. Two of them had a hand truck because they were in 200 pound bags back then. One of the guys named Dan was the strongest man I've ever seen. He unloaded the things of 200 pound bag under each arm - just back and forth like that unloading the whole train car. His arms were like that with solid muscle. Two hundred pounds on each arm and the others would grab a sack and put it down and they'd put three or four on the hand truck and they'd push it over and then they'd unload. And he was just flying back and forth. My granddad said he was the workingest man that he had ever seen. [His name was] Daniel. I don't know what his last name. He was a man, I can tell you that.

Bill Shaw

Only thing, my cousin, Malcolm Shaw down here, fertilizer would come out there. And they claimed that Malcolm Shaw, I'm not sure how true this was, could lift 200 pounds of fertilizer then. He could take a bag under each arm and walk off with it. He had an old T model truck when he'd haul fertilizer around for people delivering it.

Lotes Holmes

[The side track] was just a little area, maybe a 100, 102 yards. 100, 102 yards and it would pull up and unhook and back our car in and hook back up and pull off again in other words. There was a train station there years and years ago that was there before we were there. Bernice Morgan lived in the old train station that was right there beside of the railroad track.

[The train] would always blow and we had the two roads there and it would always blow as it came through. It'd come through in the morning and then it'd come back in the afternoon. It was a freight train. Just occasionally, maybe once a year or twice a year or something like that [it would] drop stuff at the freight. They did stop; they did a lot of pulpwood cutting on the property too. Pulpwood, they would come in and load up pulpwood and pick up pulpwood. So it was either fertilizer or pulpwood or a piece of equipment that we wanted shipped back up north. That was the main thing.



Figure 5.10: Looking south down the railroad at Overhills, with the freight station just around the bend (visible in center background), ca. 1960. Courtesy of Ed Bruce, Jr.

¹ The Atlantic Coast Line and Seaboard Air Line merged in 1967 to form the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad.

² Kim Elliman adds: "You come out of the almost typical forest and stepped onto the tracks, so you just had to be careful. I think the train came twice a day at the end - 11am and 11pm - and you waited for its whistle and the rumble."

CHAPTER SIX

THE PEOPLE OF OVERHILLS

The story of Overhills is incomplete without some description of at least a few of the characters who contributed to the evolution and sustainment of the estate. Without the people who created, funded, retreated to, and lived or worked at Overhills, the community would be impossible to define. The people discussed below are those who envisioned and created Overhills, dedicated their lives to Overhills through their work and those who called it home.

James Francis Jordan

The creation of Overhills is unlikely to have happened without the involvement of James F. Jordan. A well-respected Guilford County native, Jordan was “a man of few words, but much action.”¹ Eulogized in a leading editorial of the Greensboro Daily Record in 1919, Jordan’s unexpected death was called “sad news” for the entire city and he was remembered as “the well-known athlete, sportsman, [and] lover of nature.” Because James Jordan died in 1919, few of the interviewees recalled specific details about Jordan, though many knew that he had been a part of the early days of Overhills.

Bob Model

Mr. Jordan came down here from Greensboro. And he came down because the hunting was so good. He’d come down here with his dogs and that was their real interest from what I was told by the Archie Camerons and the Mr. Bruces, and that’s Mr. Ed Bruce and W.B. Bruce. And I just remember that so vividly.

Andrew Jackson, Sr.

[Jordan] had a lot to do with the many hunting lodges that were located in Guilford County. Daddy had been into that type thing for a number of years and he was a friend of the sheriff and I think he was the one that contacted Daddy because he was the one that organized the Overhills property. Originally he had a hunting lodge at Manchester called Buckthorne Lodge, but this was mostly Guilford County people. Mr. Jordan loved to hunt. He was a good shot. He loved to bird hunt. He loved to turkey hunt, fish. They had several ponds and kept them stocked and they would come in the spring and go fishing from up in Greensboro. Evidently some of the Rockefellers got acquainted or [the] Harrimans, I don’t know which, got acquainted with Mr. Jordan and helped him to acquire and put it all together and they called it Overhills. It was out in the woods on the railroad. We were living in Wilkes County so we moved down to Overhills for one summer.

Only thing that I know is that Mr. James F. Jordan of Guilford County, ex-sheriff of Guilford County, was the man that, I always heard, sent for Daddy to come and work for Overhills because he knew him in Guilford County. They had so many hunting lodges, so many dogs and kennels and stuff and Daddy had been in it since he was really young. What we knew he just picked it up working with other people and being around them.

William Averell Harriman

A founding member of Overhills, W.A. Harriman (1891 - 1986) visited with his first wife Katherine "Kitty" Lanier, and their two daughters, Mary and Kathleen. In the 1920s, Harriman introduced polo to Overhills. By the 1930s, Harriman no longer visited, shifting his winter polo interest to Aiken, South Carolina. Harriman would go on to become an important diplomat and political figure, serving as Governor of New York, Ambassador to Great Britain and the Soviet Union, and an active member in several presidential administrations.

Andrew Jackson, Sr.

After we'd been there about two or three years they got a hold of man. There were two Harrimans, Averell and Roland Harriman were members and Mr. White, the truck man, and Mr. Allen,² he had married a lady that was from St. Louis, Anheuser Busch people, and of course he had got the money. He was in the match business. When the matches first came out we didn't have a safety

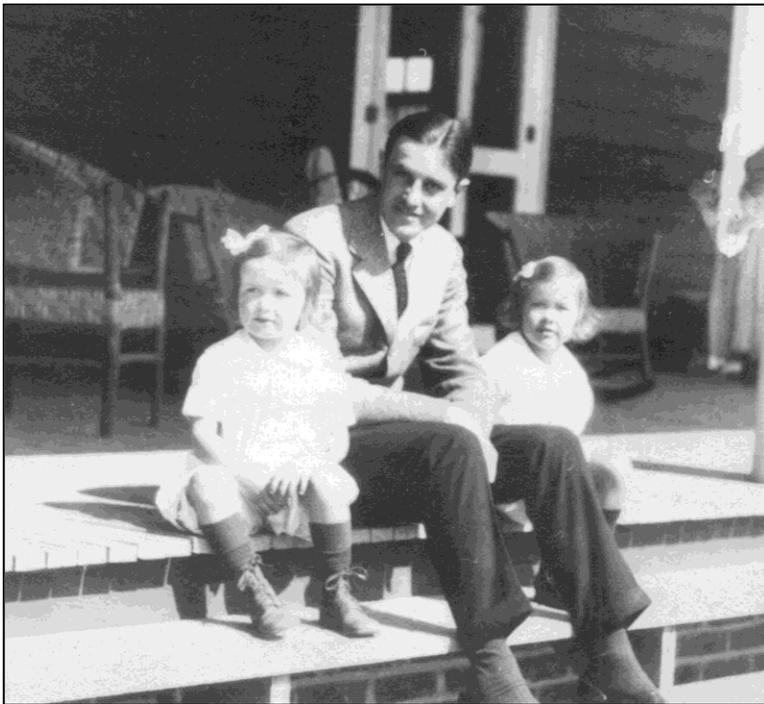


Figure 6.1: Averell Harriman seated on the porch of his Overhills cottage with his daughters, Kathleen (left) and Mary (right), 1920. Courtesy of Kathleen Harriman Mortimer.

match, but they came from Sweden or Norway, up that way. And he represented the safety match thing when it first hit this country. It came to New York and he was living in New York then. And he was a bird hunter. And Harriman and Mr. White. And every night my daddy would go up to the Clubhouse and all of the bird hunters - well of course everybody was there and Mr. Percy had a cottage of his own. He'd come over to the Clubhouse and they'd make hunting plans. They'd sit down and pick out where they wanted to hunt. Fox hunters would be in one section of the estate and bird hunters would be in another section so they wouldn't interfere with each other. When the fox hounds came through you could just quit bird hunting, that was the end of it. Mr. Percy, he didn't cooperate and they messed up the bird hunting a time or two. So the Harrimans, they're not poor people, and they got fed up with it so they said, well we'll just sell out to Percy. And that was in 1926 and that's when my daddy had to quit because the Harrimans left and they let down on the bird hunting. Left the dogs there.

Percy Rockefeller

Percy Rockefeller (1878 - 1934) was the son of William Rockefeller and Almira Goodsell and nephew of John D. Rockefeller. A Yale University graduate and member of the Skull and Bones Society, Rockefeller was labeled in 1910 as one of the coming rulers in banking, steel, railroads, oil, and sugar. After a career aggressively involved in a wide range of capitalist enterprises, Rockefeller died at a young 57, following an operation for ulcers of the stomach.³ Though a legendary figure in Overhills history, few of the narrators remember him in great detail. He and his wife Isabel left Overhills as a legacy to their children.

Bob Model

My grandfather was very formal. Everybody wore riding pants and boots and so forth, but in the latter days I'm not sure how everybody was dressed but when I was growing up everybody wore proper riding boots and breeches or jodhpurs or whatever it might be.

Ann Elliman

You kept your own riding things. As I say, my grandfather was very spit and polish when it came to riding. My father was anything but. It sort of went out of style. My father went the other way. And people would have golf clubs, you would borrow golf clubs, it was never very fancy.



Figure 6.2: Percy A. Rockefeller ready for the hunt at Overhills, 1927. Courtesy of Patricia Penny.

Rudolph Singleton, Jr.

I remember Mr. Rockefeller on his horse on one occasion. And of course being a little chap he looked as big as life itself. And having heard, you know, many impressive things about him, it was also something on my mind.

Pat Penny

When you read the write up [the Harnett County News obituary] about Mr. Rockefeller, it'll give you some insight. Apparently he was just a real genuine human being, loved by everybody.

Isabel Stillman Rockefeller

Isabel Stillman Rockefeller (1876 – 1935) was born Isabel Goodrich Stillman, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Stillman. Isabel and Percy married April 23, 1901 at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York. Isabel died in 1935, just 11 months after Percy. While Percy Rockefeller's role at Overhills was much more conspicuous than Isabel's, she is remembered more, particularly by the families whose lives were impacted by her benevolence.

Ella McPhail

Miss Rockefeller, she was real good. She'd come to your house and it was just about time to have a meal or anything and you'd ask her to eat with you and she would eat. She wasn't somebody that thought she was better than the workers. Now[adays] people couldn't afford, not even people you call rich people, couldn't afford to do like they did. They were sure good to their workers.

When I was sick with pneumonia, she took the kids all to town and bought them some clothes. She bought me this doll and she got me a dress too, but it was a doll that was in a suitcase and it had the prettiest dress on. I'd never had a fancy doll like that before. I just thought that it was the prettiest thing I'd ever seen. I kept it for years but it finally got torn up and thrown away I guess. But she wouldn't give it to me while I was sick. She said it was bad luck to give gifts to people while they were sick. And she wouldn't give it to me until I got better. She gave me that doll and I just thought that [it was] the prettiest thing I'd ever had. And I guess it was because with six children you couldn't afford to buy them all a fancy doll. So I didn't get no fancy doll. It was the only fancy doll I'd ever had. I just thought that was the sweetest thing. And the dress she got me, I don't know what kind of material, it was a summer dress. It was just made so fancy and prettier than anything I'd ever had because what I'd had was just school dresses. Back when we was going to school you didn't wear pants like you do now. Everybody wore dresses. She gave me that dress and that doll and I never forgot that.



Figure 6.3: Employees on vacation at to the beach in 1933. Left to right: Sabra Coble, Vernice Bruce, Ed Bruce, Jr., Virginia Griffith, Katherine Coble. Courtesy of Ed Bruce, Jr.

[In the summer] she'd take two families at a time [to the beach for one week]. She took all the people that worked on the farm. And we would always go with the Holts because he had a bunch of children and there was a bunch of us and we just all went at the same time. I think he had six children.⁴ I know one time we made a bunch of pictures and Mrs. Rockefeller had bought us all some sun suits. Back then they didn't wear shorts like they do now. We had one piece sun suits. And she bought us a floppy hat too, a cloth hat, a floppy hat. And we had some pictures with those clothes on and some

how or another our pictures got misplaced after my sister died. I've questioned everybody in the family I know but they don't know where those pictures are. I said they wouldn't mean nothing to nobody else but I would like to have them. And she would have a cook to go down too, all the cooking and everything. You didn't do nothing while you were staying there. You just had a good time. And that was something I reckon that she just wanted to do for people. I don't imagine

many of them could have went on their own. I know we couldn't have. She would come down [to the beach]. She wouldn't stay the whole time, but she would come down.

Ann Elliman

I have not very strong memories of my grandfather, but certainly of my grandmother. We saw a great deal of her. I would go down to Overhills with her and other cousins. I remember once going to picnic with her over by the Nursery at Possum Bottom and afterwards she went to various tenant homes over there to see what they had that she could be buy. This is of course during the Depression so money was hard to come by. She was encouraging them to make jams, jellies and so on, which she would help to sell and also things that they could sew and also sell, she could help sell them. She was really very proactive in getting them to help themselves along with trying to help them personally.

Dorothy Yantis

During the Depression when old Mrs. Rockefeller was there, she helped a lot of the farmers to meet their mortgage payments and everything, and probably gave them money to help them buy. She was very generous and wanted to help. But after the fall of '29 then so many people lost all of their money but the Rockefellers still had theirs because they were very frugal with the money. So she spent it lavishly helping people. Daddy would always refer to her as old Mrs. Rockefeller.

Old Mrs. Percy, she had the sanatorium and then she had outfitted some kind of truck or something and they went around from house to house. I remember one day they came by our house to see if anybody needed help or was sick. I remember that – and Lona told me – she [Mrs. Percy] sent everybody to the beach in the summer, all the people that worked there that wanted to go to the beach. And she sent a nurse and a cook. And then of course she gave everyone presents. And she helped the people with the mortgages on their farms and things like that. She just did a lot for people. She was very plain. Momma said when the country women bought feed for their animals and everything, the feed and all was in a feed sack. The women would wash it out and then they would make their own clothes out of these feed sacks and it would just be a loose dress. Old Mrs. Rockefeller really liked that idea. So she got some material like that and they made sort of like a shift. I don't know if Momma made it or not. Before she went to work she could have made her some of those. So she would wear that when she came down there. And she would come to the door and greet people in her cotton stocking and maybe her bedroom shoes. She looked very plain; you'd never know who she was. But when she came there she wanted to be one of the people.

One time he took one of the maids that was dressed up all nice and they were all bowing and thought she was one of the Rockefellers. Daddy said they just didn't know. So he just followed along and whatever they bought he would carry back to the car. And then when the people were invited for a Christmas party or something, and this my dad could not understand, being part of the Depression and growing up poor, he said that they even went out and bought new clothes to wear to the Rockefeller's house. And old Mrs. Rockefeller would come to the door looking like one of them.

Katherine Stilwell

Sometimes if it was very dry we would have a tremendous fire and they had a fire truck at Overhills in my day. And Mrs. Rockefeller, if she happened to be there at the time, she was right out there fighting fire. And she kept coffee and sweet breads and things, sandwiches and things for the men to have. And my father and everybody on the place would stay out as long as they needed to, to get the fire extinguished. Everybody worked together.

She was a slight woman but oh boy she could get about! She was a delight! Occasionally she would go into Fayetteville – not often I don’t think – to shop because she probably needed something in a hurry. I remember my mother – we had a Capital department store and my mother was in there one day and mother knew it was Ms. Rockefeller. But [my mother] said [Ms. Rockefeller] just wore a plain old house dress when she went out. She didn’t dress up. She said people were bowing and scraping because somebody recognized her. Occasionally they would entertain and they would dress to the hills for the party but she just met them at the door in a house dress. They were not pretentious people and when they came to Overhills they came to relax. I don’t suppose the general public realized that. It was a place of relaxation because it was a hunting estate. And the people who came there came to enjoy themselves and to be themselves.

Avery & Anna Rockefeller

Avery Rockefeller (1903 - 1986) was the second child and only son of Percy and Isabel Rockefeller. Avery began visiting Overhills as a young adult and returned regularly throughout his life, continuing in his marriage and with the family. Avery married Anna Mark (1906 – 1996) in 1923 and they had three children: Isabel “Ann,” Avery Jr. “Pat,” and Joan. After his father’s and mother’s deaths, Avery assumed a leadership role in Overhills management. After Bird Song construction was completed, Avery and Anna spent months at Overhills. Avery died in 1986 at Overhills.



Figure 6.4: Avery and Anna Rockefeller in Bird Song, ca. 1980.
 Courtesy of Sandy Hemingway.

Ann Elliman

He loved Overhills and he sort of established himself down there as the ultimate authority of the place. He loved nature, loved birds, loved riding – he was an excellent rider – and loved having his children around and his grandchildren.

Kim Elliman

He could be a really charming man. He was very good looking. He got heavy in his middle years, but he was handsome. If he was in a good mood, his eyes lit up and he had this big smile. He really loved to laugh and he would bring

people and he would hire people who would make him laugh. He was really interested in learning about people. If he met someone anew or afresh, he really gave them the third degree, but that's because he wanted to understand their genealogy. He wanted to understand how they think. He wanted to understand where they came from. But it wasn't done in a hostile way. It was really done with a core interest in who people were. And once he became interested in who people were he would follow them often, sort of abstractly through books. For instance, if Bob Model was going to Africa, Gampop would read every book about Africa and tell him exactly where he was supposed to go, how to do it, what to do, and then when Bob came back, he expected a full debriefing and then he usually told them what they'd done wrong. He had great interest in people.

Bob Model

If he thought something was the right thing to do, he did it. And there's nothing wrong with that. The gals [siblings] were much more sentimental and he was much more practical. If you try to accommodate everybody, nothing happens, right? That's the reality of life. It's kind of an interesting pattern that the things that his father built he took down. He was kind of a practical guy. He knew what he wanted and he'd draw out stuff and he'd get somebody that he knew but never used an architect. He never thought that there would never be another Gilded Age. And there certainly is now. Good gracious, the homes that are being built are mind boggling. He was a very practical. There was nothing fancy about Bird Song. It was rambling, but nothing fancy about it. No outstanding architecture and the same thing with Cherokee. And that's the way he was. He was looking for practicality. He was unconventional. When his father got all dressed up to ride to the hounds he didn't wear a tie or a jacket or anything like that. He was a man of his generation and he didn't follow his father's formality, if you will. So the stuff that he did was practical and probably he just guessing, he reacted against the formality of his father because Owenoke was kind of a substantial house.

Well Lauren Conger bought all the horses. And I remember Lauren when I was a kid growing up in Greenwich.⁵ And my uncle's interest in racing was through Lauren Conger because Lauren Conger used to go out to Belmont and take Avery out there. And Avery was a good horseman. He was a good horseman. He was a good rider. He could stick to a horse like glue. He got on and he could ride. There was just no question about it.

Kim Elliman

He was a very private person. One of the flip sides of being very family oriented was that he preferred the family to anyone else around. He had a coterie of old friends and I think they visited less and less as the years went on, but he really restricted himself to a very small universe of people. People always had to come to him and he had a very regimented life. He took breakfast in his room and then he would do an activity and as he got older that activity was more passive. Typically he would go riding between nine-thirty and ten in the morning. He'd be back by noon. He would go for a swim. We always had lunch at the dot of one. Then he would go usually take a nap, read much of the afternoon, and there'd be a formal – not formal of the sense in dressing up, but formal in the sense of there would be tea served. If it was nice weather it would be on the terrace, if it was not nice weather, it'd be in the living room. Basically, he read. He read voluminously. And then dinner – there never were drinks – dinner was at seven. And then you were expected to retire

to the living room and converse. Quite often after his hearing got bad, which was in the late '60s, the conversations – he expected people to retire to the living room and have conversations. There's a whole element that David and I can tell you about, how the kids were less welcome if you were playing games. He would just sit in his chair in the corner and read, and as you know he yellow highlighted. Having said, he had a wonderful sense of humor and could get quite chatty under the right circumstances. He loved telling stories, particularly of the old days. It's a shame he's not here to record because he would love to tell stories about characters and about times past. And in fact, the fact that so many of us can tell stories where we cite him, 23 years after his death, suggests how

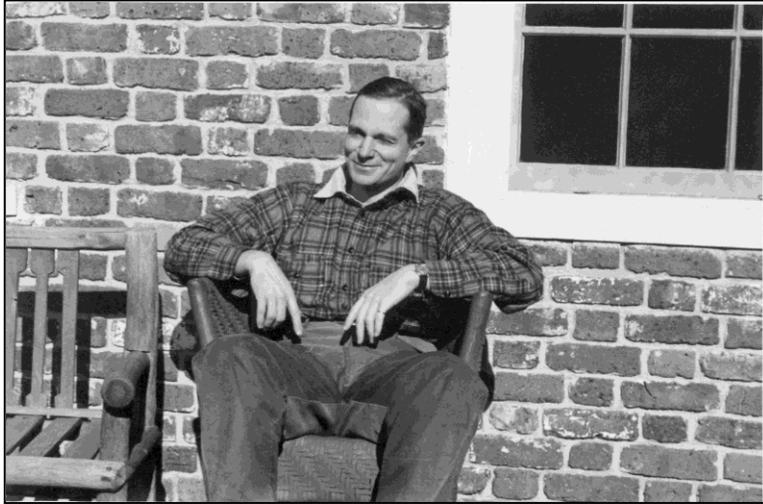


Figure 6.5: Avery Rockefeller on the terrace at Croatan, ca. 1940. He wears his mother's wedding ring on his left pinky finger. Courtesy of Ann Elliman.

often those stories were told to us and how strongly imprinted they were. But, he could severe, he could be aloof. But as it's been suggested, because he was such an authority figure he didn't seem as accessible particularly when we were younger as when we were older.

isolated from anybody outside the family. That's true and people did have to come to him, but the places where they had to come to him were Overhills, increasingly as he got older, and the Adirondacks, which was equally inaccessible. Except for the people who naturally came there and were around him, it was very hard. I think it's important to know that, and Mom would know this personally – we would know it anecdotally – he had tremendous challenges keeping Overhills together through the late '30s and into the war after his father's death. I think it's a testament to his abilities as a visionary and as a businessman that he was able to do that. The role of the Piggly Wiggly investment of saving Overhills cannot be understated. That's something that he, with his friends, he recognized that and put it together and was able to orchestrate that really without help from anybody else in the family. In that way, he sort of became the personification of the next phase of Overhills after his father.

Carolyn Lucas

They were real good people. And when Mr. Avery was living, Mr. Avery Rockefeller, he was a very private man, but he was always super nice to my husband and I. Especially my husband, he thought a lot of my husband, he really did. I think everybody on the place thought a lot of him, respected him. They respected Mr. Avery quite a bit. I know when my husband got sick, I don't know what happened unless his nerves just really went out on him. And he was in bad shape for

David Elliman

I think one sort of funny anecdote, you know Mom said that he loved Overhills and he really controlled it to the point that where his youngest sister Gladys called Overhills, "Avery Hills." And as Kim said, he became increasingly

about two months. And I won't never forget it, Mr. Avery says, he's not to miss a paycheck. So he didn't. They paid him right on just like – but he went on back to work after he got better. And he was okay from then on, thank the Lord. But things like that you don't ever forget.

Freeman Tyler

Avery Rockefeller. Mr. Rockefeller. One of the nicest gentlemen ever in your life you'll meet. I remember the first time I ever had a chance to talk to him. I was finishing up the gazebo for him. He had sent me a little drawing on a piece of regular notebook paper from New York. He had sent it to the office to give to me. He wanted me to build him a gazebo and I had built a gazebo and I was finishing up that Saturday morning. They came in that Friday night and I was finishing up. I'd seen him standing out on the patio up there at Bird Song and I knew he had his chairs out there and I knew he was ready for his gazebo. We hurried up and finished the gazebo. As soon as I finished, started getting my tools up, cleaning up, he goes through and here he and Mrs. Rockefeller came with their two little chairs, opened the door, and went in there and set their chairs in place and set down.

[We] got to talking and he said, "Now where do you live at young man?" I told, "I live back on the Townsend Farm." He said, "Do you like it back there?" I said, "Yea, I like it back there, nobody bothers you back there. Ain't many people know you're back there." He said, "Yea, you're right." He said, "Now how long have you been with us now?" I told him. And he said, "Do you raise a garden?" I said, "I'd like to, Mr. Rockefeller. I try to raise one every year." And I didn't mean nothing by telling him this, I said, "It's hard – it gets so hot and dry in the summer, you've just about got to have water to raise a garden." He said, "Hmm, okay." He said, "I like the gazebo; you've done a good job on it." I said, "Well thank you sir." So I left and didn't think no more of it.

Monday morning we had a big meeting at the Shop. Mr. Rockefeller, it's hard to describe the type of man he was. He was concerned with more than just his self, his family, and his money. He thought of other people. He told me, well he didn't tell me, but he told Billy Spruill that he wanted some water back there. So that Monday we had a meeting and Jim Flood told everyone, "Look we don't mind you guys talking to the family, if you see them out and about." He said, "But, be careful what you say to them." And I spoke up, I said, "Well, if you're referring to what I told Mr. Rockefeller yesterday," I said, "He asked me a question. I'm not going to lie to him, not for you or nobody else. If he asks me a question, I'm going to be honest with him. I'll be truthful." And that week, Bill's Well Drilling was out there drilling a new well. And my Uncle Hubert was back there with a backhoe digging a new irrigation pond for us and putting in a new irrigation system. I didn't ask him to do that, but that's the way Mr. Rockefeller was.

Florence Short

Uncle Avery and Aunt Anna were big nature lovers as I'm sure you know. And then my son went to ask Aunt Anna and Uncle Avery how to hook a frog. "How can you catch and hook a frog to use as bait?" Anna nearly passed out.

Ronny Holmes

Mr. Rockefeller was the big dog; he was Mr. Avery, that's what he was called.

And I can't speak for the other kids, but I know that's what always happened for us. And we always gave Mrs. Avery something and she'd "ooh" and "ah" over it. She was a big bird person in the Audubon Society. And you know, Boy Scouts or Cub Scouts you'd be making stuff. You'd make a little old plaster of paris bird, you know what I'm talking about? You'd paint that sucker boy, give it to her. She just made you feel special. You'd have the greatest time. She cared a lot.

Tommy McPhail

And Mr. Avery: probably 25 words were the most I ever spoke to him. It was either "Good morning" or "How are you today, sir" or whatever. But I saw [him] when they were down everyday. I knew he was the man and you don't mess with the man unless he wants to mess with you. I won't ever forget - I want to bring this up. We were out there working on the golf course one day and me and a group were planting dogwood trees, the small dogwood trees up around Bird Song. I was sort of put in charge how to do them. I thought we'll just put them in a semicircle here and that will be pretty. We start digging holes and Miss Avery just happened to be walking out. She says, "Tom, Tommy" - they always called me Tom - "What are we doing today?" I said, "We're putting out some of these pretty dogwoods out here for you." She said, "How are we doing it?" I said, "Well my thought was to put them in a line, in a semicircle here." "No, no, no, we can't do it like that." I said, "Yes ma'am, how do we need to do it then?" She said, "We need to put them out there as the Lord would have put them out there." I said, "Well that's exactly what we'll do then." I said, "You show me where you want them and we'll put them exactly where you want them." She did and that's where we planted trees. I will never forget she said, "No, no, no, you can't do that."

Freeman Tyler

She [Anna Rockefeller] loved the outdoors. If you go up to the lakes, you'll see these boards across the lakes. She loved to bird watch. I think Mr. Rockefeller bought like an 8,000 acre bird sanctuary somewhere in Africa, South Africa, just for that reason. When she was coming in the early spring, when the little dandelions start blooming, you dare not go and cut those things. She'd have a fit. You didn't trim bushes; you didn't cut trees, nothing like that when she was here. She would have a fit. She said that's a living creature, just like we are. Let it grow. Then when she'd leave, we'd get everything trimmed and cut back up but you didn't cut like that when she was in residence. She would have a fit. Mr. Rockefeller was just different. He didn't seem like he cared. If you cut it, fine. If you didn't, fine. But he was now - there's one thing I can say about him is he was peculiar about the way you trimmed your shrubbery and stuff like that. He didn't like to see nothing manicured. He liked everything left natural. We'd do pruning on our shrubbery and stuff but we'd do it to where it looked like it hadn't been cut.

Mr. Rockefeller was the type of man - he was a multimillionaire - but just to see him, you'd never know it. He had his old Mercedes. He actually had two. One of them was a new one and then the other one was an old Mercedes. You see him uptown. He'd have on his old khaki shirt and his old khaki pants, looked like an old farmer or something. I'd never see him mad. I'd never heard him raise his voice. He was just an easy going person. But if he wanted something, he wanted it. If he wanted something done, he wanted it done. He don't want you dragging your feet on it. But I never had one minute's problems with Mr. Rockefeller. He was just as nice a man as you'll meet anywhere. He was a real gentleman.

Sandy Hemingway

He was a smart man, he was a well read man. I love this story about him: we were eating lunch one time and he was always real curious about your genealogy. Something came up about my family and he asked me about my mother and I said well, it had not been a particularly wonderful relationship and she had always been a bit flaky and it was one of the reasons I left Ohio. Well he was really well read. But after lunch, the routine always was he had lunch and then he went back to his bedroom, both of them and they read and usually took a little nap. They never came back out until almost dinner time. But Kim occasionally would go back there with him and they would discuss the farm. We had had this lunch conversation and the next day Kim came up to the office and he was laughing. He said, "I went back with Gampop after lunch and he was in the dictionary." I said the dictionary, "What in the world would he be doing [in the dictionary]?" And [Kim asked], "What are you looking up in the dictionary?" [Avery] said, "I'm looking up flaky." [Kim] said, "Because you said your mother was flaky." The next time I was up there Avery said [to me], "That wasn't a very nice thing you said about your mother."

This is the way he dressed. See the checkered pants? And this is a Brooks Brother's shirt. I think you can still buy them and it has all the different – I said to him one time (of course there's the front of Bird Song) – there they are. That's him and her. That's Betsy's dog, Marmaduke.⁶ And there he is again. Now he nearly wore that almost everyday. The checkered pants. And I said to him one time, I said, you know your clothes don't match. He said I know but I don't dress for other people, I dress for myself. And he liked that outfit so that's what he wore all the time.

Kim Elliman

I think one of the things other than financial, that David has already spoken to, that Gampop did for Overhills is he created a sense of continuity, a sense of tradition, but also a sense of expectations among everyone of what the conduct would be and what the place would look like. I don't think that, if you think about what people talk about Overhills, there's an element of timelessness to it. That just doesn't happen. It happens because there is an ethic. I think he and I think some of his sisters really behaved, militated, and expected that of the staff and other family members, both the expectations of your enjoyment but also of the decorum at Overhills.

William Bryan "W.B." and Thelma Bruce

Of employees and families with long tenure at Overhills, W.B. and Thelma would be among the few who lived for decades at the estate, from the early days (1920s) through the modern era (1970s). W.B. Bruce grew up on a farm in Sperryville, VA and, before moving to Overhills, lived a colorful life, working in the Midwest harvesting corn by hand, then serving in World War I as a medic in France. When he returned to Virginia he worked at an army remount station. It was in Virginia that he met his old acquaintance Charles Carver, a huntsman for Joseph B. Thomas, who happened to be traveling with J.B. Thomas and Percy Rockefeller.⁷ Rockefeller hired Bruce to work at Overhills, building bridges. Soon after W.B. arrived at Overhills, his brother W. Edward Bruce came to work in the dog kennels and later as a carpenter. Their brother Clarence worked as a chauffeur for a short time.⁸

Thelma (Puckett) Bruce (1907 – 2000) grew up in Pineview, a railroad crossroads just north of Overhills and married W.B. Bruce in the early 1920s. While they had no biological children, they adopted two nieces, Virginia Griffith and Dorothy Jean Bruce. W.B. Bruce (b. 1896) died in 1972, after living at Overhills for over 50 years. Thelma remained until 1986 before moving off the estate. Both are buried in Cross Creek Cemetery in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Ann Elliman

He was, I think, one of the most competent people that I've ever met and had a sense of calm about him and authority. He was a real gentleman to everybody and certainly with an air of



Figure 6.6: William Bryan "W.B." Bruce (left) out on a fox hunt at Overhills, ca. 1930. Courtesy of Ann Elliman.

authority. And he had a marvelous sense of humor. He loved, as we said, telling stories and then he had this high laugh. And it was just infectious when you heard it; you'd have to laugh, too.

Ronny Holmes

Hard nosed man, running a tight shift. But I'm telling you, when he said jump it was "how high?" That's the way he was. But that's just the way he run the place.

Kim Elliman

Mr. Bruce played a lot of golf. On Sunday afternoons, the adults

would go out and play. The adults included Pat, who's a very good golfer, Lucia, who was a champion golfer, Lotes, who's a good golfer, and Mr. Bruce who was an excellent golfer. [They intimidated the rest of us].

Louise Alabaster

Well lots of times we'd go out on the golf course and then lots of times they would invite us over for dinner or something like that. We'd just have a good time visiting through dinner and afterwards just sit talking. Sometimes we'd go in the afternoon so that my husband could play golf with Mr. Bruce on the golf course. I'd be in the Clubhouse with Ms. Bruce and we'd just chat and do things women do when they get together. Gossip, I guess.

Louise & David Alabaster

Louise: [Mr. Bruce] was a real quiet type person. Ms. Bruce did all the talking.

David: And she did a lot of talking. She really did. She talked all the time and she was very interesting, a lot of fun.

Louise: But he was real quiet, a real quiet person but very nice and always welcomed you with open arms. They were a good host and hostess and they enjoyed people a lot. Very gracious.

Katherine Stilwell

He was a typical Virginian, very distinguished. He was distinguished. Now he and Ed were very different. See Ed, Jr.'s father was more laid back, down to earth, and we were closer to that family than we were to Bryan and Thelma. Now Thelma was a Holmes and she was the one who had the peach orchard and my mother got all her peaches from them. I'm trying to put two and two together. And Lotes Holmes was the nephew.

Florence Short

Well, the Bruces were just an institution in itself. Basically you call up Mrs. Bruce and she says, "Well honey child we just waitin' to see you. The sun doesn't shine unless you be here at North Carolina, Overhills. And when will you be? You can't come here soon enough. Now I have to tell you, that your sister Percilla will be down here." She could just do it. How could she tell people that they can't come? And yet the fact of the matter is that you couldn't all be there at once. So Mrs. Bruce would just smooth over everything and everybody would be happy. And you were always the most wonderful person in the world to Mrs. Bruce. And Mr. Bruce was just a distinguished southern gentleman that knew everything.

Rudolph Singleton, Jr.

Yea, he was a neat guy. Great big fellow, outgoing, congenial. Was superintendent of Overhills for some 40 years. Great personal friend of my dad's and he had a real unique and neat job. He ran the Overhills Estate for 40 years; he looked after the estate and the Rockefellers looked after him. It was a good job. Very comfortable gentleman's life, you know.

Andrew Jackson, Sr.

Mr. Bruce married a Puckett lady at Pineview. See Pineview at one time had a hotel there when then railroad was running. And the Pucketts go into that somehow or another. Let's see now. The Holmeses had what they call Holmes' Hill. I thought they came from Wilmington, but I think they came from up near Lewisburg, somewhere in there. And he had a big peach farm on Holmes' Hill. The Overhills land came right up there. And Mr. Holmes, that's Lotes' father, had a big peach farm.

Ann Elliman

Dot Bruce was close in age to my sister and they were always together. They were in each other's weddings. Of course, Dot called Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Aunt and Uncle, which was accurate. She was adopted much later and I guess we picked it up from that as children. If Mrs. Bruce wrote me a letter, and she did from time to time, she always say "Aunt" at the end. She was an extremely competent person. She married Bruce when I think she was 16 or 17 as you probably know and they lived over the kennels for a while and she did the cooking for the help. And then I guess after my grandfather died they moved to the Clubhouse. I think that's right. She took over sort of running the whole household. She did the planning and organizing and trained the people who worked there. She was a remarkable person. She would have run any hotel in the country.

Kim Elliman

Mrs. Bruce was very demanding of the staff. I think in some respects her management style was very middle third twentieth century. There were complexities but she managed everything really well in the end. I think we've talked about the important of Avery to the traditions and the continuity of Overhills, but I don't you can underscore Aunt, more than even Uncle Bruce, because she was there an additional 15 years. And he was almost quasi-retired from '65 to '72 because he had a pretty severe heart attack. I think it was '65. And Gampop kept saying he just wasn't the same. He was just tired, which makes sense. So she really had a hand managing it 20 years beyond he did. And I think if anyone personified the continuity, she did.

Bob Model

Well I never went fox hunting at Overhills. That was finished, obviously by the time I came along. But Mr. Bruce taught me all I knew about hunting. I hunted with him from the time I could, from the time I was allowed to carry a gun. And anyway we had a little trap out there at the old polo field. We had clay pigeons that just went straight out there. We got out there and that's where I learned how to shoot. I can't remember what year that that trap was put in but obviously it had to be in '50s. I'm just trying to think. I was about eight years old when I started toting a gun and I went with him.

Well I'd be happy to try to describe [him]. He was a remarkable man and he was a giant. He was well respected within the community and from what I remember he was brought down here by old, the fellow, I'll think of his name here.

Joe Thomas. Joe Thomas brought him down here to clear the trails from Virginia. And Mrs. Bruce, she was from here because Lotes' mother was Mrs. Bruce's sister. And anyway he was definitely a nineteenth century man. He was a very formal man. He was a very smart man. He was a good manager. He was tough. He was fair. He knew the land. He was loyal. He and Mrs. Bruce really kind of, from the time that he took over as superintendent, he had been recognized as someone who could do the family good service and he did. And I guess honesty was another important quality that they had. Loyalty to the family and it was their life. They were concerned about all the members of the family and I got to be very close.

He died in 1973, I think is when he died. He stopped riding. He had a broken leg and some doctor told him not to ride anymore and Mrs. Bruce imposed that on him. I think he was younger than I thought when he would have stopped riding but he had a broken leg, an injured leg and I don't recall the circumstances around it. Overhills was a challenge. I think it wasn't managing the family because he knew how to do that. He knew how to do that. He had the respect of everybody so he had no problem managing the family. Managing the change in the environment, in the community. The change of more and more people as Fort Bragg became more developed, it took on a different perspective. We had to shutdown some roads and you always had issues with people coming on the property. There was always a concern for liability and fires and so forth. So I think that was probably the biggest challenge in the change from farming practices as the old tenant farmers got old and tired and then the shift there. That was the real challenge, making that shift.

But he was very much until he died, he was there and always a presence and a wonderful influence on all of us and especially me.

Tell you another thing that I always remember that Mr. Bruce did when I was a child and Lotes carried this on. Every morning Mr. Bruce put the flag up and I was always out there at Overhills when Mr. Bruce put the flag up in the morning and I was always there in the evening when he took it down. And that's when I'd fold the flag with him and he was very insistent that the flag was folded properly and then he took it and put it away.

I would have to say that W.B. Bruce managed all the people quietly and the family never heard about it. If there was ever any problems nobody ever heard about it. And people didn't leave. People stayed. All the different people who worked there. So I think you have to really hand it to Mr. Bruce for not only managing the family but he also managed the employees and they were there year after year. As you know that's not an easy thing to do. And so when the family came down it was sort of a seamless thing. You didn't have to worry about anything. Everything was taken care of. It was almost too much of an ideal – what do you call it, Alice in Wonderland type of environment.

Cookie Model

That's one thing we were talking about was how protected we all felt and had not a clue how Mrs. Bruce, how Mr. and Mrs. Bruce really protected everybody. They set the tone. The whole feeling was being taken care of and protected. That was definitely Mr. and Mrs. Bruce. Mr. Bruce was a great big man and by God, was he going to take care of you. Nothing would happen to his little girl. And Mrs. Bruce probably continued it on.

Dorothy Yantis

Well there was the kennels back between our house back down and the Bruces' house. In recent years they had dogs back there but they weren't hunting dogs or anything. They were just dogs that Mr. Bruce had kept. One day one of them got sick or hurt or something and my brother Archie went up there. [Mr. Bruce] said, "Archie do you know how to shoot a gun?" And my brother said, "Yes, I can shoot a gun." And he said, "Would you kill that dog for me? I just can't do it." Archie said sure. But if it had been my husband he never would done it. So he did and Mr. Bruce thanked him. He said, "Archie, thank you because I just couldn't do it."

Bryan Bruce. Everyone said that Mrs. Bruce – we always called her Mrs. Bruce. She always called my mother Mrs. Cameron. They never called by first names. Mrs. Bruce's name was Thelma. They always were very respectful and always said Mr. Cameron and Mrs. Cameron. Then Virginia was older and then Dorothy Jean was a little older than me. So I was at their house a lot in the white house there on that corner. That was there. But I was in the Clubhouse when I was even younger and when they lived in the Clubhouse. Mr. Bruce could be a little cantankerous every now and then. Every morning my dad got up. He went to bed when the sun set and he got up at five o'clock in the morning, every day. At seven o'clock sharp Mr. Bruce would be down at the gas tank, down the hill from us, to give them orders for what to do today. Daddy would have to be there that they could see it was done. They even had a gas tank down there. I spent a lot of time when I had

nothing else to do was pumping up the gas because you can see it go up in there. It was the old fashioned thing. So Mr. Bruce would be down there. Then Daddy would see that everything was done, like Mr. Bruce said and discuss any problems and things like that. The early people that were there was the ones that took care of the dogs was – I think his name was Singleton. And then he had a son, little Rudolph they called him.

I just lived at the lake in the summer, all summer long. And Mr. Bruce kind of gave me some swim lessons and I was real little. One day he took me off the end of the diving board and he said, he just picked me up and he said, “Sink or swim.” It was right by the dam and it was pretty cold. Don’t you know when I came up I was dog paddling for all I was worth. So I don’t remember anything about that, but I remember I was really young. He was very gregarious.

Archie Cameron

Archie Cameron was another long time employee of Overhills who moved there in the 1920s.⁹ He and his wife Annie McKay raised their four children (Ruby, Lona Mae, Archie Jr., Dorothy) at Overhills. Archie worked as a mule skinner and later as a Superintendent of farms. Archie died in 1975 at age 86, but Annie continued to live at Overhills through the mid 1980s.

Lotes Holmes

And we had Superintendent Archie Cameron, was our main farm superintendent. He looked after all of the eight farms mostly himself, different ones and things that they required. He would help them get the tobacco to market and sell it and then bring the check back and then it would go through my process, our process through the office.

Kathy Riley

Our grandfather had such a tender heart that he didn’t like to say goodbye to people. There used to be a gas pump and he would go and when it was time for people to say goodbye and we would say, Granddaddy’s gone down to the gas pump and we knew what that meant. He wouldn’t say goodbye.

Walter Bull

He did kind of everything and towards the last they made him what they called Superintendent of Farms. He went around to check on the sharecroppers and if they needed fertilizer or whatever they need, he had it sent over there. Before that he did just about anything. I’ve seen him mow and whatever needed to be done. He also would pick the Rockefellers up at the Raleigh Durham airport when they would fly in. You know where the gas tanks were down there he’d go down and I’d see him washing and shining the car. He’d drive to Raleigh and pick them up. Way before that he used to come by train but I guess during our time they flew into the Raleigh Durham airport. He would go up there and pick them up, usually on Saturdays. And they used to work five days a week and half a day on Saturday. I think he got off at twelve o’clock on Saturday.

Dorothy Yantis

I'm not sure, but Daddy told David, my husband, "Well I was a mule skinner." He never told me that. He told him a lot of things. Daddy just did everything there, but when he came there he was probably, I think he was probably about 30, 31. And he died in 1975 and he was 86.

And that was Daddy's main duty was to take care of all of them. And he took care of all of his relatives too and everything. He was a chauffeur. The Rockefellers first came on a train and he would go to meet them. I don't know where it was. I'm thinking it might have been Raleigh, I'm not sure. And he would go and meet them and they had come from New York. And then later on they flew and Daddy would still meet them. Mr. Harriman was one of them, Averell Harriman. The Rockefellers were very very kind. So that was his job. And he was always busy. He was busy seven days a week. Every Saturday when I was a teenager we'd go up to Jonesboro to the movies, but if I didn't go then he and Momma went - he always said they went "up the country" to check on relatives. And every time I went back to visit they would never come to see me. He said we must visit with each one of them. So his whole life was his family. Daddy loved to talk, but he was a really good listener. He would listen.

My life was really good because everybody else was extremely poor. They were selling pencils on the streets of Fayetteville. And Daddy would always say, we are just so fortunate to live here because everything that we had was furnished.

Daddy was in Highsmith Hospital and so I flew back [in the 1970s]. I was going back and forth all the time because he was in and out of the hospital and he was still living there in Overhills. And Mrs. Rockefeller came over one day. I don't know if Daddy was in the hospital or what. That was Mrs. Avery Rockefeller. And she said that, "I have to bring a tape recorder over for Mr. Cameron. Do you suppose he would talk into it?" I said, "Yes I think he would. You just ask him questions and let him talk." She says, "He knows everything about Overhills. He knows every tree, every line, where all the markers are. He knows everything. And all of that is going to be lost." Of course they never did it. And she said, "I want Mr. Cameron to stay here until he dies and I want your Mom to stay here because they have been faithful. They've served our families for all of these years. I want them to be here if they want."



Figure 6.7: Archie and Annie Cameron pose for their wedding portrait, late 1910s. Courtesy of Betty Deer.

Daddy always stood straight, erect, he was always a very proud man. He always wore a hat and a shirt to work.

[The town of Cameron, NC is named] from his ancestors, but it's near Vass and it's still there. One of the times I was there I had my brother take me up there just to see it again. I should have questioned my dad more but I didn't. My dad loved the bagpipes. He had a guitar, my husband gave him a guitar, well I think he had one before, and he couldn't really play the guitar but he liked to just strum the guitar on the front porch and sing. The name Whitford in here rang a bell because when my brother was born they named him Junior.¹⁰ Mr. Whitford, I guess, named him Junior. And his birth was not recorded so when he went into the Navy he had to take the family bible that had all the dates and he had to prove who he was. And he says, "My name is Junior Cameron." They said, "You can't be in the Navy with Junior Cameron. What was your dad's name?" And he said, "Archie C. Cameron." And so that's what they put on there, Archie C. Cameron, Jr. Mr. Whitford was Irish I think and I remember them coming to our home quite regularly. Daddy and Mr. Whitford would sit on the back porch and sing the old songs and drink White Lightning or whatever. I don't know. And Mrs. Whitford always had on a navy blue dress and lace collar and she sat in the house. But every time Mr. Whitford saw Daddy he would always say, "How is the wee man and the wee lass?" because we were the two youngest at home. I remember their visits very vividly because my mother would get very upset. And Mr. Whitford would say, "Archie, wet the other eye," and that meant to take another drink of the strong stuff. Then they would start singing loudly and my dad just loved to do that. He got the biggest kick and my mother would be so embarrassed. She'd say, "What if Mr. Bruce hears that noise and comes down here?" That's the way he was and he started smoking when he was a teenager. He went to the doctor one day in his later years and he said, "Mr. Cameron if you don't quit smoking it will kill you." So he quit cold turkey. That was my dad.

I think it was in the fall of '75, he died in the Highsmith Hospital where I worked. All of these people came to his funeral which was up at Cypress Church, the black and the white. They all came to pay their respects. That's when some of them came and talked to me in the churchyard. I remember, I can't remember exactly who they were, but they were people that Daddy would intercede for. They would line up outside our house, maybe it was Saturday morning, because they knew maybe he'd be there. And then he would get up and he would see each one and whatever help they needed he would intercede with Mr. Bruce. Because we were not wealthy because Daddy was taking care of his family in the country and all of us, but he would do what he could.

And at the funeral that day, so many people came up to me and said, you look just like your Daddy and if it hadn't been for him – these were farmers and times were very hard – and I would call your Daddy or go down and see him and he said, I could see his car coming across the field. There would just be a dirt road through the fields to their homes. And he said that I knew that we'd be saved because I knew that Mr. Cameron would be bringing money or help or something. There was going to be an answer. This was how they looked right after they were married and about the time they came to Overhills. And Momma was 19 and Daddy was 29. And see how she's standing behind him? Because that's what you did.

He never made much money or anything, but everything was free. They brought us milk for free and that's what the Dardens did. And drop off fresh milk every morning. And everything was free; we only paid for the phone when we got the phones. He was extremely frugal with his money and if he would go up the country and our Momma would go into cash the check or something like that and they would ask her for identification. Daddy would get really incensed. So he would put money into that bank. He loved to go to Vass and he liked to go to Sanford and Jonesboro. And he would put money into that bank, so he would just have a little bit of money spread all over to these banks that my brother found out after he died. And my dad had bought property and when things were really bad he bought property for two dollars an acre. And he kept the property.

If there was a snake in the yard he would wait until my mother came home and he would send her out there with the hoe. And she was a wonderful cook. We had chickens when I was little. She would put a chicken in each hand and just wring their necks and then hang them on the clothesline back of our house there above the lake. Of course I didn't really want to eat any of it because they were kind of my pets. She did all of the cooking. She would come home from work really tired and everything because she'd been on her feet all day and she would fix dinner. And if my dad didn't particularly like it or something he would just sit there and he wouldn't say a word and she would get up from the table and start making something else. He was just spoiled rotten. He said I would rather have a piece of your Momma's cold cornbread than the finest food in the finest restaurant. That was his theory.

When he went to the hospital Momma went with him. They would bring a rollaway bed and she slept right next to him. He called in my brother in the last days and he said, "Your mother stayed with me all of her life." He said, "There's money. When I'm gone I want you to let her do whatever she wants to do. If the money gives out, get some more money and just let her do what she wants to do." So Momma was just flying out here all the time. So she would do what she wanted to do. And because he had a faithful wife and everything, he knew that he had chosen right. He told how you went around, you chose your wife, and he would describe some of these women as big, raw boned women which meant that they were very strong and sturdy and everything. You would lead your horse around and you would go there and you would ask for something or other and then usually when you were in the country all of the girls would come out to see who was there: a man with a horse. So Momma was the youngest in her family. I guess he went to their house. Her mother was very strict and everything. Momma was always running around the house knocking on the doors when she was little. Daddy came calling one day and Grandma yelled out, "I'm gonna bust this egg in your face if you don't quit it." So she opened the door and there was my dad. Grandma was tough. She wore skirts down the floor and she just had this stern look. That's how he chose Momma. Momma was real skinny and little when they were married. We said, "Daddy she was not real sturdy." Most of the men wanted sturdy women that could have at least 10 or 12 children to help with the farm. And that's what they all did, they just gave birth to one after another. Momma said they were very poor and they would be working and sometimes the baby would be born in the field. If it was they would just pick the baby up and put it in the apron and take the baby back to the house. These were tough women, just tough women. That was my dad's personality. Momma would do nothing or just do anything. That was kind of my whole dad's life. He was very protective of his children.

Atlas Simpson Davis

Atlas Simpson Davis (1872 – 1967) managed Lindley Nursery and then worked as an Overhills Farm Manager, living at Overhills with his family in the same house until the 1960s. He married Linnie Allena Melvin and they had thirteen children together. Aside from his work at Overhills, A.S. Davis was an elder at the Church of the Covenant at Manchester from 1913 until his death.¹¹ He also served on the Anderson Creek School Board.¹² He and his family are buried at the Church of the Covenant.

Katherine Stilwell

And that woman [Linnie Davis] worked like a Trojan. My mother used to just worry about her. Mr. Davis was a huge man and he was the nurseryman. He came to Overhills from Lindley Nursery in Greensboro and I have three big hollies in my yard right now. I treasure them. And they are gorgeous. We have to keep them cut back to practically the ground every so often because they grow and grow and grow. He was a wonderful, wonderful horticulturalist. He knew what he was doing, and anytime they needed anything [*shrubbery or trees*] over at one of the houses he would plant it. Oh yes, I spent a lot of time in the Davis home.

Carolyn Lucas

I remember Nancy Maye. She lived over here in the big two story house as a kid. I lived up here in my mom's house with Mom and Dad. But I remember Nancy Maye and Ronny Maye and Sonny Maye. Their granddaddy, Mr. Davis, is the one that used to live over here in the big house. He used to be the big man. They used to have a nursery down there where my husband grew corn. They used to have a nursery down there and they would sell shrubbery and stuff. My great uncle used to work over there, that's what he'd do.

Ella McPhail

Well when we first moved around in this part of the country, like I said, children don't think about things like that then, it was called Lindley Nursery at that time. And they did have a nursery there. They had it for a few years, I remember that. And it was called Lindley Nursery. And Mr. Davis, Mr. At Davis looked after the nursery. His name must have been Atlas. They always just called him At, At Davis. Atlas, I think, must have been his name.

Andrew Jackson, Sr.

The Nursery was this side across 87 to the east about five miles from Overhills. Mr. Lindley had a nursery on the creek. It ran through there. It was great, big level bottomland in there. And Lindley Nursery, he had come down there and bought that thing. They're up in Greensboro. He had become a very wealthy man. Mr. A.S. Davis ran the thing and all the shrubbery – they grew shrubbery and they'd bring it on a wagon to Overhills and put it in a great big box and ship it from the Overhills railroad station.

Dorothy Yantis

The Davises were in charge of the Nursery. Woodrow was one of the sons that came afterwards. And then there was another one. I forget his name, but he was over there. We would go by the Nursery to pick up people that worked over there and to go to school. I think I started school

when I was six and we had to go this long long way, on the bus, on the dirt roads, everyday. It was so far over to Anderson Creek. We would stop there. But I knew they grew a lot of trees and they always referred to it as the nursery and the Davises had that. They went to school with us and they rode on the bus and I knew them. I grew up with them.

Maggie McDonald

Maggie McDonald began working at Overhills in the late 1920s, when she came with her uncle to work in the kitchen for Percy and Isabel Rockefeller. She was just a teenager at the time, but worked at Overhills for the rest of her life, becoming the head cook for decades. After Maggie retired she moved to Fayetteville, where Avery Rockefeller had a house built for her. In later years Maggie returned regularly to Overhills to cook when Avery and Anna were staying in Bird Song. Maggie died in 1987.¹³

Ann Elliman

Maggie was there for a long long time. Actually, certainly in my teenage years, Maggie was a very young girl. And Maggie stayed on connected to the family until [1987]. [Kim and I] both went down to [speak] at her funeral.

Kim Elliman

But Maggie learned from Percy and Isabel's French cook. She wasn't the top cook until after Percy and Isabel died. She had learned to prepare and bake pastries and became] but the sous chef role for pastries. She was just a wonderful baker. And so we had this I was saying sort of combination of down home country cooking and then these French [recipes].

Carolyn Lucas

And then when Mr. Avery was living this elderly black lady named Miss Maggie, she was the cream of the crop. She was way up in age when they would come down and they would always go get Miss Maggie when Mr. Avery would come down. Even when she got to where she couldn't get around very well he would want her there. Because it was just a bond there between them. They'd just been with one another for so many years.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

And the cook, I liked the cook too that used to be over in the Croatan. I can't remember names. I think it was Maggie. Yea, Maggie. I used to love to go in Croatan when the house was being occupied, which was primarily in the wintertime when I was there because during the summer the Rockefellers would use their place up around Lake Placid. During the winter they would start coming down around Thanksgiving but then before Easter they would leave Overhills. But Maggie would be there during the wintertime and she lived in the Croatan downstairs and she'd go back and forth sometimes to her place, but she had to be there as the lead cook. And I used to go over with Daddy. There'd be something wrong and I'd have to go over there and do something and piddle around the kitchen with her. And downstairs in the Croatan they had the washrooms too. You've probably seen that in one end of the basement. It had the big washtubs back there where they would do the washing for some time.

Sandy Hemingway

But overall the girls in the kitchen, Glodean, Gladys, those were all girls I hired. Maggie was the matriarch. She and Mary Lee Morgan and those two really were the only ones there when I came. And they would bring in help. Maggie was there from childhood practically. She never married. I think probably from her 20s. And she had a room back there by the hallway going by the pool. There was a room off to the side. And that was Maggie's room. She stayed there the whole time. When they were in we went and got her and brought her two or three days before they came there. And she just stayed there. If they were there for three months, she just stayed. Once in a while she would say, "Sandy, can somebody take me home?" They built a little house for her off Murchison Road in Fayetteville. They would take her to her little house. And she wouldn't stay long. Maybe she wanted to go to church or something. And then we would pick her up and bring her back, till she got so old she just couldn't do it. Then she would even come a little bit. She would say, maybe I'll do something. She just got so old. Her whole life was them.

Cookie Model

Yes, Maggie McDonald. Wonderful, absolutely wonderful, very smart, very gracious, very gentle, very loyal. I would say she was probably the heart and soul of the kitchen. She trained everybody. She trained Mary Lee and everybody else, Glodean, all the people that worked in the house.



Figure 6.8: Sandy Hemingway and Maggie McDonald in the dining room at Bird Song, ca. 1980. Courtesy of Sandy Hemingway.

Dorothy Yantis

There was Maggie. Maggie was the cook and Maggie was always opening the house in the fall and cleaning everything. She'd bring a lot of the black ladies in when I was little and they would just clean all the houses from top to bottom. And Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller would go to the white house there and they would stay there. I remember going over there and Maggie would be there with all of her cleaning crew and they would be frying bacon and they put the bacon out into the bird feeders because it will make their feathers even brighter. It was good for them. So that's what she did.

Florence Short

Well Maggie was – there's no way to describe Maggie. She was just wonderful. The food was always perfect and nobody's been able to hold a candle to Maggie, before or since.

Ethel “Miss Pete” Peterson

Known as Miss Pete to the Rockefeller family, Ethel Peterson began working for Isabel Rockefeller in the 1920s. Miss Pete painted the third floor children’s bathrooms in Croatan Lodge as well as rooms in Bird Song and other Rockefeller houses in Connecticut. She was a self taught artist and very knowledgeable about birds and flowers. Her artwork is whimsical and often naturalist themed.

Ann Elliman

My mother and father and Kim basically were the birders. Miss Pete, she was [great] and she was marvelous [in her knowledge of] with wildflowers [as was my father]. My father and Miss Pete would go out early in the morning. My grandmother, I gather, was very interested also in birds, maybe that’s where my father got it because a lot of the chintz¹⁴ in the old days were birds and she had Miss Pete do pictures of birds [all over Croatan]. There were lamps [in Croatan] that I have at home which I didn’t show you [in the shape of] birds.



Figure 6.9: Miss Pete in the Adirondack Mountains, 1945.
Courtesy of Ann Elliman.

parents had three daughters and they all were self taught artists. One of them did illustrations for fashion magazines. Miss Pete was employed by my grandmother. The other, there was one who was married and had two children and those are the nieces that eventually helped take care of Miss Pete in her latter years.

Kim Elliman

Avery and Anna were wonderful naturalists. She had passion, he had real knowledge, and Miss Pete had both. You can see that from her drawings. She was amazing. [She was a] self taught artist. Actually what you don’t have is some of her more whimsical things. First of all the birds in Bird Song that she painted, the canvases in the bathroom were amazing, just phenomenal. And then she also painted lots of wastebaskets of birds and fairies.

Ann Elliman

She was employed by my grandmother in the ‘20s. She was a little bit older than my father. He was born in 1903 so maybe she was born in ‘01 or ‘02. She lived about 25 minutes from Greenwich. Her

[Miss Pete would come] often when my mother and father were there alone. She also sort of worked as sort of a part time secretary for my mother. And she worked for other members of the family too. My aunt Faith, she worked for her [and] I think a bit for Isabel occasionally. But primarily it was my mother and father. And she would come everyday, about everyday, until she retired. [She got Rocky Mountain tick disease] we think down there [at Overhills]. We're not sure. But she was very Yankee, very stoic, and didn't tell anybody and she got really really sick. One of

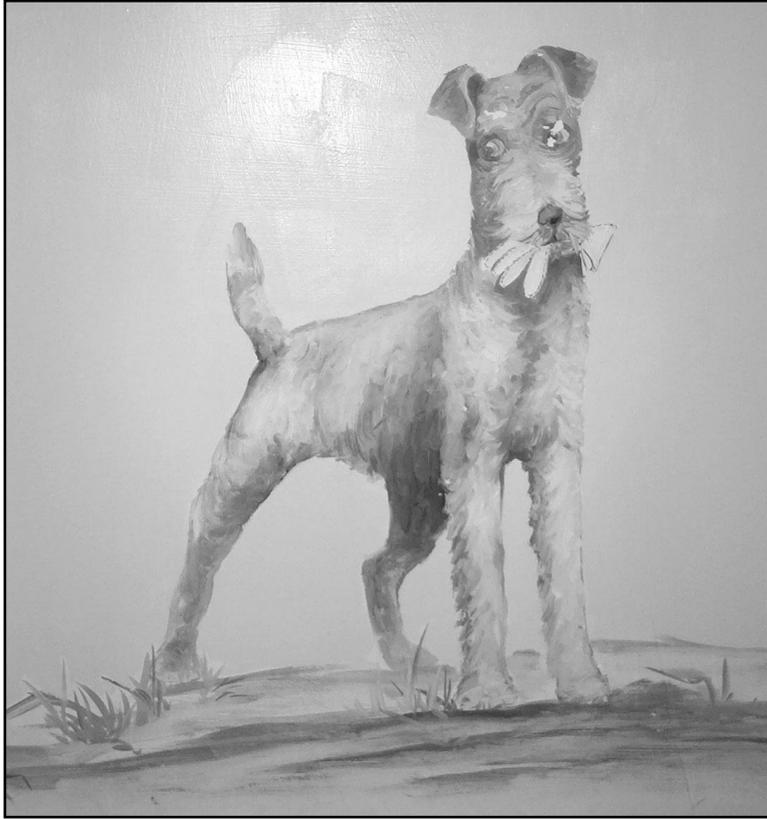


Figure 6.10: One of Miss Pete's dog paintings on the boys' bathroom wall at Croatan, third floor. Courtesy of Fort Bragg.

those things where she thought it was heat or something and then she was hospitalized, intravenous, antibiotics. She probably said she was sick and then she went home. She went home by herself on the plane and I guess one of her sisters met her or niece or whatever, and she could barely get off the plane and then she went directly to the hospital. She was very private.

Kim Elliman

Remember the foxing hounds at the top of what we call the runway between the back of Bird Song and the pool. We had a metal relief of a fox and hounds. It was actually wonderful. But the paint was rusting off. And my grandfather had arranged a scaffold and asked Miss Pete to repaint it and I think she fell off the scaffold and that was when people realized that it

was not just heat, but Rocky Mountain tick disease. She never finished. My cousin Lucia has the fox and hounds in her house in New Hampshire. You go up and three of the hounds are done and two are not and the fox is not. So it really was Miss Pete stopped working midway through a project and she just never recovered her health. And she was also at that point 80 years old.

Ann Elliman

But she kept on. Actually she saved my father's life in Greenwich. He was having a heart attack and my mother didn't hear it or understand it and she got the ambulance and got him to the hospital and saved his life.

Kim Elliman

In Sycamore [the motif] was also whimsical because there was this green furniture that came out of the Covert. You had these little salamanders creeping up the lake. You know this green lake. All of a sudden you see salamanders or you'll have a dog looking into what would become - you pull

out the drawer so you have the dog looking into the drawer. Just as you have the dog looking at you in the bathtub, right? Just amazing little and then she had fairies and the fox and the hound [in nooks and crannies of the house].

She also did a lot of work for National Audubon Society. My grandmother was on the board of National Audubon Society and before nature photography they did a lot of artwork. She worked with Roger Tory Peterson and others. They [prepared] an educational packet and she did the artwork for that.

Ann Elliman

My sister had always been frail and so we were sent up in the Adirondacks in the summers. And Miss Pete would go up there and sort of take over the household while my mother would be with my father in Greenwich and Miss Pete would organize the household. So I saw here a lot when I was young.

Kim Elliman

I actually think she liked the Adirondacks more than Overhills. I think Overhills she was stuck inside painting a lot. In the Adirondacks she really got to pursue her passion which was wildlife and wildflowers. [My grandfather would say, “Pete prefers collecting out of doors to finishing her art indoors.”]

Cookie Model

I remember Miss Pete growing up. She was always a part of my life. When my mother died Miss Pete went to work for Uncle Avery. [Miss Pete] painted. But I think for my mother, when she wasn't painting, she did Christmas and was sort of a little bit everything. She was a single woman. There were about three or four of them when I was a kid. But Miss Pete was the longest lived one and painted all of the bathrooms in my mother's house in Greenwich. And then we bought a house, my mother bought a house up in Cambridge, Massachusetts and she painted old Boston scenes in the dining room and painted all the bathrooms. But also organized my mother's basement where all of the Christmas presents for everybody were. My mother would start buying Christmas presents probably January or we'd travel or whatever. We bought in volumes. Miss Pete was always part of my life.

She could copy anything [in painting]. In Boston she had – you know on the wall you put a scene and then you paint it, so she wasn't a natural. She could copy anything, but not a free form artist. She would put a projector on the old Boston scenes. I think that we had a bathroom in Greenwich



Figure 6.11: An owl painted by Miss Pete on the girls' bathroom wall of Croatan. Courtesy of Fort Bragg.

that she did spring, winter, fall scenes. She didn't do birds for my mother. She did dogs and sort of spring, summer, fall, winter and more scenes in the bathrooms.

She worked for Uncle Avery, until probably Uncle Avery died. That would be my recollection. I think she outlived everybody. What would be interesting is- and I think, that's what I don't know and I should know, she had other family members that worked for my grandparents or that worked for my mother. They all lived in a little group in Greenwich.

Willie King

Willie King (1898 – 1971) worked at Overhills from the late 1920s through the 1960s, beginning as a dog cook in the kennels and eventually earning the position of stable manager. Willie, his wife Essie, and their children lived above the riding stables.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

I can remember for the children that were going to go horseback, Willie King, the one I was showing you who was the guy at the stable, he would take those horses out.¹⁵ He would ride one and just guide the other ones behind him just to walk them down before the children went on so they wouldn't be frisky. And that was his chore early in the morning when everybody was going to



Figure 6.12: Willie King at the Riding Stables, 1958. Courtesy of Ed Bruce, Jr.

come down and ride to have those horses conditioned, ready to for them. We'd always see them riding going up the road or through some trail at Overhills and doing that.

He got on me one time, I guess he had just had it all raked down with his rake and prettied up waiting for the guests to come into ride, I went down to see him and rode my bicycle through here, put those tracks all over. He said, gosh man I got to rake that all over again. He wanted to look good when they came down to go riding.

Bob Model

Willie King, he had glasses. He was tall. I'll bet he was six [feet]. He also always wore riding boots, high riding boots and breeches. And he was an interesting - I always enjoyed Willie. He had a son by the name of Ike, did you know that? And Ike worked - he was a school teacher, I think a principal for the school. Ike, I don't know. He was a lot older than I.

Mr. Bruce was in charge of cutting all the trails out and I think Marshall was the one who worked with Mr. Bruce.¹⁶ And Willie King also worked with Mr. Bruce cutting trails, don't forget that. Willie and that was probably - Marshall was older and Willie was quite a bit younger.

Florence Short

It's kind of hard to describe Willie King. He didn't say too much. I've got his saddle. Got to have a Willie King saddle. He would always ride in front of me. He would always have his hand hanging down looking to see you were alright. And as kids we used to play in the stable all the time, up in the hayracks. And sometimes Willie got a little mad at us. We made too much noise up there for the horses and one time we broke some eggs he was counting on. There were chickens roosting up there. We spent a lot of time at the stable jumping down from the hayloft and stuff like that. Willie would be there. Willie lived there. Somebody was always living in - I think there were two apartments there.

Dennis Washington

Mr. Willie: tall, dark, kind of hunched over, probably did it longer than he should have. He was a very old man in my mind when he left the stables, but he was a very gentle man. I can remember that. And like I said, we were kids and we would just go play around. We lived next to Bernice Morgan¹⁷ and if I was on my bike or if I was just walking somewhere and Miss Essie saw me, hey have you had this or that? This lady would just cook all day long. She would make cookies. You'd walk up. I just baked some cookies, do y'all want a cookie? Yes. So we'd go upstairs and go into her kitchen and she's got a whole counter of cookies. And she'd make cakes. That was her life. She was quite the cook. That was fun. But Mr. Willie was just - I remember him being tall. A tall slender man but a very gentle man. And his daughters, well his granddaughters were about my age. Willeatha and Cynthia were about five years older than me.

Thurman Washington

After Willie King retired, Thurman Washington took over the position of riding stable manager. He and his family moved into the apartment above the stables. Thurman and his wife Louise had two children, Dennis and Sheila, who grew up at Overhills. People remember Thurman's passion for Overhills, the horses, his laugh, and how sad he was to hear about the sale to the U.S. Army.

Jo Ann Locklear

And Mr. Thurman he was always in the horse stables, helping them to ride with the horses. He'd always take the families out. And he would help pick the family horses and stuff like that, which was suitable for which person. About fifty years. Because he said he left for the war, he left after he come out of World War II and started there. And he was real young, he left out of the war and came there. And he's the one that stayed at the horse stables when you walk in, the white and red horse stables.

Sandy Hemingway

And of course Thurman. Everybody wanted Thurman. He was about that tall [*indicating short height*]. Really hysterical. I think when Thurman died I think some of folks - I don't think anybody

had to be invited. Everybody loved Thurman. He was different. He had this laugh that was absolutely infectious.

Cookie Model

Thurman was a talker. Elmon probably wasn't as much of a talker, but everybody would always ask Elmon questions.¹⁸ That was the big thing. Thurman was incredible with the horses. I'll never forget, somebody was with me and somebody's horse acted up and somebody fell off. Thurman got on that horse and oh man, those horses did not misbehave for Thurman. And if they misbehaved

they came back to the stables and they would have to walk around.

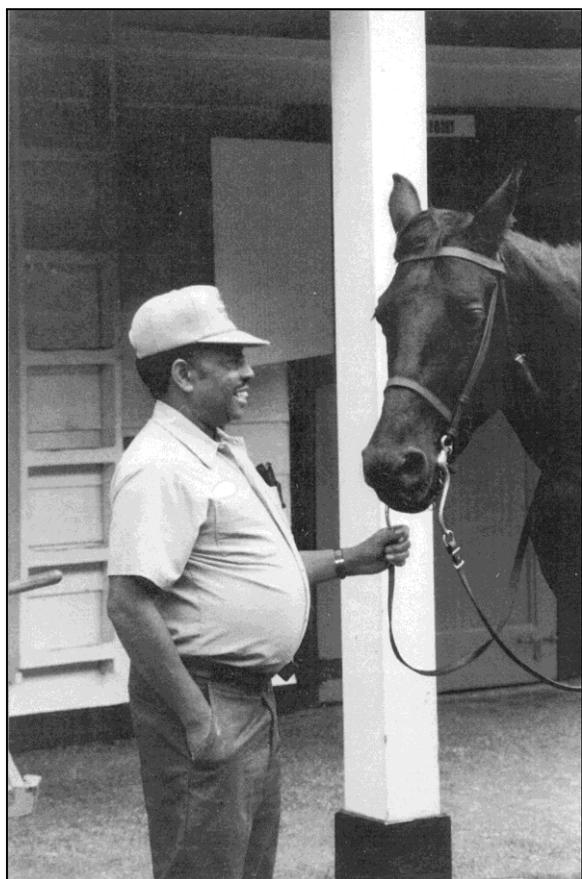


Figure 6.13: Thurman Washington at the Riding Stables, ca. 1980. Courtesy of Dennis Washington.

Glodean Robinson

When I see the stables I always think of Thurman. He died not too long after he found out they were selling Overhills. He had stayed there for a long time. He used to work, take care of the horses mostly. He loved Overhills. Thurman, he was a short man and had a funny laugh. He used to kill me when he laughed. He liked to laugh. And he was very devoted to the family and you could not go on Overhills if you didn't belong. He would know about it. He would watch out for the property as if it was his own. He cared very much about the place. He was very devoted to the family. Thurman married one of my cousins, Louise. She was a nice lady.

Dennis Washington

He was born in 1930 in Bladen County. July 9th. He was a graduate of Elizabethtown High School and he played drums in the marching bands. He had a brother named Douglas, a brother named Clayton, and a brother named Alfred.

My Pop was from Bladen County and my mom was from right here in Spring Lake. They met when he was in the Army. She would tell the story that he came to visit somebody else. I'm trying to remember how it was. She thought he was really cute and set out to meet Thurman. Of course we're short guys and her brothers used to tease him and call him "Shorty." And that name stuck. I think if you ask anybody here that you've talked to that knew anything about him, they knew him as Shorty. It was kind of cool.

He'd stand and look at something and say okay we can do this or we can do this like this. Give it some thought and the next day or so he's back at it again looking at it going okay. I think that's how he came to build the boardwalk at the lake. Just, hey, we can do this. And the things he did

over at the Croatan Pond, number eight pond. I remember for a long time it was just a lot of woods and growth around the edges of the lake. I'd like to go fishing over there but the brush was right up to the lake so there was always a concern about snakes and stuff. He went in there, got the guys to clear it all the way and put some boards around it and stuff and cleaned it up and you got a pretty nice area. Then you could go there and fish from the shore or row a little boat out, put the boat out on the lake, paddle out to the other side and fish areas that most people wouldn't dare thinking about trying to get to. I think his vision, he was such a visionary I think, made him special. And just the ability to say we can do something; we can do it better than this.

[On a typical day, he'd] get up, have his coffee and two sunny side up eggs and toast. Eight o'clock, seven forty-five, he'd leave the house and walk right across the pasture to the stables and I guess technically the stables were supposed to be open at eight o'clock. If he had rides that day, of course - I think one of his best rides or the person he enjoyed riding with most were probably Bob Model and Mr. Rockefeller, Mr. Avery Rockefeller. And he always took special attention when he was riding with Mr. Rockefeller. And then of course Mr. Avery's Rockefeller's son, Pat Rockefeller, later [became] one of his favorite rides. But those three guys, if Pop had to ride with them, he got pretty excited about it. He'd be home by noon for lunch, one o'clock he's back at it and five o'clock the day is done. It's like Paula said, he'd come home, wouldn't change clothes. He'd get in his truck and then he's out going to do something else. He'd be home about seven o'clock and eight o'clock he's ready to read the paper, sit down and relax for a while and the next thing you know he's ready to go to bed. But a typical day, six-thirty he was up and seven forty-five, he's got his boots on and he's ready to go work. Seven forty-five walk across the pasture and eight o'clock he was there and ready to go. If he had rides and knew he was going to ride with you, he always knew, say Mr. Avery Rockefeller always rode English. So he made sure that the saddles were polished. A lot of times we had to clean the tack. Once the horses were fed, just making sure the tack was all in working order and clean. The stables were always clean. The stables were immaculate, they really were. It was very clean, something that struck me about how meticulous he was about making sure how nice things were. And that was his life.

Paula Washington

He had an incredible laugh, one that you'll never forget. In fact, the AME Zion Church on Vass Road, the back of the church has an annex that is dedicated to Thurman. He was famous for the laugh, but I'll tell you it was also his facial expressions that I remember the most because he could just look at you and you'd know you needed to stop doing that. And you stopped. He was always in work clothes. Every time I remember him, he'd get up in the morning and put on a brown shirt. He was always in work clothes. He got up and he was ready to work. He was a real handyman. He was always busy, always out doing something. He couldn't stay in the house. He was always out on the property, working, fixing something. He never stopped.

Dennis Washington

My mom worked for the board of education and she was a cook in the schools. In the summers she would work part time but during the school year she was out of the house at six-thirty and was at work by seven o'clock. She was usually done by two-thirty, three o'clock. But she was also going to school at Fayetteville Tech and Fayetteville State. Every Monday I remember, Monday and

Thursdays, a lot of times my sister and I got home from school and my mom would leave work and go to school or go somewhere and study or get ready for her class on those nights. So she wouldn't get home until nine, nine-thirty. So she had a long long day. The other nights we'd get home from school and she was home cooking dinner. Most of the days, five o'clock, my Pop would walk in the house. [By] five-fifteen, five-thirty, we were all having dinner. It was some good times. Then Pop would eat and he's out again and he's in his truck, he's going somewhere else. I remember there were people in the church congregation a lot times who would have problems. My dryer doesn't work or this doesn't work and you know what, he'd say come on let's go. So I'd get in the truck and go ride with him. I'd say, here we go. Now I've got to go crawl under somebody's damn house. What's going on with and this. When he died there were people in that church that owed that man money but he never would hound them about payment. He said, that woman got no money. So we'd get back in truck, we'd go home and it was a done deal. Fixed whatever the problem was.

¹ "The Kent-Jordan-Lindley Enterprise in Harnett and Cumberland," *Fayetteville Observer*, August 30, 1911.

² Frederic W. Allen.

³ "Percy A. Rockefeller of New York and Harnett, Dead," *Harnett County News*, September 27, 1934.

⁴ The Holts were a tenant farming family who worked for Overhills and lived near the Nursery. They lived next to the Allgood family (Ella McPhail's family) and are listed on the Christmas lists from the late 1920s - early 1930s and traveled to the beach for a one of the vacations that Ella McPhail mentions in her interview.

⁵ Lauren Conger worked for the Rockefeller family from the 1920s - 1940s. Conger took care of the horses, handled their transportation to and from Overhills, and purchased new horses for Percy Rockefeller. He lived in Greenwich, CT. Transcript of oral history interview. Ann Elliman and Christopher Elliman. Interviewed by Jeffrey D. Irwin and Heather McDonald, August 29, 2006. Greenwich, CT. Overhills Oral History Project, on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources, Directorate of Public Works.

⁶ Betsy Bayliss worked for Avery and Anna Rockefeller when they lived in Bird Song. Transcript of oral history interview. Sandy Hemingway. Interviewed by Jeffrey D. Irwin and Kaitlin O'Shea, 9 February 2007, Southern Pines, NC. Overhills Oral History Project, on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

⁷ Arnold Bruce Strauch, "Narrative of Arnold Bruce Strauch," August 2007, unpublished, Overhills Document Collection.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Transcript of oral history interview, Dorothy Yantis. Interviewed by Jeffrey D. Irwin and Kaitlin O'Shea, 18-19 August 2007, Bonita, CA. Overhills Oral History Project, on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

¹⁰ Mr. Whitford was a good friend of the Cameron family and an Overhills employee.

¹¹ Dorothy Ferrell, "Personality of the Week (Atlas Simpson Davis, Sr.)," *Spring Lake Times*, June 30, 1966.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Transcript of oral history interview. Ann Elliman and Christopher Elliman. Interviewed by Jeffrey D. Irwin and Heather McDonald, August 29, 2006. Greenwich, CT. Overhills Oral History Project, on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

¹⁴ Type of fabric or painted ceramic.

¹⁵ Ed Bruce adds in his transcript: "For a pre-walk before riding."

¹⁶ Marshall McIver was an Overhills Hunt & Kennels employee in the 1920s and 1930s.

¹⁷ Bernice Morgan was a longtime Overhills employee. He and his family lived there from the 1950s until 1997.

¹⁸ Elmon Lucas was the manager of the farms for Overhills and husband to Carolyn Lucas.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LEISURE AND SPORT

Leisure and sport form the primary purpose of Overhills throughout its history. Unequivocally paramount from the 1900s through the 1930s was the sport of hunting, the passion of men who invested in and steered the development of the club. Early on the Overhills experience was often distinguished by guns, game, bird dogs, hounds, and horses. By the 1920s, guests were able to choose between activities other than hunting, including golf, horseback riding, polo, swimming, fishing, and tennis. Following the transition of Overhills from an exclusive club to a Rockefeller country estate, recreation continued to define the Overhills experience. The old sporting traditions of the club founders faded quickly. Polo disappeared after the Great Depression and fox hunting followed suit after Percy Rockefeller's death. In later decades, recreation blended with an air of relaxation and a more casual, informal pace. Golf was played with bare feet, birds were admired more than shot, and the old hunt kennels were abandoned. Horseback riding became the favorite as the horses and riding stables remained a focal point, enjoyed by the entire Rockefeller family and their guests.

Bird Hunting

Bird hunting was a serious affair at Overhills from the 1910s into the early 1930s. Quail and other birds were shipped to Overhills and¹ some birds were bred on the estate. Food fields or pea patches were planted and maintained and crop fields on tenant farms were relied upon as quail habitat. As many as 100 patches were added in one year,² with some 700 - 800 fields being planted in the 1920s. Predators were trapped and killed. Dozens



Figure 7.1: Hunt guide with bird dogs at Overhills, 1920s.
Courtesy of Louise Alabaster.

of pointers and setters were kept in the kennel. A superintendent kept track of hunting operations and ensured the dogs, guns, lodging, and birds were ready for the winter. A game book records some of the bird hunting activity from the winter of 1921 through the winter of 1932. Each entry lists the number of birds killed, coveys found, and guns carried. The names of guides and dogs are listed. Typically two or three guides provided most of the labor in a season. Some of the more prominent guides included Luther Jackson, Henry Lindsay, and William Bodenheimer.

By the 1940s, bird hunting declined significantly, becoming the practice of only a few individuals and less of a management priority for the estate. Few of the Rockefeller descendants shared a passion for the sport. The enduring estate superintendent W.B. Bruce kept the tradition alive, as did a few family members and employees.

Season	Cocks	Hens	Coveys	Guns
1921-22	219	154	193	137
1922-23	291	223	273	143
1923-24	224	187	228	115
1924-25	123	113	173	98
1925-26	146	112	274	107
1926-27	95	93	148	84
1927-28	208	201	323	251
1928-29	204	187	323	122
1929-30	270	187	360	136
1930-31	296	191	416	147
1931-32	116	74	193	122

Figure 7.2: Bird hunting activity from 1921-1932, as recorded in the Overhills Game Book. Overhills Objects Collection, Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

Andrew Jackson, Sr.

We moved to Overhills about 1918, 1917 or '18. My father was handling the bird dogs and he had about 30 or 40 bird dogs that they used to bird hunt on the estate, which two or 300,000 acres originally and there was 33,000 acres that Fort Bragg acquired when they built Fort Bragg. My father, he was born in Guilford County and I was born in Pleasant Garden at Kissel Lodge, which was a hunting lodge. I don't know who Mr. Kissel was but I think he was a New York man. He handled the dogs there for several years and then moved to near Salisbury to work for Mr. Craig. He had a hunting lodge and he was on the cotton exchange from Wall Street and stayed there several years. Then we bought a farm in Guilford County near Pores Knob and we moved up there. Then Daddy was contacted by Mr. James F. Jordan who was ex-sheriff of Guilford County and he had a lot to do with the many many hunting lodges that were located in Guilford County. When they built the railroads in this part of the country the people in New York could get on a train in the afternoon or at night and be down the next day in Guilford County or Randolph County. So they bought up homes and made hunting lodges and they had men to handle the dogs. Of course this was a year round thing, which was very good for the county. And they rented land to hunt on for ten cents an acre, which would pay their taxes, the county taxes. So it was a benefit to the local people because the land that they rented and bought from them and they built the lodges and they had to have people to handle the dogs and take care of the lodge. Daddy had been into that type thing for a number of years and he was a friend of the sheriff and I think he was the one that contacted Daddy because he was the one that organized the Overhills property. Originally he had a hunting lodge at Manchester called Buckthorne Lodge, but this was mostly Guilford County people. Mr. Jordan loved to hunt. He was a good shot. He loved to bird hunt. He loved to turkey hunt, fish. They had several ponds and kept them stocked and they would come in the spring and go fishing from up in Greensboro. Evidently some of the Rockefellers got acquainted or the Harrimans, I don't know which, got acquainted with Mr. Jordan and helped him to

acquire and put it all together and they called it Overhills. It was out in the woods on the railroad. We were living in Wilkes County so we moved down to Overhills for one summer and then the next summer we took the dogs up to Pores Knob and kept the dogs during the summer and then we went back to Overhills.

[Our house] was already built. See there was a fellow by the name of Palmer that came from Greensboro to handle the dogs to start off with. And I don't know what happened to Mr. Palmer. He didn't pan out and he moved to Fayetteville. That's when Mr. Jordan got in touch with Daddy and asked Daddy to come down there.

Oh, nothing but first class dogs. They had pedigree dogs. They didn't mess with - they bought the best of dogs they could find and if they didn't pan out they would trade them or sell them or give them away and get another one. My daddy always said it took 50 dogs to get one good dog, one who is a good retriever and one that will back the dogs that are hunting with them. Now fox hunting you can take 25 or 50 and you get on the horse and you can stay out there as long as. That horse, he's not cheap: the saddles and the clothes they wear and the boots and all the first class stuff that's English style. It's a very expensive sport. But in bird hunting, to be safe, you can only use two men hunting at one time. Sometimes they would take three and there'd be one in the middle, but you'd want to know who he was. It's too dangerous to have - it took a lot of people to run a hunt club and they couldn't bring many guests to bird hunt. They always took about six or eight dogs extra and you had to have a wagon a truck. And most of the time they ate lunch out there and someone would come and bring them a basket full of food or my daddy would cook dinner for them.

Here's the idea: A setter, to me, is a beautiful dog because of its long hair. A pointer has short hair but the reason for that is if they hunt in old fields with lots of huckleberries they put down short hair dogs, they put a pointer down. That's a beautiful sight when a dog points a covey of birds.

Usually two dogs at a time, sometimes you can get three or four, but usually it's two dogs at a time. The other dog when he sees the first dog point, he stops. He honors that and then they don't move. They stay just like stone. They look like a painting right there, until the huntsman walks up behind them and flushes the covey. A good dog will not run after them, he will stay right there. Of course



Figure 7.3: Bird dogs in wiregrass at Overhills, ca. 1920.
Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

you want to shoot and then you've got to go and pick them up and retrieve them and he has to have a good mouth, an easy mouth, because they don't want them messed up, chewed up. A really good bird dog is a rare animal. It's a beautiful sight to see them hunting together.

The [lodge] probably had some spare [guns], but most of those fellows had English made guns or Belgian made guns. They were special made guns that cost up in the thousands of dollars, even then. They didn't use cheap guns. They were all made to order, more or less. Most of them shot 12's, some of them shot 16's, but most of them shot 12's. Some of the good hunters would maybe use a 20. [My son] Jimmy has a double barrel, 20 gauge fox gun. It was made for Mrs. Harriman. It was made special for her, a ladies gun. And it was something about that stock that a young boy, maybe 10 or 12, could bring it to his shoulder. Maybe it was shorter or had a little more drop or something to it. She gave that gun to Mr. Blagden and they broke the stock on it and Mr. Blagden gave the gun to Daddy. So after we came, I finally got the gun. Daddy gave the gun to me for the boys to hunt. We sent it back to the factory and it took a year to get it back and they put a new stock on it. We still have that one right on it. That's a rare gun.

Mr. Blagden and Mr. Harriman, they invited the Shaws to come and they hunted with them a little bit, but not much. They didn't care too much about deer hunting. Daddy took them turkey hunting. They liked to turkey hunt. The best turkey hunting was over in the Fort Bragg area. There used to be a lot of turkeys. That was on the side of the river of Fort Bragg. They had some special dogs for turkeys. That was a different dog. They didn't use those for quail shooting because your turkey hunting is a little bit different from quail shooting.

Bob Model

I remember seeing turkeys quail hunting. And that's another thing I did in those early years. As soon as I could pick up a shotgun I couldn't wait to go with Mr. Bruce, he always - after my Uncle [Avery] stopped quail hunting, Mr. Bruce always kept some good dogs. So I never had the wonderful benefit of shooting before the war. And probably somebody has told you that we had Winfred and Roby, the dog handlers. I never went fox hunting at Overhills; that was finished, obviously by the time I came along. But Mr. Bruce taught me all I knew about hunting. I hunted with him from the time I could, from the time I was allowed to carry a gun. And anyway we had a little trap out there at the old polo field. We had clay pigeons that just went straight out there. We got out there and that's where I learned how to shoot. I can't remember what year that that trap was put in but obviously it had to be in '50s.

Bird hunting, that's the only hunting [during my days at Overhills]. There were no deer, literally no deer. From time to time we'd see a turkey but there weren't many turkeys, not like there are today. And we would hunt in the afternoon and that's when I really defined what my activities at Overhills were. In the morning we'd ride. In the afternoon, we didn't hunt everyday, but we'd hunt from two o'clock in the afternoon until dark. And, well

actually when I was first down there we would go out every day and Mr. Bruce would know exactly where the coveys would be and we'd hit a few coveys on foot, not on horseback. And then later on as I spent more time down there we'd hunt Wednesdays and Saturdays. Can you hunt in North Carolina on a Sunday now? In the old days you couldn't. There's no hunting for anything on Sunday, but that goes back to - I can remember, hell, there were no bars in North Carolina. I had to brown bag it or you had to find a still.

All wild birds. And as I was mentioning, you see we had tenant farmers and primarily growing tobacco. I think the tobacco allotment we had was about 60 acres in the early days, is my recollection. And the tenant farmers would always grow other crops: corn, soybeans after a while and there was some wheat that was grown. But my point is that they were farms. My recollection was that we had wonderful bird hunting. The coveys would be at the same place year after year after year. You'd go from one of these little farms that were part of the greater Overhills and you'd find those coveys year after year so we knew exactly where the coveys were and we'd go to them and we'd hunt those coveys and we'd put up probably four coveys in the afternoon, typically, sometimes six, sometimes seven. And again we'd only take - the covey was between 15 and 20 birds, we'd take it down to six birds. And that was a good management tool. Not below six, eight maybe might have been the optimum. But the point was that there were enough coveys that you could hunt year round, I mean during the season, and not over hunt. And of course going back to, I'm assuming going back to the years when there really was massive hunting there. And again that land behind Overhills was all farms too. It always belonged to Overhills. When it became the pulp land we could still go out there and hunt and you'd go to the McRae farm or one of the other old places, Dobbins Farm. You'd find a covey of quail around the old fields that had grown up but those coveys still survived. There was always lespedeza that had been planted to help hold them. And we had good dogs. We always had a pointer and a setter. And that goes back to the days of Winfred and Roby. The setter worked in close, was a good retriever, and the pointer worked out further and there were leftover dogs from when there were, I mean I don't know how many pairs they had - 30 or so. We had all the hunting they needed.



Figure 7.4: Hunters at Overhills, likely employees, after turkey hunting, ca. 1920. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

We'd always have enough [quail] so we'd have a good meal and that was fun. And I'll never forget, Mrs. Bruce used to come along walking and she'd be plucking the quail as we were - she'd walk with us but she'd be plucking them. That's how I learned to care for the dogs and care for the birds. The birds that went back to Maggie were all plucked and clean.

Oh yea, well we used to hunt [with the staff]. Once the deer population came back we used to hunt deer. Those were good days but that was in the later years towards the end of Overhills. I always felt very much connected to all of the locals and felt that that was always



Figure 7.5: A dog handler at Overhills, ca. 1920. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

such an important part of the history of Overhills so I tried to do that to bring those people together. That was fun. We used to have some hellacious good times. But the quail hunting was gone. If there was any quail hunting at Overhills in the later years, you almost had to buy the birds and bring them in, put and take because the birds just disappear. If you were to ask me why, when I saw it happen, once the state of North Carolina encouraged forestry and planting out those fields and there was an economic benefit to do that, I can remember once these trees were established, you'd go to a place that there had been quail and you still had the cover to some extent and you lost that as soon as the trees got big enough. Then you got a canopy cover and the under story would be gone. And you had water but you didn't have cover and you needed cover, then feed and water. I'd go back time and again to places where there always were coveys and because of the change in which way the land was managed, the quail were no

longer there. In the old days you could go to the one of the old tenant farms whether it was Dan Cameron's place. I always remember Dan's. I could take you right there. That was right on the Lower Little River. There were a number of different places there where you could always find. Then you'd go over to the Townsend Farm and there were always places there where there would be quail. And again there was always farming activities and at the Nursery there were a number of different opportunities there. Then we had over by the buildings the remnants of the managed quail hunting. You had the feed and you still had some fields and places where people who worked on the place had gardens. And then of course everybody managed the raptors in those days, managed the ground predators so you didn't have the competition. I don't think the ground predators are a problem. The raptors I think you have a situation especially with Cooper's hawk.

Katherine Stilwell

And my dad worked with the hunting part, the dogs and preparing patches for the birds and that sort of thing. He decided where the area they could be planted. I learned a lot about bird life with my father. He would take me out to the bird patches and we watched for the birds who came there, quite often the bobwhite or the quail. They hunted quite a bit. Quail on toast was quite a thing. And quite often we would sit just very quietly and wait for the mother quail who led us away from the baby from the nest. I've often seen her pretend that she was hurt and scuttle away from where we were and safeguard the babies. So it was an interesting thing. The doves, I hate them with a passion. They drive all of the song birds away. These were for doves because they hunted doves. My dad took me and we watched the quail. They hunted quail too, but generally in later years dove, dove hunting, quail hunting. They raised pheasants too because I've seen them feed with my mother's chickens.

[My dad prepared the bird patches] with a team of mules. We had a barn. Of course he had those that he did – we had wonderful gardens all over the place. He would prepare a corn patch here and a corn patch there, you know it comes in at intervals. He did that.

Ronny Holmes

[We hunted]: bird hunted, quail hunted some with them. We had the bird dogs and so we got to quail hunt, they always would be quail hunters, but that was sort of at the end of the quail era, but there was lots and lots of birds.

[The dogs lived in kennel below our house]. I took care of the dogs. My uncle Bruce took care of them, Mr. Bruce took care of them for years and years. And then we sort of took it over from him. He taught me how to hunt and where to go and all that kind of stuff so I sort of inherited it from him.

[Quail were wild and] plentiful in the '50s and '60s. [In the] '70s it played out. You can look over at Fort Bragg and see how the quail declined on the base over there and it did the same thing over here. [Food fields were maintained some]. There were lots of them from way back and then they sort of played out over the years. Nothing but farming. All the farm fields had soybeans in them, so a lot of quail around the farming operation.

There was fox hunting early on but that was way before my time so I don't know when the fox hunting quit. And then always quail hunting stayed popular, but as it declined so did the interest probably. And there was some interest one time in revamping and trying experimental things trying to figure out what went wrong, wasn't anything anybody did wrong but just a general decline in birds. And then at the end there was some interest in deer hunting. From some of the family there was some interest in deer hunting. We had some nice deer hunts with the family, different members of the family.

[In quail hunting] the dogs would point the quail. In other words their job was to find – you'd walk out wherever you were walking and they're trained so if they smell the birds

they just stop and point and you walk up and flush, make the birds get up and then shoot. And then the dogs retrieve the birds. That's ideally how it works. You just walk behind the dogs basically. If you were gonna hunt, if all this was a field you'd hunt around the field edges or whatever and the dogs would work and if they found birds they did and if they didn't you'd pick up and go to the next one. [We kept] pointers and setters, English pointers and setters.

Freeman Tyler

What we would do, there's a gentleman up here towards Cameron that raised quail and we would go up if, say if Bob was coming in and he wanted to go quail hunting, he'd tell us about how many he wanted to put out and we'd go buy that many and then we'd go out the day before or a couple days before and we'd release them in the wild. Those tame birds, they wouldn't go very far. They'd stay right about where you put them out. We'd take them out and Ronny Holmes, he'd bring his dogs or there was another gentleman down in Fayetteville that had dogs and he'd come out. We'd take them out hunting and we'd go out and shoot birds, hunt birds up. Some of them you'd have to kick them just to get them to fly. Once in a while we'd get into a covey of wild birds and they'd have a bit more action. But most of the time we bought pen-raised birds and drop them out there for them. And some of the young guys, Mr. Elliman, he loved it. He loved to bird hunt. And Bob and a couple of Cookie's boys liked to bird hunt, too. Even Cookie would go out once in a while with us to hunt.

Fox Hunting

Greensboro men and northern capitalists chased foxes through Overhills as early as the 1900s. By the 1920s one of the wealthiest men to invest in the Sandhills had built a fox hunting operation at Overhills. The estate expanded to 40,000 acres, ample room to run to hounds. Joseph B. Thomas, one of the finest huntsmen and hound breeders in the nation, came to hunt throughout the 1920s.

Despite the quality of the chase, the sport did not last long at Overhills. Thomas stopped coming to Overhills by 1930 and with Rockefeller's death in 1934 fox hunting soon ceased. For decades thereafter the imprint of fox hunting lingered on the landscape and some of the artifacts of the era lurked in hidden spaces. As Bruce Strauch notes, "In my childhood, [those] coats lay in cedar chests, boots and trees and whips moldering in the back of walk-in closets like forgotten memories."³

Andrew Jackson, Sr.

They had fox hunting and one time they had two packs of dogs, 100 dogs in each pack, and they had an English bunch of hound dogs - all the same, all the same size. They didn't know much about our foxes here and about all they'd chase would be the cats. They'd chase cats all over everywhere. And in the meantime they had brought in a lot of red foxes, they wanted red foxes. So they imported foxes. They built pens around on the estate and they'd bring those foxes there and they'd put them those pens. Then they went and bought a lot of plug horses and mules. And they'd keep them in there and kill one once in a while

and chop them up and take them up and put them in the pens for the foxes to eat. There was a lot going on.

They carried the horses and the fox hounds, they left Overhills in the spring and they went up to Virginia.

Rudolph Singleton, Jr.

Dad secured a job with Mr. Percy Rockefeller who was a primary owner of the Rockefeller Estate here in Cumberland County, North Carolina. We moved - that is my mother and my father and I - by way of a 1930 Hudson automobile packed full up to the back of the front seat from Kentucky down to Overhills, which actually is across the line in Harnett County early in 1933. And we lived at Overhills from 1933 to 1935. Daddy was



Figure 7.6: A fox hunting group crosses the railroad tracks at Overhills, ca. 1925. Courtesy of Louise Alabaster.

designated as the Master of Hounds, which meant that he was in charge of Percy Rockefeller's fox hunting organization. And as best as I recall from talking with my father, they always had at least eight thoroughbred horses and probably up to as many as 12 which were designated for fox hunting and they had a pack of fox hounds. I believe they were Walker Fox Hounds, which is a very fine purebred breed of fox hounds. And I believe there were 64 of them. We lived in a two story brick rectangular building with stables extending on each side which gave the building a 'U' shape formation and I believe there were probably about six horse stalls on each side which would give facilities for about 12 horses. And then there was a courtyard in between the horse stalls and in the rear of the house. There was another similar type stable also on Overhills.

Daddy concluded his 1935 year at Overhills with I believe 25 fox hunts and according to him they got 23 foxes out of those 25 hunts. This is pretty impressive since you only got one fox per hunt at the most. Everything was provided by Mr. Rockefeller. My father's hunting clothes came from Brooks Brothers and they were the English pink coats and the light riding britches. The fox hounds notwithstanding the fact that it was a depression were treated extremely well. They were fed hot food out of copper, cooked in copper kettles and their health was well looked after, as well as that of the horses. The tack, the bridles, the saddles were of course of the finest English leather. There was also a farming operation that I was not so personally acquainted with, but it was there. Unfortunately sometime

during 1935 Mr. Percy Rockefeller had the misfortune to die. And this was not good news either for the Rockefellers or for the Singleton family. The decision was that there would no longer be fox hunting at Overhills and Dad would not have a job at Overhills.

He was the Master of Hounds and that's the number one fox hunter. You had assistants who were called "whipper-ins." Dad, in Kentucky, was an assistant. When he came to Overhills he ran the fox hunting show and I feel certain that he had a couple of assistants; but I don't know the details of it. One person would have a very difficult time leading a

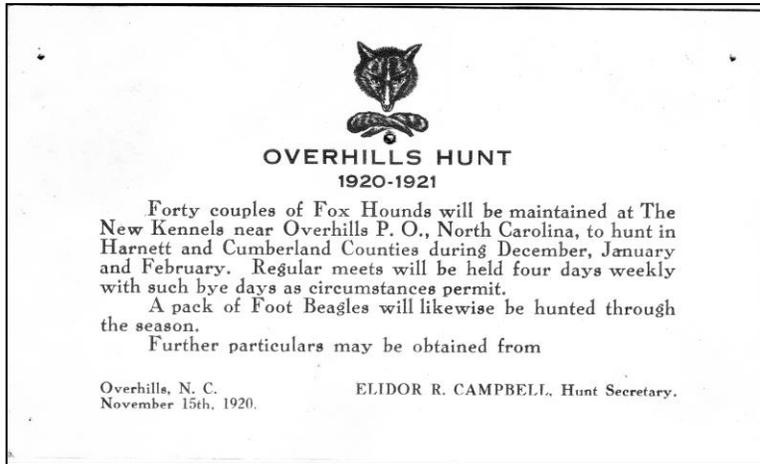


Figure 7.7: An Overhills Hunt card, 1920. Courtesy of the National Sporting Library Archives.

fox hunt with 64 fox hounds, eight thoroughbred horses, and eight riders probably half of whom were probably mediocre riders. And the purpose of the fox hunt, the Master of Hounds, would be to professionally lead the hunt, ride with the hounds, through the terrain, jump fences, jump small walls, ford creeks, even at some point maybe to swim a river to keep up with the hounds where the

guests would probably do something less strenuous on it. To do that you needed somebody to also help keep control of the fox hounds and they were called the "whipper-ins." They actually would have whips and they would snap them rather than beat the dogs to keep them in a pack. And a fox, once the hounds would catch the scent of the fox they would then chase the fox. What made it such a sport is that the fox is a very clever animal and the fox would double back, the fox would run on stone walls, the fox would even go into water if necessary and at least half the time the fox would win. When the hounds won they would of course kill and devour the fox, but it was the old English sport of fox hunting and a very colorful thing.

I did not [go on a fox hunt]. Dad got out of when he was 35. I learned to ride decently well but fox hunting is virtually obsolete unless you have a huge piece of land because highways present a huge problem. It's death to the animals that cross, if traffic is coming. They present a hazard and it's just not conducive to fox hunting to have an area of land that is criss-crossed with highways. The Pinehurst area still has some fox hunting on controlled large tracts of land.

There were two stables. I didn't exactly live above it. They were the stables connected to the house and that formed a 'U' shape figure. It would be like a good size two story brick house with wings which consisted of stables and courtyard between those stables. And as

you go into Overhills, from Fayetteville there's a home now almost in the woods which is the closest to Fort Bragg, it's the easternmost building. We lived in that one. The one that's most visible, that's over near the railroad tracks is the one I did not live in.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

I remember an old story that some of the horses from Overhills they would take up north for the summer. Overhills had a horse van that would haul six horses that you had to pull by a truck, like a tractor trailer. And they would take them up [north], I know they would take them up like one time near my father's home place which is around Sperryville, Virginia, somewhere around that area up in there and they'd



Figure 7.8: Roby Dorsett on horseback during a hunt at Overhills, ca. 1935. Courtesy of Ann Elliman.

keep them in the summertime. Well Mr. Singleton had been in the horse business. I think he was out in Kentucky for a while and then he would stop by [Overhills]. My father knew him then. Daddy would stay in a room upstairs, another one of the rooms upstairs just as a visitor while he was there and then be in and out at times. I don't know the whole story on that but I have heard Daddy say he'd be by for a while, got to know him at that time.

Florence Short

There were always stories of things about the railroad and the railroad tracks, and the fox that walked down the railroad track so the dogs couldn't smell him and he'd walk on top of the tracks. There were a lot of stories of fox hunting days, which I never saw. But my father started to write a book about all of the funny things that happened. Each chapter would be some fox hunting escapade. And he wrote it, I think it was a legal yellow pad and I think my sister Percy has that and I have asked her dozens of time. I said Percy if you send that to me I will type it up. I don't know. She doesn't type. I could do that, I've offered many times. So now I don't know where that is.

I liked going riding with my father. That was a big thing. He was always saying, this is where there was the crossing of the swamp for the fox hunting and this is where such and such horse got in the quick sand. And then they put a plank under the horses head and tried to retrieve it from the quick sand. So they were always pointing out features of what and then stories of people like my Uncle Stapley who people called Shapely Stapley.⁴ And didn't realize that horses always like to go back to the barn. So as soon as they'd take him

out for the start of the fox hunt and then follow something and then the dogs ran the other way. Of course they'd go by the barn again. Shapely Stately goes whoosh back into the barn. There's many stories of that. There were a bunch of photographs too. I wish I had taken those. They were just black and white photographs stuck in a drawer in the living room and they weren't labeled or anything, but there [were] the dogs, the special dogs that came from England. Just odds and ends, a lot you couldn't identify.

Isabel Elmer

I can remember fox hunting when I was young. I remember I'd go down with my grandmother and we'd watch them all go off early in the morning, which was kind of exciting. So that would have been, well the early '30s. And as you know my grandmother built her house in '29 for the grandchildren and then my grandfather had the Covert for his friends, fox hunting friends. And then behind the Covert was Mr. Alabaster's house. He was the butler or something like that. And the inn was there. The inn was there and going when I was a small child with lots of people there



Figure 7.9: Roby Dorsett at the Overhills Hunt kennels with the hounds, ca. 1935. Courtesy of Ann Elliman.

And we would go with my grandmother - she would take us quite often down to where they had the stables and the dog kennels for the fox hunt. We'd watch them getting fed. That was a big activity, watching the dogs getting fed. That was very exciting. I remember that. We would go down. My grandmother would bring me down to the stables and we would see them go off.

It was very exciting. The horses were jumping around and the dogs were jumping around and then one of things I hated, I just hated: when they got the fox they'd blow a horn, some sort of a horn. I hated to hear that. I hated the idea of fox hunting. I didn't like that.

Katherine Stilwell

[The fox hunters] would go right through our yard quite frequently. We just took it for granted. They wore their red coats and their riding pants. The hunter's horn, you could hear that in the distance and then sometimes you could hear the fox. Or you'd hear the dogs when they got him. And I always thought that was terrible. And my father was not a huntsman. He didn't like to see animals hurt and I didn't either. But they [the hunters] enjoyed it and it was a wonderful sport I suppose. Those were the days.

Ann Elliman

[To Kim Elliman] You remember the story about Percy stopping off at Overhills to collect your grandfather at Jekyll Island. [He] came back and stopped at Overhills and heard it was marvelous. Marvelous fox hunting land and said that was when he changed his interests from Jekyll Island where his father went to Overhills [a few years later]. My father I think had the measles or something, was left at Jekyll Island, my grandfather went to pick him up and brought him back and on the way back he was told that this was marvelous fox hunting.

My grandfather just loved to ride and they would ride, they would constantly have fox hunts there. And then if they were finished in the early afternoon he'd go out again, this is according to Mr. Bruce, and ride till late afternoon. My brother and I went on several fox hunts but not the fancy ones, just the ones that were pick-up there. And it was a big thing because we were, I think, the only grandchildren who were [allowed]. [We] thought we were good enough riders to be on these rides, on the fox hunts. Very exciting, we'd have something to eat before we went down and we'd go down to the stable. All these riders and the hounds and the bayne of the hounds and the horses all mixed up and jumbled around. It was very very exciting.

Golf

The Overhills golf course was designed by a master architect and was likely intended to be a central part of the town of Pinewild or an offering for guests of the Vanderbilt Inn. As the estate evolved however, golf seems to have taken a backseat to hunting and polo during the glory days of the 1920s. During that time, the course might receive daily play in the winter, though a full-round and scores anywhere near par were not necessarily common. In later years the course remained private with restricted exposure and limited play. Golf at Overhills showed little resemblance to the formal sporting affair where etiquette, carefully scheduled tee times, and intense competition might characterize a round of eighteen holes. Instead, at Overhills golf would often be a highly informal event.

The golf course was always an integral component of the Overhills landscape, a kind of picturesque, manicured park for casual play and sunset viewing. For children the course became a rambling playground with broad stretches of open space, clear slopes for speedy descents, and bunkers sufficient for re-enacting historic battles. For adults the course offered a vista and backdrop of tranquil beauty framed by the surrounding pine forest.

Employees at Overhills enjoyed the golf course as much as the family. As far back as the 1920s, Overhills employees held the only known tournaments at Overhills. In these staff tournaments, scratch golfers joined those with sizeable handicaps. Loving cup trophies in at least two years went to the son of Percy Rockefeller's valet. Young Bert Alabaster, referred to in a local newspaper as the "Overhills ace," was a skilled, frequent player. Over the years, though the tournaments would disappear, employees and Rockefellers would continue to enjoy the course.



Figure 7.10: A few surviving photographs from the 1920s reveal some well-dressed parties enjoying the course. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

Kim Elliman

A lot of us played golf in bare feet and so you had to be careful when you went into some of the bottoms to retrieve the balls, make sure there were no snakes lying there. I actually loved bare feet. It saved you a lot of money not buying golf shoes. You actually could get a much better grip than any other surface with the exception of golf shoes.

We all walked. [When] we were younger, typically four or five of us would go out playing golf. My two brothers, my cousin Avery Rockefeller and often Mary Rockefeller would go out, and sometimes their sister Lucia Rockefeller. Their mother, Lucia Rockefeller, Pat's wife, was national amateur champion golf player. And we were always together. We went to the same school, were all a year apart. So the six of us would often go as a mass. Aunt Lucia would all take us for golf lessons during the year on Wednesday afternoon after school. Of course at Overhills we'd try to show off everything that we learned during the year and you

know the number of shanks and divots was appalling; but yes, but they didn't trust us, this gang of teenagers or pre-teenagers with golf carts. And there weren't that many at the time. You know the next generation was spoiled. And so we always walked it.

Most of the time we'd play nine [holes]. Sometimes we'd play 18. And sometimes we'd play nine in the morning, but typically what it was is we'd go riding in the morning after breakfast and given the day or whatever we'd either play some golf or not, but typically we didn't play golf until after lunch and then it just depended upon our stamina. And frankly the lure of tea and cookies was greater than playing golf and so depending upon where we were towards four o'clock? But you know the nice thing about having your own golf course is it didn't much matter if you played seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12 holes.

[The golf course] was a backdrop; it was everyone's view shed. And my grandmother took loving care of the planting both with the dogwood and other flowering plants and trees. So if you could imagine the sequence of it: you had daffodils, you had dogwoods, you had azaleas, and the budding really flowers were really focused on March 15 for six weeks and the end of April, which was when there was the heaviest use. And it really was sort of just

gorgeous. It was a kid's paradise to play in, but it was just gorgeous. Golfing was something, I'd say, if we were there two weeks, we'd probably played 10-12 rounds of golf. Wasn't necessarily something we did everyday. Clearly the weather factored in. So it wasn't a passion, but it was an interest.

Florence Short

I never played golf except with my friend Janet. Janet came in later years too. We had a game and it was called "Oat-n-goating." And we could only legally get on the fairway if our ball bounced on a tree. And that's how we played golf. We could never go more than four holes because we'd lose too many golf balls. The game was played in the rough for sure. We started out seriously but we played our own game.

You know when I'd take friends down there was usually somebody that loved the golf course. And in earlier years, if you came earlier in the spring it would all be kind of purple with bluets would grow. So you'd arrive and it would just be purple. So yea, we liked the golf course.

Bob Model

Everybody walked on [the golf course]. I can remember in the early days, my aunt and uncle, Uncle Avery, they used to go up to number five, get up on top there and have tea. You'd have tea out there in the afternoon. In that generation everybody had tea in the afternoon. But anyway they had tea out there. They'd go out there and watch the sunset. My aunt got very interested in birds so they'd go out there and they'd - and I remember, I'd walk out there and have tea with them. And they still played golf and then he gave up golf and she gave up golf and that was in the '50s and I don't know why he gave up golf. I don't know whether he had a bad shoulder or whatever, but anyway he gave up golf. And then Pat was very interested in golf, his wife was a golfer, and golf became popular. My father was a golfer and he used to go over to Pinehurst to play golf. In those days you could hardly get on the course over there. He always played No. 2 [Pinehurst]. I remember that. He played at Overhills, but he had friends over there and much more of a competitive type golfer. I can remember the early '50s, it was kind of a hike over there, we'd go down to Vass Road and then you'd take a left down on Young's Road.

OVERHILLS COUNTRY CLUB			
GOLF COURSE			
No 1 -	450.7 YARDS	PAR. 5	BOGY 5
" 2 -	375.4 "	" 4	" 5
" 3 -	207.7 "	" 4	" 4
" 4 -	509.3 "	" 5	" 6
" 5 -	171.6 "	" 3	" 3
" 6 -	417.9 "	" 4	" 5
" 7 -	384.0 "	" 4	" 5
" 8 -	360.5 "	" 4	" 4
" 9 -	156.5	" 3	" 3
	<u>3033.6</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>40</u>
No 10 -	422.7 YARDS	PAR. 4	BOGY 5
" 11 -	510.5 "	" 5	" 6
" 12 -	411.2 "	" 4	" 5
" 13 -	337.7 "	" 4	" 4
" 14 -	146.3 "	" 4	" 4
" 15 -	585.9 "	" 5	" 6
" 16 -	395.1 "	" 4	" 5
" 17 -	371.2 "	" 4	" 5
" 18 -	330.4	" 4	" 4
	<u>3511.0</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>44</u>
PAR FOR 18 HOLES = 74			
BOGY " 18 " = 84			

Figure 7.11: A late 1910s Overhills Country Club listing for the yardage, PAR, and BOGY scores. Overhills Document Collection, North Carolina State Archives.

The front nine was magnificent and I can remember playing. To my recollection there was only one hole-in-one on the ninth hole. And in those days they were sand greens. Were you aware of that? I guess you were, of course. And those were sand greens. So I can remember when there were sand greens. And I can remember when we moved away from the sand greens. Lotes ran the golf course and did a wonderful job. I can't remember when we started trying to recreate the second nine. I don't know the layout today as opposed to when it was first - because during the war they let the second nine [get overgrown].

In my view, the front nine was the old fashioned part of the course and the back nine was trying to modernize what Donald Ross had done. Probably from a historical perspective, had they kept the sand greens and had they kept the whole course as a complete original Donald Ross course, that would be something I think that would be very unique. And interestingly I doubt we would have ever put in, had Pat not been really interested in golf, I doubt we would have converted because there would have been no need to have done that. But Pat's wife was a golfer and they had friends who came down and golfed. And people were used to country club golf so we tried to make the course a compromise. But it was a family course and it was never anything but that. It never got used very much and so



Figure 7.12: Overhills Golf Course, ca. 1920. View from Hole #3, Hole #2 is to the right and Hole #4 is to the left. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

consequently we really didn't - it was whatever you did for the greens and whatever you did was fine, I think. It was never considered to be anything other than just a place for the family to get out there anytime they wanted to. To my knowledge it never really got used that heavily. But in the retrospect scope, it really is too bad that it wasn't kept as an example. Today that would mean something. Thirty years ago it didn't mean that much.

And the other thing is: you probably noticed that on the golf course with the exception of a couple on the front nine, I'm trying to think which ones, you're always hitting into a hill. I don't know if you noticed that. But you're hitting into a hill. Number six you still you were hitting into a hill. That was that lovely course. Number seven you didn't hit into a hill. Three, was a par 3 and you hit into a hill. And four was par 5 and there was a small hill. Five there was a par 3 and you hit up into a hill. Six was that beautiful one that you hit off but it was always into a hill. Seven wasn't into a hill. Eight was into a hill. And nine they made it into a par 3 but it should have been a par 4 and it was down in a hole and

you'd have been hitting into a hill. But a big drive in those days was a 180-200 yards. Now people are hitting 300 yards, 400 yards, whatever it is. That's the difference.

Dennis Washington

I have a favorite place out on the number five hole out on the golf course. It is the highest place on that golf course and you can see the number six hole and you can see to the left of you, they have a tremendous view. That was one of my favorite places. I would go out there and I would just sit right out there and there's a little gazebo right off from the tee and just sit there and just go wow. And listen to the birds and just look around you; even in the winter it was one of my favorite places.

My mom's pop had worked at Overhills way back when they were building, when they were constructing the golf course. No it's not. Her grandpop had worked there, okay, when that golf course was under construction. You can imagine building a golf course without bulldozers, without chain saws and the things that we use today. But she would tell stories about how hard the work was to get it to the point where they could play golf there. I think the original greens were sand, not grass.

William Hanson

I would say if we weren't going down to [the stables], the majority of our play time was on the golf [course]. We may just throw in some golf clubs and a couple of golf balls in the back and we may just start out, maybe do one hole and get distracted and then maybe go look at the pond or whatever. It was a lot of fun. I also remember driving the front nine all the time and as Stillman said, always looking for that hole in one on the ninth hole. That was the obsession. I remember being out there for a couple hours, just trying to make sure you did that before you died, trying to get that hole in one. Par 3, really easy, real quick. I never did it, I don't know if you ever did it. I spent hours doing that. We used to do that one, eight, nine circuit a lot in front of the houses. And that's doing the sand trap, hit the ball up and then you're distracted. Oh look at what I found. And that was a lot of fun.

Stillman Hanson

I think I played 18 holes a handful of times, maybe 10 times my entire life. But we would definitely mess about. I remember being older and messing about, just taking a bucket of balls and hitting them down to the ninth green or darting at them coming back in for lunch, doing that type of stuff. The golf carts were a big part of and then later the Jeep, learning how to drive the sandy hills and down the pine alleys.

Louise Alabaster

Now that's his dog Spud. There was a write-up. David probably told you. In *Believe it or Not* by Ripley. He wrote because they said that this dog retrieved about 84 golf balls in less than one hour on the golf course. He'd just run, take them up, and drop them by in front of Bert, my husband. That's my husband when he was playing golf out there. He grew up out there. He spent most of time on the golf course and he used to play with the Rockefeller or caddy for them when they were there. He played all his life. I was a Sunday afternoon



Figure 7.13: Bert Alabaster won the 1928 and 1929 annual staff golf tournaments at Overhills. He is pictured here with his dog Spud and his golf trophies in 1929. Courtesy of Louise Alabaster.

widow and Wednesday afternoon widow. He had work sometimes, but he played every time he had the chance, which was good. Everybody needs some outlet of some kind. We'd go out on the golf course and then lots of times they [the Bruces] would invite us over for dinner or something like that. We'd just have a good time visiting through dinner and afterwards just sit talking. Sometimes we'd go in the afternoon so that my husband could play golf with Mr. Bruce on the golf course. I'd be in the

Clubhouse with Ms. Bruce and we'd just chat and do things women do when they get together. Gossip, I guess. There was nobody out there. Now usually they were because they're the ones that gave us permission to use it. They said Bert was welcome anytime he wanted to come, but he still felt like he had to okay it with them and usually they invited us to have a meal with them. They were real good friends.

Lotes Holmes

I did par the back nine one time. We had par 35 on the front nine and par 37 on the back nine, made 72. I did par the back nine 37, nine straight pars one time. That was the only time I ever did that. I lived on the course and got to play anytime I wanted to in other words and we did play it. We enjoyed it. Every Sunday afternoon Mr. Bruce and Mrs. Bruce would go out. She had some clubs and she would play along with us too. We would usually walk in the afternoon, Sunday afternoon and play nine holes of the golf course, nine holes of golf. That was relaxation for him and us too.

Imogene Holmes

On a Sunday afternoon, this is year round, [Lotes] played golf. We went to church, we came home and had lunch, and he hit the golf course. And as the boys got a little - well Bob, our oldest son he was on the golf course on the golf scooter when he was six weeks old. They started early. That's when I was able to go out. But I rode all the way around so it was okay. They all grew up - I remember one time when we lived in the old house and we had a fence built around the backyard to keep the kids in. And they had all decided to play golf about eleven o'clock and took off out on the golf course and didn't bother to tell me where they were. Well there was this lake down there and they all went down there

everyday swimming. We couldn't find the boys when it was time to eat lunch. He came in, no boys. We looked and looked. We finally took off and looked around the golf course and they were on the back nine out there. Way back out there.

Horseback Riding

While some sports declined at Overhills, horseback riding persisted, eventually eclipsing all activities in popularity. Riding was enjoyed as early as the 1920s and grew to be the preferred form of recreation for multiple generations of the Rockefeller family. Ultimately horseback riding became almost synonymous with Overhills for family members. The riding stables played an essential role in visits. About 200 miles of bridle trails existed, with numerous rides named and memorized by many, recalling hunting trails cut in the 1920s and 1930s. Children and novices were led by guides, most



Figure 7.14: Horseback riders leaving the stables at Overhills, ca. 1940, the railroad bed in the background. Courtesy of Ann Elliman.

notably in later years, stable manager Thurman Washington, who followed the tenure of Willie King. The Rockefellers either shipped their own horses to Overhills or enjoyed those kept year-round at the estate. Individuals cherished an encounter with a familiar mount. For decades, tradition held that a favorite pony in the stables carried the name Patches.

Kim Elliman
A lot of people would hang out in the stables, you know with the horses, feed the horses carrots or sugar or something. And others were more active. It was very much sort of a country club or a playground for us growing up. And again there was this sort of wonderful concentration of age, about five years older and five years younger than I. It was this place where the extended family got together principally in the spring.

Typically we'd get up, have breakfast at eight and usually by nine-thirty or ten we'd be on horseback. The grandchildren's ride [a shorter ride], was 45 minutes and the longer rides were an hour to an hour and a half. Really adventuresome. If there weren't too many people, you'd do a two or two and a half hour ride. And, you know, there were again, we always went out with one of the employees of the estate. The exceptions were my grandfather because he knew horses and trails, Pat who also knew horses and trails. And Bob Model, a cousin, and I got to know all of the trails, would take people without one of the stable hands.

In some respects it was very plush riding because we'd go there and the horses would be tacked up and saddled and all we had to do was jump on. We adjusted the girth and off we went. We'd come back and the horse would be really sweaty and they'd be probably under exercised in some cases and they would be lathered down. But until I went to Australia when I was 19, I didn't know anything about grooming or tacking a horse even though I had ridden a fair amount.

There was any number of permutations on each of these rides if you got to know the trails. Thurman used to sort of laugh and say, "How was your ride this morning?" He said, "Well I went out with Mr. X and we never more than 200 yards from the stable, but he never knew and thought we were miles away," [and Thurman would laugh] in his big resounding laugh. You could get turned around. At one point Henry Harder who's the foreman, who's chair, would complain that he's always getting lost. And this is after he's been down at Overhills 55 years. So I went out one day with one of the stable guys and we started marking trails. There was this anxiety about marking trails because it was assumed that you could let people in as well as people out. So I started putting these discreet red markers on the Lincoln Bridge Trail and Henry tried to go by himself and he got horribly lost saying they weren't worth a damn. You go straight and turn right, you go left. So we gave up. It was also a real pain because you sort of had to hammer these things on from horseback.

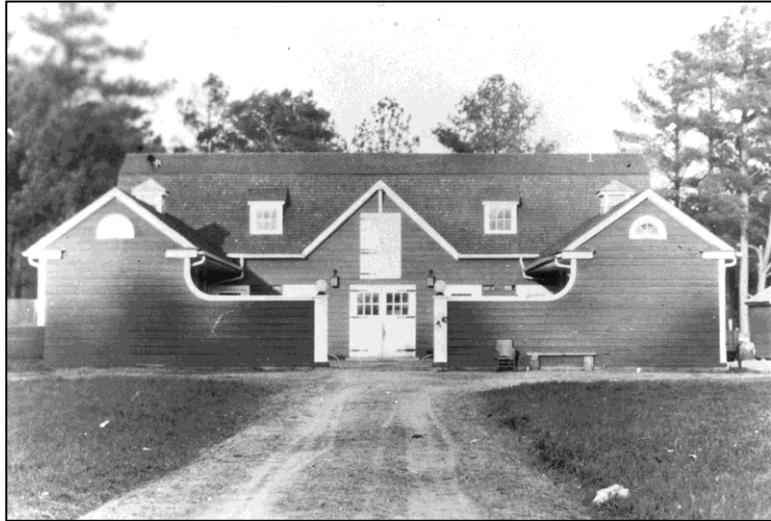


Figure 7.15: The Overhills Riding Stables ca. 1920, prior to renovation. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

Bob Model

I was different from most of the family because I would go down there from the time that I was old enough. When I first went down there of course they put me on a horse and led me. I remember Willie King would lead me or it would be Mr. Bruce would lead me on a lead rein and we'd go off and ride. I finally, as I got older - most of the time when I went down there after I was old enough I would saddle my own horse and I did that because I wanted to do that not because I had to. When you went down there most of the time the horses would have been exercised, been saddled and ready for - but I spent time down there and would saddle my own horse. I went to farrier school so I could shoe my horses. I don't do it anymore but I could. I knew all of that so I would saddle my own horse.

We would walk down to the stables. In those days people walked a lot more. Afterwards people would jump in a car and rush, rush, rush. We used to walk from down, when you

would be going first to walking over to the office and then walking down with Mr. Bruce. There was the road going into the stables, there was – I can't remember the lovely green – I can't think of the name of the low bush but it was nice and neatly trimmed on both sides. But you'd go down and you'd walk in on the end of the stable and on the right hand side there was a right hand side where you lead the horse up. On the left side I think there was an open space, kept some feed in there and the hay was – that's another thing we used to do. I'm glad you brought that up. We used to climb the hayloft and have – that was always an exciting time. And other end there was a door where they would fill the, put the hay. And then there were stalls up and down on either side and then in the back as you know there was a tack room and then above is where Willie King lived and then Thurman after that. But that was always, that was – and I'd go down and enjoy cleaning out the stalls every morning. That was another activity that always took place.

Florence Short

Well we always road horseback and that was my interest. And the very first time I rode was on Patches because every child rode Patches. There was always a Patches. And my Poppy took me from the stable on a lead and we went up the road to the first tee off for the ninth hole and we went around and my saddle fell off I was on the ground because nobody had tightened the cinch. So that's my first memory of Overhills.



Figure 7.16: Anna Rockefeller and Ann Rockefeller outside the stables with the polo barn in the background, ca. 1940. Courtesy of Ann Elliman.

[Years later] this boyfriend came to visit me. He was not asked but he found it and he was, let's see I was 19 and I think he was about 25 which is sort of a big difference at that age. So when he arrived we were doing what we often did which would be telling ghost stories with a candle. And I guess he thought that was a little bit childish. And then he was seated with me at the children's table and that was insulting to him. Then – he came from Greenwich, Connecticut

and he had horses and he made a very bad error of boasting about his riding abilities. So we put him on an excitable horse. I mean he demanded the best horse. So off we go with Thurman. And the Townsend Farm, you know the Townsend Farm? The Townsend Farm, there's a big shed there. There was always a mule in that shed and the horses always shied. And then the mule was no longer there but the horses continued to shy year after year so you always knew. So here's this boyfriend of mine and off the horse shies and there was

still cotton in that field. Around and around this horse and Thurman would laugh, laugh, laugh. And that was most entertaining for us.

Ann & Kim Elliman

Kim: We know what we didn't do much after a certain era but I think you did a lot in your youth is you'd go out and horseback ride and be met with a picnic. On the river ride.

Ann: We would ride out to river and we would have a picnic. I think the food probably went out by a truck and then there would be somebody there to tie up the horses.

Kim: We recreated that a couple times towards the end. There was a picnic spot on the river ride down below the Townsend Farm. That was the traditional place. And then we did another one near the Brinkley tract on the other side of 87. We'd take a long ride across 87 and swing down by the farm operations, the Davis, and sometimes through the



Figure 7.17: Lee Coombe, Isabel Lincoln, and Frederic Lincoln, Jr. on horseback at Overhills in the 1940s. Courtesy of Isabel Elmer.

Nursery and back around Possum Bottom. But as we came up, we'd be met with tea or something particularly on colder rides. It was a self-conscious re-creation of what had gone on in the '30s and the '40s.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

There was always something going on, I think everyday, with horseback riding. I can remember for the children that were going to go horseback, Willie King, the one I was showing you who was the guy at the stable, he would take those horses out.⁵ He would ride one and just guide the other ones behind him just to walk them down before the children went on so they wouldn't be frisky. And that was his chore early in the morning when everybody was going to come down and ride to have those horses conditioned, ready to for them. We'd always see them riding going up the road or through some trail at Overhills and doing that.

Kim Elliman

We only used the Riding Stables. The Hunt Stables were by that time employee housing. They were not used at all. The kennels were not used at all. Nor was the polo. The polo barn was used for overflow for the horses and then the mule barn was only for wood storage by that time we came around.

Ann Elliman

And again we were at the stables a great deal, looking at the horses, feeding the horses, admiring the horses. We always went down there. And there - you could climb up the ladder [to the hay loft]. You could climb around in the hay loft; it was that sort of childish thing - the stable activity was endlessly fascinating.

Cookie Model

I can remember lots and lots of times riding with Mr. Bruce, probably my memories are the horseback riding. I was definitely a horseback rider. I had a horse in Greenwich and I loved the horses at Overhills. We were never really allowed to have our own horse at Overhills, it was always shared horses, but you had favorite horses. I'm in the old guestbook, you'll read, I'm sure some of mine are "I love Patches." And then my kids liked, I think it was, Red. And there were kids' horses and grownup horses and you couldn't wait to ride the grownup horses. That was a big deal. We never ever were allowed to ride alone, which probably in my early adolescent, about 10 or 11, I desperately wanted to go out and show that I was a horse woman and could ride by myself. But we always went with somebody. That was the rule, which also made it very very special because that was when you got to really know the people. I spent a lot of time as a child riding with Mr. Bruce and then as a grownup, riding with Thurman. That was very very special; those were my special times. We would ride in the morning and I would ride in the afternoon, and probably was one of the only ones that would ride in the afternoon as well.

I would walk down to the stables. I was a big one for walking down to the stables. My mother made me walk down so I was going to make my kids walk down to the stables, whereas when the kids were older the golf buggies probably had enough charge or they were gassed and they could make it down to the stable. When I was a kid and the golf buggies first came in, they probably didn't have enough of an electric charge to make it back and forth to the stables. Uncle Avery would take his golf buggy to the stables and then he'd have to plug it in because it probably couldn't make it back up the hill. When I was a child, we'd stop at Mr. Bruce's house. We would go down to the stables. Whether he had already told Willie that we were coming, whatever, but we'd get to the stables and our horses would be out and we'd climb up on the mount and get on the horse and go off for a magic ride. That's probably depending on what time of year or where Mr. Bruce and Thurman (probably trained by Mr. Bruce) probably would be checking on everything, which I didn't realize as a child. But when I was older, Thurman would spend a great deal of time talking about different things: what changed, what was going on here, there, whatever. They would do a great deal of their work, probably on the horses.

Thurman would ride all the horses to exercise them. To me it was phenomenal how well Thurman knew all of the horses and on trail riding there is a magic and Thurman was always magical about that. How many horses go together well? Who was the front horse? Who was the lead horse? The back horse, who would kick? Who wouldn't kick? Who would have a tendency to want to cut home? It's definitely an incredible art to make horseback riding a pleasurable experience. Sometimes it was four, sometimes it was six.

Eight was always pushing it. To have eight horses that could keep up because the taller horses with longer legs would walk faster. Some of them would walk faster, some of them would be slow. And I'll tell you, Elmon and Thurman did a phenomenal job.

It was absolutely fascinating. Mr. Bruce was a beautiful rider. I took riding lessons all my life in Greenwich till I was probably 13. You know, jumped and did working hunters and that sort of thing and then would come down. And when I'd go with Mr. Bruce - none of



Figure 7.18: The Riding Stables, ca. 1992. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

the horses jumped anymore and I would always try to make my horses jump over a log or jump over something and Mr. Bruce always let me, but he always said, "Don't tell anybody because you're not supposed to do that." A lot of it was for the next person that rode who wouldn't know how to jump. So the riding level was definitely probably not great. I mean the horses only knew how to walk and they only knew

how to canter. Uncle Avery did not like to trot so the horses did not know how to trot. So it was sort of bizarre. The horses weren't allowed to trot, they weren't supposed to trot. Horses naturally want to trot, so Thurman and Tony and Jerry had to work very hard to train them not to trot. That's something that is totally unique to Overhills. I know I had a good friend that married Pat. She went and rode somewhere else once and she didn't know how to trot and she was very embarrassed.

Kim Elliman

It was marvelous, it was great. Originally the horses were Percy's, who with Loren Conger, a horse dealer and worked at Belmont Racetrack.⁶ But Loren Conger basically did the horses until World War II. He stayed on after Percy died, I mean not as a full time employee but [he shipped horses down to Overhills]. Then they came from Alabama. There was a horse trader in Alabama and actually it was probably one of these books, the demographics of horses. And Mr. Williams, it was a Williams shop, and my grandfather or Mr. Bruce would sit, you know that long alley, that is the entrance to the stable, before the railroad was abandoned they would watch people ride the horses in on the road between the stable and polo barn. And they could look at the people and decide if they wanted the horses or not. Occasionally my grandfather would ride them or Mr. Bruce would ride the horses. It was a very hands-on thing. Before my grandfather died he would have Thurman and me ride the horses and then sort of this q & a. But it was really Mr. Bruce's job with my grandfather and my grandfather sort of took it over. And then after we thought the

quality of those horses was going down – the Alabama horses – so we started riding these horses that a guy called Pruitt in Fayetteville would find for us. They were Rocky Mountain horses, which was a Tennessee horse. They were five gaited horses, which we immediately limited one gait which was a trot. And they worked out pretty well. For the last 20 odd years we got our horses from a horse dealer in Fayetteville.

After the war [horses didn't change locations]. We actually had a shortage of summer pasture so when the pine beetles hit in the '70s what had been wooded areas were turned into the pasture lands. On the east side of 87 it was for cattle, which was a disaster and on the west side was for horses. So you can look at the maps over time and see where the pastures were put in. We created pastures as a result of the pine beetle outbreak.



Figure 7.19: Riders at the Overhills Riding Stables, ca. 1940.
Courtesy of Kim Elliman.

Dennis Washington

When Mr. Avery Rockefeller would ride he only wanted to ride with my Pop. Cookie, Bob Model's sister, she always wanted to ride with Thurman. Then I got to a point where I could ride with some of the other kids when they would come out. And I thought okay it didn't matter to them and they just wanted to go horseback riding and so I would go or Ron might go riding with them. Or I would go.

There were things on weekends where I used to have to feed the horses, mornings and the evenings. And my friends all had other things to do, but I always had to make sure to feed the horses before I could go and do anything. Depending on what we had going on I'd maybe go horseback riding. We had a lot of trails. I used to really like going and riding with my Pop. When we went out he showed me stuff that not a lot of people knew about and showed us things that were just so cool. It was a really different place. It was really cool.

Around October we would start bringing the horses back to Overhills and start to work them and get them in shape and ready to again. In the summers you'd clip them before you take them and then you wouldn't clip them again until you got them back to Overhills. Their hair was really long. So the first three or four weeks you spent riding them, bringing them back to the stables and then clipping them. And just starting to work them and ride

them and just getting them ready to ride again. But there's probably four or five months out of the year they'd be in the summer pasture

Kim Elliman

It was always a treat going riding with him [Avery]. He would dress up, to extent of which we've said he wasn't conscious about clothes. He always showed up, not in the formality of a hunt club, but he always wore jodhpurs, he always wore knee high boots, and a special cap, and he always wore sort of the Eisenhower waist cut jackets when he rode.

It was a privilege going out with him and it was a privilege because he didn't ride that often by the '60s, maybe '70s. I think he rode pretty steadily through the '60s. But you always knew you were going to go someplace you'd never been before, or a route you've never been before. He knew the property as well as probably anybody other than Bruce and Thurman.

There were a couple of times that I went out with Thurman and Gampop and at this point I knew the place really well, but I was just lost the entire time. They would talk about past land uses on a particular tract of land and who had lived - you'd come through the woods and all of a sudden there'd be remnants of a stone chimney and they'd talk about who the last five people who had lived there were and where they drew their water. But it was amazing because he usually took the most demanding horse. His horses had to have good gaits. They didn't necessarily have to have good manners, though he liked that, but they needed to challenge him in some way. He always led from the rear. Many of the rest of us tried to lead from the beginning, from the front, but he always held his horses back and you rarely saw his hands or his feet or his legs move. He had an amazing seat. He would always hold English saddle, English bridle, but his hands were always behind the pommel, but he had such control and such strength that he could control the horse without getting up on the neck with the reigns. I remember one time, I was quite young and I came down with a friend from college who had done some riding but was a little bit uncontrolled. His horse ran away with him and my horse started to follow. My grandfather simply kept the same pace. Eventually I slowed my horse down and he caught up and then we spent time sort of at a very gentle canter tracking where my friend had gone, but he never lost control of the horse even when the other horses were running away.

And he didn't really like to go out, the one time I just noted as a key reason why, he didn't really like to go out with people who didn't know how to ride. He also had some wonderful rules about riding. He would never ride if the temperature got below 30 degrees because he had been in too many fox hunts where 30 degrees there's ice on the ground, you couldn't see it, and the horses would skid particularly as they prepared to jump. So his rule of thumb was never go out if it was below 30 degrees. And he had thermometers everywhere.

Roger Mitchell

I went all over, especially when I was riding horses. I used to ride on Fort Bragg. And course before Fort Bragg got it, it used to belong to the Weyerhaeuser Company and they would let us ride out there. We could go maybe 15, 20 miles just riding. That's when we

were first breaking the horses back in to get them to where the family could ride them. We used to take them on those long rides, especially on those long roads, just to open them up, work them out. Brought them back, they'd be walking. Ready for someone to get on them then. [I'd ride with] whoever was working down there at the time. Let's see, Jerry and Tony, they used to work down there. Ricky Hollerman used to work down there. And we'd just saddle up three or four and go out riding, ride for about an hour, hour and a half, come back in, take the saddles off of them, put on another one and go back out again.

Ronny Holmes

Man I'll tell you what - there used to be old wood coal stoves that we heated. Not upstairs, but downstairs we had the coal stoves. Man when we was little we'd be down there working them things, we'd get them old pot bellied stoves, we'd put so much coal and wood in them things they'd just be glowing. They'd be pure red. I don't know why we didn't burn the place down, that's the God's honest truth. We didn't do it one time, we did it a bunch of times, in the stables right there, down in the bottom. Have you been back in there and piddled around in there? Man that thing would be so hot, you'd wonder it just didn't melt. I don't know how we didn't burn the place down. I reckon the good Lord looking after us.

Polo

A result of W.A. Harriman's influence, polo was played at Overhills for roughly a decade. Little information survives regarding the field or the nature and frequency of play. A few memories provide some insight into polo's history at Overhills and reflect its legacy upon the landscape.

Andrew Jackson, Sr.

The Harrimans played. The youngest Harriman played polo some, but they had horses. They lived on Long Island, the Whitmans, and they lived near Old Westbury where the international polo field was. During the summer - they brought this Englishman. They built a polo field after they brought the polo ponies in there. He was a trainer of polo ponies. A polo pony, you don't use the reins on them. How you guide them is by your



Figure 7.20: A trail through typical Overhills scenery, ca. 1992. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

knee. You put pressure on them. But you've got to train them and they can follow a ball just like a dog can, if they will.

See, that's how I got to go to Long Island. I went up there to work at the polo field. Then in the meantime, just before they quit bird hunting, there was a man that came. The Englishman left and they got Mr. Blagden. Mr. H.H. Blagden, Mr. Harry Blagden. And he had a boys' camp up at Upper Saranac in New York. I went up there in '21 and '22 to the boys' camp and then I started working at the polo field after that. But then eventually I went back to Mr. Blagden at the boys' camp in Saranac Lake.

Bob Model

And I was just saying, when you look at this, this row of trees here, that's how Harriman took his polo ponies to the polo field. So they'd come up. That one - where are the barns? Here's the flag. That building was the polo barn. And William [Locklear] lived in that house back there. And that's the polo barn. [We used it for] storage. In the later days, they had excess horses and they just put them in here. But this was all part of the field that came off. But this was just junk, nothing in particular.



Figure 7.21: A ca. 1938 bird's eye view shows the location of the polo field at the top right of this photograph. Note that only the front nine of the golf course (left) is in use. The polo field is along the 15th fairway. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

The polo field was over not far off from the golf course. It's back over somewhere on the side of the golf course. Last time I saw it, it was grown up in pine trees. And it was over in that area somewhere where that Air Force cargo plane crashed. I don't know if it was in the polo field or between that and back to where the Clubhouse was. I remember going over right after it happened. We saw the crash [site] and it went into, plowed up new ground, trees and everything and so forth.

Katherine Stilwell

Yes, quite frequently Overhills would play [a polo match] Fort Bragg. That was when I was very small and I can remember my mother talking about it and we would come to Fort Bragg usually for the match because we didn't have anywhere out there to go.

Kim Elliman

My grandfather who could be known for his biases, said that there was this tension between fox hunting and polo. And Captain Miller was Averell Harriman's guy and he was really focused on polo but I think that there was some irritation there. My grandfather really didn't like polo, but he loved fox hunting. So once Percy died, polo stopped immediately. Captain Miller was fired immediately. It stopped and fox hunting stuck around for another year or two. And the polo fields were replanted in slash pine, either during the war or just after. You can see where the old polo fields are, way beyond the 15th hole.

Overhills Lake

One of the oldest manmade features at Overhills, the lake dates to at least the Croatan Club days and perhaps the nineteenth century. Fed by the blackwater stream Muddy Creek, the lake's outer edges are rimmed with Bald Cypress trees. Stocked with fish as early as the 1920s, the lake offered fishing, boating, swimming, and bathing for club guests, Rockefeller family, and Overhills employees and their families. The original earthen dam was replaced in 1938 with poured cement reinforcements and gates. A bath house and picnic area near the dam served lakeside pastimes.

Ann Elliman

We would use the bathhouse or we would probably go down with a towel or a wrap or a bathing suit on already. But that was used and it always used in the summer with various people, staff people, who lived around Overhills, they'd always use that. We had a lot of picnics; I don't think there's a picnic table there anymore.



Figure 7.22: A picnic at Overhills , ca. 1940. Courtesy of Kim Elliman.

Dorothy Yantis

I just lived at the lake in the summer, all summer long. And Mr. Bruce kind of gave me some swim lessons and I was real little. One day he took me off the end of the diving board and he said, he just picked me up and he said, "Sink or swim." It was right by the dam and it was pretty cold. Don't you know when I came up I was dog paddling for all I was worth.

So the one time I was laying out on the raft and I heard this car stop way up on the hill. I was all by myself and Mom and Daddy were gone. I could feel somebody looking at me. And I thought, I am going to be in deep trouble. I'm not even supposed to be down here.

And so I jumped in the lake and I swam ashore and I grabbed a towel. There was a little path by the lake going across to the boat house. Of course snakes were always sunbathing up in that area. I ran as fast as I could. I came out down by the boat house. And the car was parked there. I heard him swing into the thing and then I heard him start. The car was parked there. And he opened the door and he said, "Get in." And so I just ran for my life. I ran across the road and I ran up the road to our house, not to the gas tank but to the house. The house was always left open, unlocked. I think I ran in the back door and I ran in the bathroom and I locked both doors. And I just sat on the floor panting because I was running for all that I was worth. I was waiting to hear if the car would come around to the house. But it didn't. So that was really really scary. Then I just didn't do that again to be out there all alone because it was Saturday afternoon and Mom and Daddy had gone up the country to visit.

We would go over and all of the people that lived on the place would meet at the lake. And if we worked in tobacco, Uncle's Dan, we'd have sticky tobacco. I did the menial things.



Figure 7.23: Overhills Lake, dam and picnic area, ca. 1996.
Courtesy of Kim Elliman.

the first thing that I did was grab a bar of Irish soap that floated and a towel and I'd head for the lake. And this gunk on there was this thick on your hands. I'd just get in the water and after your fingers started shriveling up it would come off. I knew I was going to have to go the next day, but I made 15 dollars a week. So we would just get over there and carry on. Different ones would swim under the girls and pull them under. And they were always pulling me under, dragging me under the water. And then I'd pop up and he'd drag me under again. We'd be screaming and carrying on. One day Momma got real worried and she walked all the way over there to see what we were doing and we were just having fun. But everybody that lived on the place would go over there and probably Ed, Jr. too and his sister Pat. And would all just be over there and have a big time because it would be the hot summer and there was no Rockefellers.

You hand tobacco to a looper and they looped it around the stick. And then the older boys primed. They would put it on a sled drawn by a mule and they would bring it in under a shed and that's where we would be. And at the end of the day the younger boys would take the tobacco up into the barn and just tier it all the way down inside the barn hanging on the sticks. And then Uncle Dan would put us in the back of his truck and take us back. So

Katherine Stilwell

The lake had a big dam and our parents thought we were playing beneath the dam and we would go swimming in the lake. I'm thankful nobody drowned because it was a deep - jumped right off.⁷ But it was a beautiful thing because I could remember in the afternoon when we would go swimming the heron were big white heron. Sometimes there would be 12 - 15 around the banks and when they saw us coming they would just take wing and fly up to the head of the lake. Archie Cameron and I canoed a lot on the lake. I've always loved the lilies because they were just loaded. The pond up above the trestle, the railroad track, was just loaded with lilies. They smell like coconut but they're beautiful. The lake was our prime source of entertainment. We had picnics and we swam sometimes two or three times a day. It just depended on who came along and did you want to go swimming so you went. It was a happy place. We loved it.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

The dam was replaced in 1939. I can remember going over with my father to see the company put in the concrete dam that's there now. That was put in in 1939 and it used to have a little plaque up beside one of the little screw jacks at the top that lift the gate up. Oh it was probably five inches by seven that had the date on it and the company that did it. They had it for Rockefeller, you know, Percy Rockefeller.

Not only did we bathe there but we'd go swimming there all the time in summer. And I have swam in the lake and couple of us would leave the main area and swim towards the back and turn left and go over to the trestle and get out and walk back down the railroad, to be swimming across the lake. Only did that three or four times though. I was told it wasn't good for me to be out there with somebody else swimming that far out in case something happened.

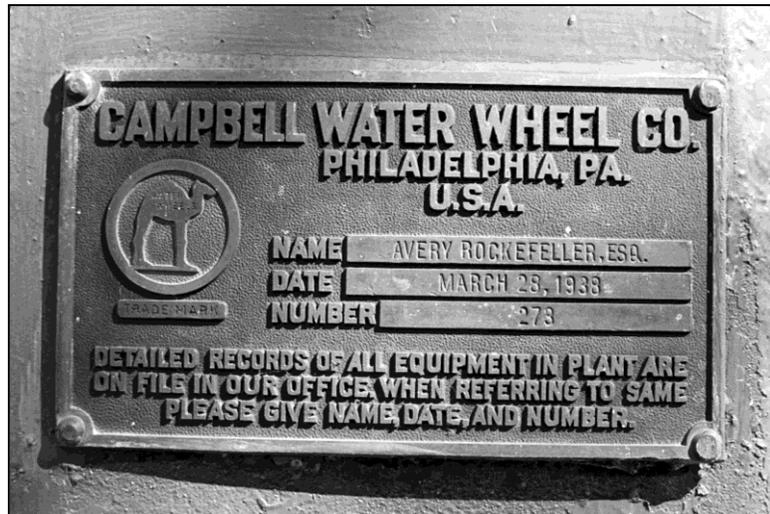


Figure 7.24: The plaque for the new dam at Overhills, completed in 1938. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

You know how deep it is around the spillway's located? It's about as deep as you see those gates looking at them from the downstream side. That's the inlet side. And around the steps it went down - if you went all the way to the bottom of the steps and tried to stand on the bottom it would be over your head. And where the raft was at it was deeper than that because I think it was out in the channel you might see coming towards the spillway. You'd go way down and be very cold. So the spillway with the diving boards on each side

was sort of a deep area where they were diving. But if you got out of the channel on each side it was deep, but I wouldn't say it was too deep.

We'd go to the lake [in the summertime] and we had soap we kept over there. We'd sit on the steps and wash up and jump in the water and get the soap off of us, dry off in the bath house and change, put our clothes and that would be our bath for the day.

Patricia Penny

We didn't sweat them [snakes]; we just didn't get near them. I guess when you grow up with these things you just don't worry about them. I've told some of my friends about them and they said, "You mean you went swimming in a lake with water moccasins?" I said, "We sure did."

Florence Short

I don't recall us doing too much at the lake except for swimming. And before Bird Song and that pool we would go swimming. And at the bottom of the falls were the cotton mouths, water moccasins. Sometimes my cousin Bobby would shoot the cotton mouths. Apart from swimming - there was the changing rooms down there - I didn't spend too much time at the lake. I guess we'd always go down there and then they made the boardwalks to go through the cypress. And that was pretty, to see all the turtles and so on.

Ronny Holmes

See whenever you get hard rains we'd have to run down here, Daddy always did it, Daddy and Thurman always did it, but they'd control the water flow in that lake by running them gates up and down. One of them used to have big old ratchet wrench on it. And then the rest of them just had a rod. You just stick a rod in there and twirl them up or down.

Sandy Hemingway

I don't know what the lake looks like now. I saw this one. But there are the locks. Isn't that beautiful? That was at Easter time. But that was the water going over the dam and of course the lake was back that time. At Easter time when the dogwoods bloomed and those azaleas bloomed and the daffodils came up, I don't think there was a prettier spot on earth.

Jo Ann Locklear

We used to go fishing and just go out there and gut them and clean them and stuff right there and have a little homemade grill. Sure we'd deep fry them right there, a whole bunch of us get together, go fishing, everybody meet up at the fishing pond after work. We'd deep fry them right there. It was lovely, yes this, I mean, I just wish that I could actually show, video show you how beautiful the place was.

Kim Elliman

One of the reasons there are all those boardwalks in the swamps was for birding because that's where you saw the Prothonotary Warbler if you go out on those boardwalks. I used to take an early morning walk basically every day for about two months in the spring where

I'd go from Bird Song and if you went through the shop you could hear the Wood Thrush and catch a burr from Brown Creeper and Brown Cap Chickadee. I went out the railroad track to the top of the lake and then there's that little trail that winds its way back into, you can see palm and pine warbler and then you go and [see] Prothonotary and Yellow Throats, Yellow Throated, lots of owl activity, lots of woodpecker.

Tennis & Paddle Ball

The earliest Overhills map, dated 1913, identifies tennis courts near the railroad station suggesting the sport was an early country club offering. In an unknown year, but likely ca. 1920 with the construction of the Alabaster house, the tennis court was relocated closer to the Hill. Later a paddle ball court was built near the Croatan Lodge. The old clay tennis court posed problems in the wet Sandhills climate so the playing surface was later converted to corkturf.⁸ Tennis seems to have maintained moderate popularity over the years. The tennis courts eventually fell to disrepair before being revamped in the 1980s.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

They had a real nice tennis court. They had a court of clay or something like that with a fence around it. And the bank was cut down to it and then it was flat and it had a high fence.

Dorothy Yantis

It was down: you know where the cars were, where Virginia and Arnold lived?⁹ It wasn't down that far. It was down in that area. It was down in back of the home. The Bruces' home was there on the corner and then I think they built a house for Lotes back there, but he came there after I was out here. That house was there. And then maybe to the right of that before you got down to back of the Croatan it was down there. I don't think they hardly ever played on it or anything because it was cork and it was really neat tennis cork. It had kind of gone to wreck and ruin even when I was little. It was neat to go over there with just some tennis rackets and pretend we were playing tennis.



Figure 7.25: Tennis players at Overhills, ca. 1930. Those identified are Albert Alabaster on the right, Bert Alabaster to his right, and Doreen Alabaster (center). Courtesy of Louise Alabaster.

Kim Elliman

The tennis courts were left to grow over. The tennis court wasn't used, we rebuilt it in '87, but there was no tennis there for a long time. We played more paddle tennis. Paddle tennis court near Croatan. We rebuilt it in the '80s; it never got much use.

Ronny Holmes

Everything led back to the -right here was the basketball court and then they turned it into a tennis court. There's a little old shed over there. Was over there I guess it's still over there. That was a tennis court in the old days and then they did away with tennis and they didn't have a tennis court for a long time because they didn't - they wanted people to use the facilities they had and not this. Later on they built the tennis court back.

Dennis Washington

I think Mr. [Lotes] Holmes was very instrumental in bringing back the old tennis courts. For a while the asphalt had cracked and people just weren't doing anything. The Rockefeller kids would come in and they wouldn't play tennis. And he got the courts resurfaced and then I think the people looked at that as a great place to play and after a while you started to see the kids would come in. After a day of horseback riding or swimming in the lake you'd hear the tennis balls and you'd see them playing tennis. But for a long time as I said the asphalt cracked and nobody did anything. It just didn't happen.

Shooting Range

Although bird hunting declined at Overhills post World War II, in later decades the interest in the skill of shooting increased. Harkening back to the clay pigeon practice in the 1920s, a modern shooting range was built in the 1980s.

Stillman & William Hanson

Stillman: They had the sporting clay range and they the skeet tower and they had a pull box in a different place. That was on the golf course. I don't know which hole it was. The sporting clay was kind of down from the eighth hole and over.

William: Right by the snake pond.

Freeman Tyler

Right out in the woods, just like you're in the woods about to start hunting. No trees were cut. We had 10 stations out there, actually 13, but every shot represented a different type of bird. When they put that in there that was a big attraction.

I've spent probably half of my time out on the shooting range once they got that thing up and going. And another guy from up in New York City is the one that put it in. We worked out there day after day putting in that clay target range. Chiggers, oh my god, I was covered from head to toe.

First thing I had to do, the guy came down and pinpointed where every station was going to be. And then I had – you know Overhills was famous for that Creosote treated lumber, so we got a bunch of trees cut and we had all the lumber Creosote treated and we built all of the trap stations where all of the machines were set up. Once we got all of the stations built I had to get all of the machines in here and I had to get all of those things mounted. Then we had this tower that was built out there and it had a machine on the very top of the tower. This thing was like 60 feet in the air. I built it out of wood and that was probably the hardest thing I'd done on that shooting range, to where it was safe to be on that high and I built that out of wood, just four poles stuck up in the air. We didn't have a pole that was tall enough to reach up 60 feet so then at the top of that pole I had to cut everything all level around and then take 6x6s and go on up two decks higher to get it tall enough.

We had a machine sitting on [the tower]. It represented what they call a Grouse Butt. The shooter was in a hole in the ground and had a brim of dirt in front of him so he couldn't even see the tower, [which was] to keep the guy on the tower from getting sprayed with pellets and he was throwing birds right over your head. We had two machines up there so you would put two trappers up there and then you had two holes in the ground that was about five, six feet deep that was just cut and beveled into the ground. You get down in that. We would supply each shooter and loader to load the gun for him and he had two guns, each shooter had two guns. When I hollered pull, those guys, just as quick as they could load, the shotgun for them, and they'd load them and these guys started throwing targets. It represented, in Scotland, they'd go Grouse hunting over there and they actually have grouse butts coming like this over in Scotland and those birds coming at you like that and you just stand there and just shoot. Just shoot till you get tired of shooting.

All of them [liked to shoot], except I don't believe I ever had Miss Elliman out there. Mr. Elliman I did. Bob, of course, he lived out there when he was here. All of the younger generations, all of them [did]. Bob had a lot of friends here all of the time.

I was fortunate enough that Bob had Mr. Rex Gage, he's a gentleman from England that came, was in the states three months out of the year and all he'd do was go from shooting school to shooting school and teach people how to shoot. He told Bob since I was going to be their shoot master here at Overhills then I needed to take some courses, too. So Bob paid for him to give me lessons on how to shoot and how to instruct people how to shoot. Mr. Gage would shoot and then I'd have to tell him why he's missing that target, what he needs to do to hit that target. Mr. Gage told me that if I ever wanted to get into that as a full time job to use him as a reference. And Rex Gage was ranked number one in the world, not just in England, but worldwide he was ranked number one. And he told me to use him as a reference if I wanted to do that type of work. But if I wasn't on the shooting range, I was doing something with them.



Figure 7.26: At the shooting range, Freeman Tyler (left) and David Wasilewski (right), 1992. Courtesy of Stillman Hanson.

I'll tell you, it's totally different from shooting skeet and trap. There's no comparison. You shoot skeet and trap, every shot's the same. It's either a left right or a right to left, one of the two. Shooting sporting clay, you've got some of every kind. You even got a rabbit that's running across the ground.

You've got shots coming straight at you where you're shooting overhead. You've got them coming from behind you where you

shooting when they come over. You got ducks shot, where they actually come in and flop right down in the water. We had one grouse butt out there that had three machines in it. You could put three people in there, three people pulling clay just as quick as they could load the machines. And they were all manual machines. You cock it back and put your clay in place and pull a lever, just as quick as they could do that. I had six different people that were shooting. Normally I wouldn't let over two people on a shot at one time, but Bob wanted to do it as a group so I stationed everybody and made sure everybody was in position where nobody could get shot or get sprayed by another shotgun. And when I got everybody in position I hollered, "Trappers Ready?" They said, "Ready." I said, "Let's go! Do it, release them." Man, you ain't never hear such racket in your life. I got six shooters there shooting just as quick as they can load their shotguns. I toted the shells over there and set them down by a shooter, a case at a time. That one afternoon we shot up like 1700 rounds. That's when they had that group in here from California, a bunch of bankers and stuff like that that he had brought in here for a weekend.

¹ OHD1923-014; OHD1924-012; OHD1925-016. Overhills Document Collection, on file at North Carolina State Archives.

² OHD1923-006; OHD1923-007.

³ Arnold Bruce Strauch, "Narrative of Arnold Bruce Strauch," August 2007, unpublished, Overhills Document Collection.

⁴ Florence adds: "Stapley Wonham is the husband of Polly (Mary Knight Lincoln), my father's twin sister." Florence's father is Frederic Lincoln Jr. From transcript of oral history interview. Florence Short. Interviewed by Jeffrey D. Irwin and Kaitlin O'Shea, 10 May 2007, Gambier, OH. Overhills Oral History Project, on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

⁵ Ed Bruce adds: "For a pre-walk before riding." Transcript of oral history interview. W. Edward Bruce, Jr. and Barton Bruce. Interviewed by Jeffrey D. Irwin and Kaitlin O'Shea, 15-16 February, 2007, Fort Bragg, NC. Overhills Oral History Project, on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

⁶ Belmont Racetrack is located on Long Island, NY.

⁷ Katherine adds that the lake was 40' deep. Transcript of oral history interview. Katherine Stilwell. Interviewed by Jeffrey D. Irwin and Kaitlin O'Shea, 5 April 2007, Fort Bragg, NC. Overhills Oral History Project, on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

⁸ OHD1937_049, Overhills Document Collection, North Carolina State Archives; Overhills ordered cork turf from a company in Utica, NY. The court was spray-painted with a particular green that Anna Rockefeller preferred, one that was between dark and light green; OHD1937_049, Overhills Document Collection.

⁹ Virginia and Arnold Strauch lived in the apartment in Croatan Garage.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CRACKERS AND GUAVA JELLY

Food and eating at Overhills played an important role for the club owners and guests, the Rockefeller family, and employees alike. In the 1920s, cooks were brought in as seasonal help to prepare meals in the Clubhouse or Percy Rockefeller's cottage. Breakfast might even be prepared at the Manchester camp before a foxhunt. In later years, eating took on a symbolic value, representing long-held traditions and foods uniquely associated with Overhills. Meals provided structure to otherwise unrestricted days. Meals also became strongly associated with the places where they were served and the people preparing them.

Bob Model

Maggie McDonald and Catherine and Mary Lee were very important people in my life. And there were some others that were there, but Maggie was always there. And then by the middle '50s, Catherine and Mary Lee were there. So going back, breakfast was always very organized and we had a buffet and that was the beginning of the activities and the activities were riding in the morning. Again, you can imagine the excitement of being there. I'd be ready to go at seven-thirty in the morning. So that was fascinating to just to be able to get there in those cold winter days and mornings and have breakfast. The big living room with the fireplace was always going. Those were the morning activities. Everybody at some point or another would go ride. And then lunch, we started off with tomato juice. You probably heard tomato juice and then Ritz crackers, saltines, and guava jelly. You've probably heard the guava jelly story. Those were sort of things that were a tradition. And we always had our big meal at lunchtime.

There was always a fire and then dinner. Dinner was light: salad, eggs golden rod. You probably heard about the eggs golden rod. We'd have beef, corned beef hash, chicken hash, turkey hash, the salad - that was sort of a thing. There was always brown betty with hard sauce, was another favorite. But the eggs golden rod was everybody's favorite. Eggs golden rod used to have those - tomato casserole with bread crumbs on the top. It was delicious, absolutely delicious. And that was more or less the dinner. Soup, always started with soup at dinner. Always had a tray of Ritz crackers, Saltines, and a little dish of butter and guava jelly. Guava jelly. And then desserts: cut up fruit was a favorite and Maggie's applesauce that was spiced beautifully. It was delicious, absolutely delicious. And then after dinner there was always, people either have coffee or Sanka and that would be out in the living room. But the kids always ate early. We always ate prior to, say six o'clock. We would go in and there was a long table and there was a short table by the window in the dining room there. That's where we ate. Now you see, when they built Croatan they didn't build a real big dining room because that was supposed to be just for the grandchildren. So the grownups were always at the Covert or at the Clubhouse.

Cookie Model

At Overhills you didn't have to get dressed up. You got to wear your jeans. It was definitely casual. You got to "hang out." It was a hang out place; it wasn't a proper place. You didn't have to sit up at the table. When I was a kid we had to sit up at the table with our hands like this and straight and Overhills you could get away with probably having your elbows on the table and things like that. And again in Greenwich and I'm sure - Aunt Isabel or the Lincoln girls, we were always served. We were served. When I grew up, every weekend, every lunch and every Sunday dinner we always had finger bowls. Every evening we had finger bowls. And to go to Overhills and just have this buffet where everything magically appeared and you could get seconds. It was quick; it was efficient. There was movement. You weren't stuck ever so proper, ever so formally. With a long extended mealtime, you



Figure 8.1: The Croatan dining room, ca. 1996. Courtesy of Kim Elliman.

got up, you got to eat what you wanted to eat. You didn't have to eat everything on your plate. It was just definitely different. During the day we probably were somewhat separate, but mealtimes were always - this was interesting, Stillman and I were talking about how important mealtimes were. You had to be on time for meals. One of the things that to me was probably one of my biggest memories were how efficient mealtimes were. I'm sure it must have been my grandmother that set it up. You weren't waited on. You had the pass through. Do you know about the pass through at Croatan? It was always buffet style so they brought the food out. At lunch we always had Ritz crackers, butter, and guava jelly. Where that came from, I don't have a clue, but that was Overhills. Why? I don't know.

It was definitely a tradition. It was always, don't spoil your meal by eating too many Ritz crackers and guava jelly. The most incredible part was how efficient the system was of the buffet. There are trays stacked and everybody sticking it through the little window. Mealtime was efficient. There wasn't a lot of wasted time, though it was definitely a magic time. As a child we had a child's table. My kids, we had a child's table. I think when I was a kid, you had to be six or eight to be at the grownup's table. I think my kids stayed at the children's table, probably most of their life. There wasn't room. There was the main table and then right in front of the window was the kid's table. We probably were down there with enough people that the kids always stayed at the kids' table even though they were

probably older as grownups. But mealtimes were very traditional. Everybody had their favorites. I can remember my mother every Monday morning going in to Maggie and talking about planning the meals. I followed that tradition. Every Monday or the first day I would get down there or whenever I would be down there, I would go and do the main menus for the week. That was a big thing. I can remember, I guess when I was a child, Mrs. Bruce probably did the menus. And then my mother would sit with Mrs. Bruce. And then after Mrs. Bruce retired, we were with Maggie or Mary Lee or whoever. It was who got the best house. Everybody wanted Croatan. Mrs. Bruce was probably very fair about who got Croatan and who didn't. She probably ran it very tightly about when you could come down there and when you couldn't come down, whereas after Mrs. Bruce retired everything got a great deal laxer probably. There was not the same formal structure. Mrs. Bruce ran a tight, tight ship. There was no flexibility. It was my grandmother's way and that's the way it was going to be.

Isabel Elmer

Oh [meals] were wonderful. I particularly remember the fried chicken. It was wonderful. The fried chicken and then in the winter when they would go hunting quail, we would have quail. And I used to have some of the Overhills menus. I don't know where they are. They made wonderful orange jell-o with regular orange juice instead of hot water it would hot orange juice. It was so good. And something called fluff. I have some of those recipes around. It was always as far as I remember, it was always buffet, always. Breakfast, everything, lunch, everything was you get up and help yourself.

Well, Aunt Rosetta did [the cooking] in the very early times. And then Maggie. And then when Uncle Avery built Bird Song, Maggie went over to Bird Song. [Meals were generally served] in the Covert and the Croatan.

Florence Short

And that was the beauty of Overhills: total freedom. The only thing we were expected to do was to be on meals on time. And then we were just doing whatever we want with zero adult supervision. And we couldn't get in trouble. How could you get in trouble?

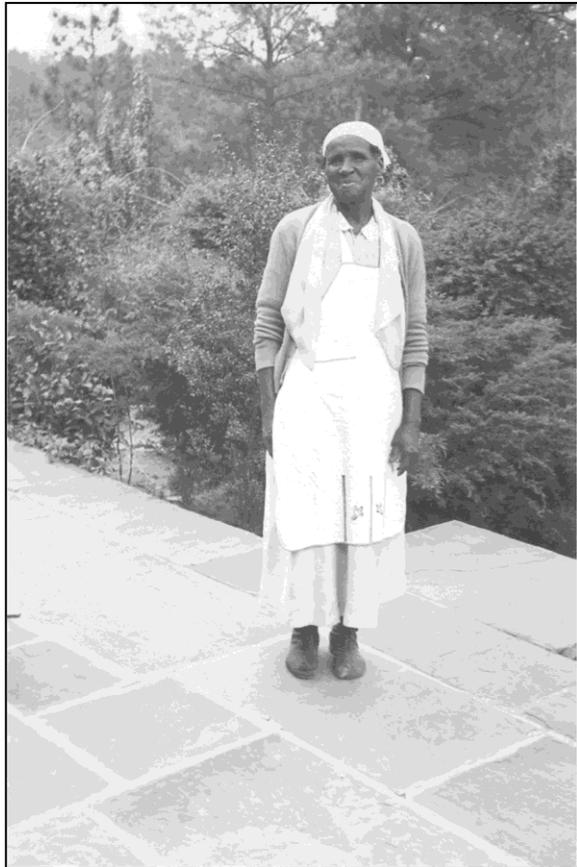


Figure 8.2: "Aunt" Rosetta McLean on Croatan terrace, ca. 1935. Courtesy of Ann Elliman.

There's no way to describe Maggie. She was just wonderful. The food was always perfect and nobody's been able to hold a candle to Maggie, before or since. [She cooked in Croatan] and then there began to a little sort of fights about it because then when Uncle Avery and Anna went to Bird Song, the question was: Maggie is not cooking for us? She's over at Bird Song? How can that be? But I think she did go over to Bird Song. And then Mary Lee took her place and of course Mary Lee is wonderful. And I think she knew all of Maggie's recipes. Everybody would go and get Maggie's recipes but you never could duplicate it at home. They'd always use a lot of Crisco too. The bacon would be fried in Crisco. And there were certain recipes. You probably saw. Somebody probably had the recipe book I would think somewhere.

Pineapple or Strawberry cream
 2 cups canned crushed pineapple or
 juice -
 3/4 cup sugar, 2 tablespoon cold
 water - 2 tablespoon lemon juice -
 2 teaspoon gelatine in the cold water
 2 cups cream -
 Heat pineapple to boiling point - add
 sugar - lemon juice & gelatine that has
 soaked in gelatine 5 minutes - Cool by
 putting container in pan of water

with pieces of ice - when mixture becomes
 thick fold in stiffly beaten cream -
 Pour in trays & freeze without
 stirring - ^{3 to 4 hours} Serves 6 to 8 -
 For Strawberries - do not heat berries
 crush them well & add sugar -
 Soak gelatine in cold water & dissolve
 over hot water - & add to strawberry
 mixture - omit lemon juice

Figures 8.3 and 8.4: Overhills recipe cards for "Pineapple or Strawberry Cream" found among Isabel Stillman Rockefeller's papers in the Overhills Document Collection, North Carolina State Archives.

would be so long, it was hard to keep them at the table because all these different courses. So I think we finally eliminated the first tomato juice and crackers because when the kids were little, well that was the meal. They couldn't sit still any longer by the time. So meals were good.

There was a book that we started collecting over. It didn't have the recipes in it. It had the meal plans so you'd say turkey for Sunday. And then people would have their favorites, fried chicken, corn, those corn muffins, and the beaten biscuits. And you'd write it down. Monday: lamb, beet and biscuits, succotash, and of course the desserts, cut up fruit. It took hours to cut up that fruit into tiny little pieces. And brownies and strawberry surprise, banana pudding.

They always started with tomato juice and Ritz crackers, which you put butter on. Every meal started that way. And then you'd have a lamb roast and oh my God, dessert. But when my children were little I mean the meals

Kim Elliman

And as I said earlier we would have these proper meals, formal in the sense as what was being offered. Every meal was a buffet; there was just lots of food. And it was just calories in, calories out; I mean we were just from one activity to another.

For a long time they were served principally to two houses, Croatan and Cherokee and then after Bird Song was built, Croatan and Bird Song. We only had, basically we had a head cook and a second cook. And if there was one kitchen going, usually they had a cook assisted by a second cook, and if there were two they each had just main cook. Maggie [McDonald] stayed over at Bird Song and Mary Lee Morgan was at Croatan. After Maggie retired, Gladys Anthony became the cook. For about 10 - 12 years she cooked for us at Bird Song. Mary Lee was at Croatan. The extent to which the houses got fuller than that either people came into one of the other, for instance, my parents loved to stay in the Harriman House. They would eat in Bird Song if I were there. And if people were in Cherokee, depending on where their closer relatives were they either stayed and ate in Bird Song or in Croatan. We tried every once in a while sort of shifting food out. If there were a lot of people it just didn't work as well.

Ann Elliman

Meal times you were expected to be prompt, right. Three meals a day at Overhills. When we were all in Croatan, my mother or whoever was there would go out and discuss meals with Maggie and it was always quite a - it wasn't a formal affair, but it was a very, it was fun to go out there and have suggestions go back and forth and Maggie would - I don't know who wrote it down, I guess my mother or whoever. And it was a very pleasant way to start the day after breakfast sitting down with Maggie and going over the meals. We always had light lunch and then the main meal at dinner. Sunday was always lunch and then a pick-up dinner. No snacks [on] Sunday night.

Ann & Kim Elliman

Ann: Mrs. Bruce [did the grocery shopping]. Mrs. Bruce was a fantastic manager. And I think the reason that everything went so well was Mr. Bruce was a marvelous manager in his area and she was equally good in hers. And it just went beautifully.

Kim: I think that's the reason meals were so precise for a while. It wasn't an easy trip and they had to buy in bulk.

Ann: Oh they certainly bought in bulk and the visitors I remember in the later years - she would have special arrangements I think with the people and they would save certain things for her.

Kim: I think they went all the way into Fayetteville to shop. And you know, [it] just was a long trip back then. And they had to go through Bragg. And in fact almost until, because you still got better meats in some of the Fayetteville stores than you did in the Spring Lake stores, so all the way to the end, I think most of the shopping was done in Fayetteville.



Figure 8.5: Glodean Robinson in Bird Song at Overhills, ca. 1990.
Courtesy of Glodean Robinson.

Glodean Robinson

They had good meals, good times. They used to send their menus down, fax the menu to Sandy [Hemingway] and they'll send us a list of things that they wanted and whenever they come to town we have the house all decorated and looking nice. We always had chocolate chip cookies, brownies, tea made. They would send their menu. We would shop and buy everything that they needed for the house.

Now if I'm cooking I just stayed in that one particular house. But wherever their guests are staying, like sometimes people at Bird Song would stay at Bird Song and the extra guests may stay at Sycamore. So I would prepare any kind of snacks that their guests may need and put it in that house. But for all of the main meals they would come to Bird Song. But we would stock the refrigerators for anything that they might need. And we always had brownies and cookies, that's a rule. Every house must have homemade brownies, homemade cookies, and [a] fruit bowl. And we go and buy all kinds of beer and water and stock the refrigerators with orange juice. That's a must. That's standard equipment for the houses.

And they always had cereal and milk in case they don't want to come to the main house for breakfast. We put a little lunch meat or something in case they didn't feel like maybe coming to the main house for lunch.

[A standard Overhills breakfast:] Now you know we used to make our own sausage from the hog, they had the hog farm. They have their sausage, bacon, and a hot cereal and any kind of eggs or if they want pancakes. It was their standard breakfast. And all kinds of cereal, all kinds of juice and milk. And we always put everything in pitchers. Their milk, their tea, nothing ever goes out in a carton. And they had such pretty stuff. Oh I loved decorating the table because I loved using all their fine nice china. That was really fun. They always said I made a pretty table.

We never had to bring anything to the table like you see some people like for their servants to just serve them from the table. We never did that. We always had a buffet style at both

houses. The only thing we'd do, we'd do the formal table setting. But everything else would be on a buffet table and they served their plates

Always on Sunday the standard menu would be roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, chocolate cake, well a yellow cake with chocolate icing, ice cream with homemade chocolate sauce. And green beans and mashed potatoes: that would be their standard Sunday meal. And we always had to keep that chocolate sauce on hand. And we always had to make applesauce. Those were the standard things that always had to be in the refrigerator at all times.

They called that their standard recipe for fried chicken. There's a secret that we were supposed to never tell. They mixed flour and a little bit of cornmeal and put a little seasoning in for fried chicken. Cornmeal was supposed to help it be crispy and that was their secret recipe for their fried chicken, the cornmeal in the flour.

Jo Ann Locklear

I mean for breakfast they would have like, well Mr. Kim I picked on him 'cause he was talking about what is grits and they hadn't heard of grits and I'm like, "Huh? What is grits?" And then we got talking and they started having grits. "Oh this stuff is good." "Y'all ain't never had-?" "No we from the north." "What y'all eat up there?" "We don't eat no grits." "What do y'all eat? We down in the south; we eat grits." They would have like the grits, the eggs, the sausage, lot of prunes, orange juice, grape juice, apple juice; they had a lot of juices and things like that. And they loved a lot of lamb, lamb meat and stuff like that. They loved a lot of that. I'm like what is that? Okay. But they loved it, so they would eat a lot of lamb meat and stuff like that.

Yup, that's where mainly all the meals were served [in Bird Song or Croatan]. Now if there was a big holiday and there was a whole slough of them coming in, all four houses was packed. The meals were served at every house. And that's when they would keep me and Miss Carolyn hopping at the grocery store. Man, Miss Carolyn, she would go down to the Fayetteville and say I need all this lamb meat and all this and good Lord, we come with cases and cases of soda and all kinds of orange juice and all kinds of ice cream and cookies. And they're like we don't have this up there. And I'm like, what do y'all eat? Like I said, the prunes and fresh oranges, so they keep us hopping boy. Man, Miss Carolyn come back oh good god, call Mr. Bernice. "Hey Mr. Bernice," get Mr. Bernice over here, we find Mr. Bernice. "Help us unload this food out of the station wagon." We'd come back boy, whoo, we'd have to start stocking and it was a job. Took about an hour just to put up everything. Eggs, good Lord, we had to buy several cases and cases of eggs 'cause you know they eat a lot of eggs for breakfast and stuff. You cooking breakfast for two sets of families, you know the children eat first and then the adults would eat later.

But everybody had like certain meals and stuff and we'd have to get it and see where I could go. They liked a lot of lamb meat, so they ate a lot of lamb meat and the Cornish hens they ate a lot of that. They had their breakfast plates, they had their brunch plates, they had your lunch and then at night, it depends on what they had that night. They had

certain dishes, some beautiful plates. They had plates that had horses in them, they were beautiful. They had plates that had birds in them, beautiful plates and stuff and we'd all have to go in there and set the tables a certain way. And it took me the longest time to learn how to set them napkins and spoons and forks out. I'd go in there and they would come in – Miss Rosie Tyler would say, "Jo Ann and Mary Alice, it ain't right." "But it looks right." "It ain't right." You had to be just right. "Oh, doggone it." I'd always get my salad fork and my other fork mixed. It ain't right. I said, oh Jesus. Then when they would come in, they would different ones that would go and they would have to serve them. You go in, different ones would have to serve them their plates. And then when they got finished they had this little thing that you would pick up and they would slide the trays through and then one of them would come in and say okay we're finished. You couldn't go in unless they called somebody in there while they were eating. Then they say okay we're finished and you go in and you finish cleaning up everything. The kids would eat one lunch or breakfast, so every meal they fixed it would be two. The kids and their nanny, they brought their nanny down, they would eat one breakfast. Then after that they'd wash them dishes and they we'd have to get dishes ready for the adults.

Carolyn Lucas

[Meals were served] in the dining areas of each one of the homes. Like in Croatan, the kitchen and then the dining area was a great long table in there. And at Bird Song it was in the dining room in there. Yea, mainly those two houses. Sometimes the ones that lived in the little house called Sycamore, the Sycamore house, they would go over to Croatan and eat with the group that was over there. But we'd always put fresh fruit and cookies and brownies and things like that out at their houses too, in case they get hungry. We put soft drinks or whatever they wanted in too. But they would take mainly their meals at either Bird Song or Croatan.

CHAPTER NINE

WORK

Since the Kent-Jordan era, employees have played an important role in the operation of Overhills. Some of the earliest Country Club employees included a superintendent, cooks, maids, and stable hands. By the mid 1920s, the work force expanded as more tenant farmers, stable hands, and other workers, some seasonal were introduced. By the 1930s, employees included a cook, maids, a valet, a superintendent, stable managers, dog handlers, game keepers, laborers, a postmaster, a dairyman, and farmers. While many of the workers at Overhills filled part-time and/or seasonal jobs, many worked year-round. In later years some of the seasonal jobs were filled by the spouses or children of resident full-time employees.

Domestic Work

Domestic work in and around the guest houses was of critical importance to the smooth operations of Overhills, from the days of the Clubhouse and Percy Rockefeller's Covert to the later visits by Rockefeller family and friends. Employees ensured that guests had everything they needed and enjoyed their stay. From the 1930s - 1970s, Thelma Bruce organized the domestic staff, assigning tasks and making sure that everything ran smoothly. Jobs varied and included cleaning, cooking, laundry, grocery shopping, and arranging the Rockefellers' travel plans.

Rosie Tyler

I worked in all of [the houses]: Bird Song, Croatan, Sycamore, and Cherokee. And the last one we had was the Harriman house.

It was nice. You did your job. You didn't be around the family. If you needed to check something, you go. Like if you was working in the kitchen area you had to always make sure there was no dirty glasses or something sitting in the living room or dining area. Also, we did our own decorations every year. Magnolia and Holly with the red berries and pine top and cedar were our decorations for the holidays. They did not want any artificial flowers for the house, which I don't blame them. I don't care for that either, but nowadays, don't make a mess, that's what they say. That was the wintertime decorations and we had to make sure it was watered. It wasn't hard. After we got the beds made and breakfast served and then we get to take care of everything else, meaning make sure the flowers are watered and check - sometimes we would have Croatan, Bird Song, Cherokee, Sycamore for one family and the Harriman house. We had four houses. So that person had to go check things during the time the family was resting. It was kind of tight. It all depended on how many was coming down. If it was a small family it was easy. If it wasn't you had to keep moving, there was no time to rest.

Usually if it was me serving breakfast or dinnertime, the server, I had to be there at seven o'clock in the morning and I stayed until three-thirty in the afternoon. Then I went home, fixed dinner for my family, I came back and we had dinner at seven o'clock at night. A lot of times it was nine-thirty, ten o'clock we got home. But see, that was not - sometimes it would last a week, sometimes

it would be three or four days, sometimes it would last two weeks. It all depended on the family, how long they were going to stay because that was their vacation time.

Gladys and a lady with the name of Miss Maggie, when I first went, [did the cooking]. She retired. She was Miss Avery's cook, Miss Maggie was. And Mr. Rockefeller. The two of them, she'd go from house to house until Mary Lee Morgan started cooking. And then she retired from Bird Song, cooking over there for Miss Avery.

[In the summer it was] very beautiful. All we had to do was go up and check the houses and stuff like that. Not often, like once a month or something like that. Of course the men would do that too. Croatan didn't have an air conditioner so that was the house we really had to check a lot. In closing house for the summer we had certain sheets, huge sheets that would cover up the windows and furniture and all that. Everything in the house was covered. We had to pack the blankets, the comforters, all that down in the spring. And in the fall we went up three weeks before the family came down and had everything fixed up for them to come. We had to air everything out, blankets, beds.

We had several [managers]. Thurman was for a long time. Mr. Holmes was for a long time. Mr. and Mrs. Bruce [were there when I started]. She's the one who hired me. She was supervisor. He was manager. She was over the ladies and he was over the men. And then after him, Thurman was over for a while. Billy Spruill was one of them.

Carolyn Lucas

And the girls would put vegetables up sometimes in the summer. But they loved that because [the] fresh garden vegetables that [were] grown there on the place. And they loved that. Probably if they wanted to fix their lunch they could use some of the vegetables. And they provided them - I've picked them up things at the grocery store also for them. 'Cause they would eat. They'd go up there to the houses like at six o'clock in the morning. And then they'd go home most of the time about four in the afternoon. And then they'd come back about six for the main dinner that night.

As they [the Rockefellers] came down over the years their kids kind of [grew] up coming down over here. And they would bring their friends sometimes. Now when the boys got like - the kids got older and got in college, they would bring their friends, maybe one would bring a friend. Another one would bring a friend. They didn't overdo it as far as overloading the ladies and staff that worked in the houses. They'd [the staff] probably say different. They really looked after them when they come because like I say they didn't come that often, they keep fresh flowers in the houses for them. I won't never forget I would have to buy Dove soap for the sinks and I'd have to get Dial soap for the showers, for the bath tub. This is what they requested. I guess this is the way Mrs. Bruce had done it for so many years. They kindly liked things like the way they were and I can't blame them. I'm kindly traditional myself.

[I worked] mainly to buy groceries and before the family coming in to make sure that all the bed linens, towels, everything was nice and clean. That's what Mrs. Bruce used to do. But they didn't come as often when I was working with them as when Ms. Bruce was working with them. They

paid me. They paid me to do that. And then the book keeper, she and I just opened a little account at the bank in Spring Lake and then I think they would pay their own way when they would come down. They pay their own grocery bill and whatever. But Sandy would know more about that than I did. I just mainly went and bought it and made sure the houses [were clean]. See the house would be closed up so you had to let the house air out. But usually if they started coming down it would be like winter months. Very seldom they ever came in summer months.

Sandy Hemingway

They needed somebody to come out there and establish procedures and payroll and taxes and just clean it up. So that's how I started. Then it grew. You have to, which I'm sure you do, you have to have an understanding of how the whole place operated. Mrs. Bruce looked after the family for years. She took to me about a year after I started. She became quite friendly with me. And she said - and she was old then - come on, you're going to start going to the grocery store with me. You're going to start seeing how we do things around here. So I started going to the grocery store with her. In the meantime, Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller had sort of become, "how you doing and why don't you come for lunch" so by then I was beginning to intermingle with the whole operation. Mrs. Bruce after a couple of years finally decided that she no longer wanted to do the grocery shopping. In fact I think she may have had a little stroke, something that kind of set her back and she wasn't able to do it anymore. And so that load then fell on me. Of course as simple as grocery shopping may sound, when you're buying for 25 or 30 people, you take an entourage with you to the grocery store. There were times it was a day long project because each Easter time, Christmas, Thanksgiving, every house was full so there was all this commotion and cooking and airport trips. It eventually was just an all consuming - it went from a very simple uncomplicated job to just round the clock weekends whenever you needed to be there to just take of them.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

As far as getting to the Rockefellers about anything pertaining to business, they would go through the overseer and that would be my Uncle Bryan Bruce in my time. He'd be the contact with them or usually that was Avery Rockefeller. My aunt oversaw [the houses]. I guess you might say that staff as far as my Aunt Thelma, my uncle's wife, as far as to see when they coming down that the food got purchased. She would make up a list on that maybe with the help of Maggie, maybe somebody like that. And a lot of times I know my Aunt Thelma would go out to the grocery store and come back with a carload of food. Maggie may even go with her to help her. Well anyway, my aunt would be the overseer on that. And seeing that the people were called and people were obtained to be there during that time to take care of the cooking, the cleaning of the house, the changing of the bed sheets. Washing, whatever it took to keep the house running. She did that part of it.¹

Ed Bruce, Jr.

The earliest telephone that I can remember: the Clubhouse had one of these telephones in it that you crank [to dial] on floor like this. It was about that long. You had to pull down the speaker you spoke into, and you crank. Other than the Clubhouse having that and later on my uncle moved over into the Harriman house. He had one of those crank phones. And I can remember it was a thing you had to dial and everybody was on it. It'd ring.² So you had one ring, two rings, three

rings. And Mr. McNeil had one down at Long Valley Farm. ³ I remember one time we were trying to get up with Mr. McNeil. They weren't the most efficient things I don't think, as far as trying to make contact. And then later on my aunt and uncle were probably one of the first ones to get a regular telephone with a dial on it. His house is the only that had [a phone] on Overhills.

Then later on the Spences got one. ⁴ [They] lived in the house down below us. He didn't work for Overhills. I think I mentioned he worked for waterworks at Fort Bragg. But he had one, but it was like on a party line. It could have five or six telephones on that one line. So you might have a ring or two rings, ring ring. Somebody else may have one that goes ring ring ring, three rings. But if yours was two and somebody else's was three when they answered it you could yours up and you could listen in. That's the first time I remember telephones being there, was his. And my father and mother didn't get a telephone until, I'd left home I guess. They didn't even have one when I was in the service. The only way I could get a hold of them was call my aunt and uncle, leave a message with the operator for her to call me back. They'd have to go get her, a mile up the road. She'd come over and call me back. In fact they didn't get one until after we [Barton and I] married.

Work around the Estate

Aside from work inside the houses and in the fields, there were often tasks to be done around the estate. Employees recall some of the daily and seasonal work responsibilities, including mowing the golf course, firefighting, road maintenance, cutting firewood, and anything else needed to keep Overhills running.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

One other thing I can tell you about, if you want to, about Overhills being self sufficient in a lot of categories. I mentioned the dairy. And they also had a lot of their own equipment. Even the roads they had to keep up. They had a road grader or scraper, whatever you want to call it, that you had to pull behind a tractor. They would drag or scrape the road like the one coming off the state road up around our house and back. They'd tool that up, shape it up. Had its own bulldozer that it would use. A lot of this was used for keeping the trails open, making new trails. And I mentioned the capability to due concrete culverts. They did those as those needed them for trails and even built some little bridges and trails at times. I know Daddy did some of that. Had their own electrical power.

Firefighting. They had their own equipment for that, to help out. And they did a lot of preventive fire back in that time too. They did what is called strip burning in areas. Maybe one year they might burn off an area, many acres at one time to keep the underbrush from getting too big. And they would do that and the people there on the place would do the burning. I can remember they had what they call the fire stringers. It'd be like a pipe that Daddy made up. It'd be like another small piece of pipe with a wick in the end and fill this up oil, like fuel oil and you light it at the end and as it goes through the woods leave a fire trail behind you and strip burn. I can remember many times between Highway 87 and back around our house, they'd come in and use the bulldozer and disc around the three houses that was there: the studio, our house, and the one below it, and Daddy's tool shed. They would cut with a disc all the way around from one road to the other one so the fire would start there and go the other way and not come in and burn the coal

pile up or the workshop up or the houses up. And they would do that all the way over to the Chinaberry Farm, you know where that's located. I can remember at times they'd be burning over there. They'd do that late in the afternoon a certain time of the year when the wind would be calm and there was going to be moisture coming out in the [evenings] so it wouldn't get out of hand. The worst thing they could have would be a fire in the springtime, which they didn't set, that would be an accident. The stream and the saps going up the streams, the fire would come through the wood and it'd go clear to the top of the pines. It took the county and the state and everybody else to fight those types.



Figure 9.1: Controlled burning at Overhills, ca. 1940.
Courtesy of Ann Elliman.

Let's see back in my early days, the heating systems at Overhills was primarily by coal fire furnaces or boilers like that. Croatan was heated with a coal boiler as well as the other houses. Overhills would order one coal car, a train car of coal that would come in and be put on the side track there where the depot is located. Then Overhills would have the responsibility to unload that train, the coal car, take it away and give notice back to the train company. They'd stop by and pick it up, take it away. But to unload it they would board down on the railroad tracks underneath the railroad car and then they'd drive the wedges out of these doors that hold the coal in and they'd spill out on the board and then they'd back the dump truck up to it and just man-hand it by shovel and shovel it into the dump truck. Then they'd haul the coal around to the various buildings that would be using coal.

At our house we had a pot bellied stove, which Ms. Rosseau gave us. We heated by coal. We had a little coal bin outside the house. That was my chore during the winter all the time was to take the ashes and bring the coal in every day. But anyway the coal would be hauled to various houses. For the Croatan it was taken up. They had a big grate at the end of the living room that you'd take up and you could dump the coal down in that and it would into a room down in the basement and then it would be filled up to last during the winter time. In the basement they'd take the coal from that area over to where the boiler was and keep it going. It was also taken to many other houses around the area. And the storage area for the coal they didn't use was placed back of my father's workshop. They'd take it there and just store up against the workshop. If they needed they'd come over and pick up with the dump truck and take it around to wherever it had to go. That was my first job at Overhills was helping to unload coal. Of course I wasn't big enough or strong enough at the time to throw one of those coal shovels up in the dump truck. So I had the job to get inside the coal car when it got down for a ways, all the coal wouldn't keep sliding and work each end to

EMPLOYEE'S OF THE OVERHILLS LAND COMPANY OTHER THAN FARM EMPLOYEE'S AS OF JANUARY 1ST 1933.			
NAME.	OCCUPATION.	MONTHLY RATE.	
Bruce, W.B.	Superintendent	200.00	
Gurganious, R.J.	Bookkeeper	75.00	
Darden, Troy	Dairyman	65.00	
Sameron, A.C.	Foreman	60.00	
Alabaster, Bertie	Golf Course Keeper	50.00	
Huffine, D.A.	Forest & Game Warden	15.00 (Part time)	
Shaw, A.A.	" " " "	5.00	" "
Murchison, Sam	" " " "	5.00	" "
Jones, Sandy	" " " "	20.00	
McDougald, George	" " " "	30.00	
McRae, Hagy	Cook Etc.	25.00	
Lundy, E.C.	* Carpenter, Painter Etc.	20.00 (Day work)	
Holder, W.V.	* " "	20.00	" "
Williams, John Sr.	* Laborer	15.00 " "	
Smith, John Sr.	* "	15.00 " "	
Smith, John Jr.	* "	18.00 " "	
McDougald, Miller	* "	18.00 " "	
Alderman, Henry	* "	15.00 " "	
Alderman, Garland	* "	15.00 " "	
McRae, Hea	* "	12.00 " "	
Miscellaneous	* "	20.00 " "	
Total pay roll		\$718.00	
* Estimated monthly rate.			

Figure 9.2: Payroll list from Overhills Land Company, 1933. Overhills Document Collection, North Carolina State Archives.

shots, keep them in the refrigerator, which to me was never a pleasant view when opening the thing because I could think about that needle coming up later on. But she did do that as for a service around the area there.

Jo Ann Locklear

My dad, he was the top mechanic. Everybody like called him “Shady Tree Mechanic.” He was the mechanic for them up there. You know he would work on anything that had wheels on it, he didn’t care. He was the mechanic up there. He was good at what he did. Anything, he kept all the equipment you know going. He worked on the golf course taking care of that. Whatever they needed he was there for them, helping them, doing whatever they need to be done.

make sure all the coal would slide on down to the bottom and get out and then make sure all the coal inside was out before they close the door back up. And that was my first job at Overhills.

And my mother being a registered nurse, of course when she moved out to Overhills that was about 13 or 14 miles from Fayetteville, she was sort of like a nurse for the community around there. A lot of people that [were] elders, typically they had to take vaccination shots. They would get the medicine and bring it out and mother would keep it in the refrigerator and they’d come by and she’d give them whatever injections or shots they would need. And I can remember back in the ‘40s and everybody on the place, especially all the children had to have typhoid shots. And that was in the year they started. When they first started you had to have three shots, a week or two apart, then every year after that you got one shot booster. And she would go downtown, I don’t know what hospital or the health department and pick up all these typhoid

Freeman Tyler

I had two brothers that worked down there at the stable: Jerry was the brother next to me as far as age and then Tony was the baby. They both worked down there under Thurman at the stable. They'd done most of the riding with the family and that kind of stuff. Certain ones Thurman would ride with, but they eventually – Thurman eventually just about completely quit riding. Once in a while Cookie may ask for him to ride to with her or Miss Chappell or Miss Harder or something like that, but the young people, my brothers Tony and Jerry mostly rode with them.

They came onboard before I did. I don't know how in the world they were so fortunate to get in there as quick as they did. They went up there and applied for a job and immediately they were hired onboard. And I guess the reason being is neither of them was actually hired on with a skilled trade. They were just hired on to do whatever. The job I hired on was for a skilled trade and people that had those top jobs weren't going anywhere. The life at Overhills was too good. [My uncle], he was out there for years. He was there a long time before I came onboard.



Figure 9.3: William Locklear, 1992. Courtesy of Stillman Hanson.

Roger Mitchell

We maintained the roads and the rides, well they call them rides, I call them roads. Some of the rides get washed away and then we go fix them back up. Ain't no big holes or nothing like that, wash outs. We help repair some bridges and stuff. Lot of times, in the winter times we used to cut down the trees and stuff, the deceased trees, and cut them to logs and go sell them. [We would sell] all the pine stuff, but the oak we used to cut up for the firewood for the houses. [We cut it by hand].

Come hay time, everybody was out no matter who you was. The only ones who weren't out there were the guys who took care of the pigs because that's an all day thing. But everybody else was out getting in the hay and stuff. In the late spring, fall, [we would] do it about three times a year. Put up enough hay to sell some and the rest of it would go for the horses and stuff. When we had the cows we didn't sell that much.

One place was up here [where hay was] on the Chinaberry Farm. That's where the new high school and junior high and all that is now. There was a field over there on Nursery Road that we used to get the hay in. Course it wasn't nothing like Chinaberry Farm and the other field. We'd get at least two tractor trailer loads, three or four dump truck loads out at one time. There was that much hay and stuff on it.

We'd done that [controlled burning] every year. Go out there and stay out three or four o'clock in the morning, burning. We'd just pick certain area, plow it out and set it on fire - all the undergrowth, stuff like that. Mainly just to keep people from going through there, lighting a match, throwing it out, setting woods on fire. We'd just burn a strip, some of them, maybe two or three hundred yards wide, just burn it down, like down 87 that way in case somebody throw something out it wouldn't burn.

Freeman Tyler

We raised hay to sell as well as feed our own life stock. We used to sell hay to the Fayetteville police department and anyone that wanted to buy hay. And we'd get it up by the tractor trailer loads. Every place we could find to put a bale of hay, we'd fill it up. All the guys that worked on the hill, except for Bernice - Bernice was one of the old guys - we'd start everyday right after lunch. We'd have two tractor trailers out there, flatbed trailers on them and every bit of it, we'd load it up. If we had time to unload it before dark then we'd unload before dark. First thing next morning we'd have all the guys, we'd go up and unload the trailers and get them ready for that following afternoon. And the following afternoon it was back in the hay field again. And the hay fields, once they quit raising the cows, all those fields back there were used for hay. And if you've ever been back in there's a lot of field back there. And then over where the new school is at on Ray Road now, that used to be a hay field there.

We'd start probably about as soon as it'd get up about this high. We didn't want to let it get up too high, but as soon as it'd get up about this high - you can see now the grass and stuff are really starting to grow so sometimes towards the middle of next month [middle of May] would be about the time we'd start cutting hay, from then until it quit growing. You get so tired of seeing hay. I know one year we were back there cutting hay back there at the pasture land and I had tendonitis in my elbow and it was killing me.

And if you baled it too early after you cut it, that stuff would be so heavy. And then you have to throw it up as high as this ceiling on a truck, from the floor. You're tossing it up that high and some of them bales weigh 100 pounds a piece and you do that in 100 degrees out there. It was a nightmare. But, knock on wood, we never had anybody fall out from it and we'd do it every day. We had a tough crew out there.

Everybody that worked there, to include the pig boys. We'd even get them out there. When it was hay season nobody, except if it was Bernice, we wouldn't bother him, but everybody else: "Get your gloves. Come on, let's go."

Ronny Holmes

Well, all of the farmers were tenants so they took care of their own labor. Most of it was family, a big part of it was family farmed. But some of the workers like my brothers and I or the Washingtons if they needed help that was a way for us to make a little money. So we would work with somebody growing up, but all of the farm stuff went on. I don't know if they did halves or not, Daddy could probably tell you, I think they farmed on halves.⁵ But the other work, Thurman Washington managed the stables so whatever he said went including telling Mr. Rockefeller. If he said something- he was the gospel about the stables. So Thurman was in charge of all the stables,

Daddy was in charge of the labor force and whatever projects came up – if Mr. Rockefeller wanted or somebody wanted a new road built down through the woods then it would happen.

Starting sometime in the year we'd go get firewood for the houses, everybody wanted to burn a fireplace. So that's where we stored the firewood right there. They had wood splitters - old, ancient wood splitter. It was just somebody's job. However many workers, eight or ten, whatever came up – it wasn't like it was anybody's job, everybody did it.

You didn't buy wood, you just come and got your wood. Had to be cut a certain length, a certain width. When you busted it up it was a little bitty, it wasn't big stuff.

That was a wood splitter, had a wood splitter. Man that thing, sit right here and you'd run it with a tractor, a tractor sit out there. But it came from New York, Adirondack Mountains. They had a place there. That was a summertime place. And they brought the wood splitter from there. But it was an old wooden wood splitter. Run off of belts. Had two rams on it. One on one side and one on the other. You'd get it going and it would bust a pile of wood.

The women had fireboxes in all the houses. So the cooks or whoever would keep the fireboxes full. And then the people, all the guests, they could handle something that size whereas a big ol' piece – you see that's why they cut them so little. And they had to be cut that little. And there were some big right there but that didn't go in the house I can guarantee. Everything was little, just like that right there.

This is old gravel that they hauled in here. You know where they built the roads? There's a bunch of different gravel pits on the property where they'd go just haul out of there and there's clay in the gravel. Yea, all these roads are built. Roads built all down to the woods, man that dump truck went down there. They always had a bulldozer or front end loader or something. In the pit they had three or four dump trucks, I don't know how many, they kept running.

Lotes Holmes

Mostly my job in a sense was taking care of the golf course and maintaining the golf course and of course we had men working. We had eight tenant farms that farmed the tobacco and the cotton and so forth and so on. I mostly looked after the golf course and the book work and the payroll and things like that and any other miscellaneous jobs that came around as well as going to the airport to meet a Rockefeller any time they came in, which was usually during the fall months from November to say the first of January or something along that. They would always come down for Thanksgiving, part of them and then part of them would come down for Christmas. They didn't have – they would go back after New Years.

And then we maintained the buildings, tore down some of the old buildings and rebuilt some new and remodeled some of the old houses, some of the tenant houses on the farm that grew tobacco and stuff. They had repairs to do to those. We'd get all of our work, we employed all of our own personnel. We had several black families and black ladies who worked in the houses in the kitchen

as far as cooking and things like that. And the men worked out on the farm and helped on the golf course and around the area. Those were the main things we did.

Overhills had its own sawmill. We did our own cutting timber. Nobody knew how to use the sawmill but we hired two men from Olivia to come in and cut the timber – I mean saw the logs and things that we used and saw it up into lumber. Then we had a planer just on the outside beyond that that planed it, smoothed it out. And we used most of our lumber for building of houses and barns and repairs and things like that.

We would bring fertilizer in and had a little siding there on Overhills property that they would unload fertilizer. Then we used it as storage for fertilizer our own selves and Mr. Rockefeller shipped his motor grader from New York, Adirondack, Saranac Lake down on one of the tracks. Side tracked it there and used it for maybe a year or so. I don't know, maybe not that long but we used it for maintaining the roads and things like that. We'd use a motor grader for that.



Figure 9.4: The gas pumps in the shops area at Overhills, ca. 1992. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

Each one every morning would go down to what we call the old gas tanks. We kept all of our equipment down in one area. Ed Bruce, Jr. probably told you about the old post office building that they moved over there and used that for grease and stuff like that, just storage. Every morning all of the employees would go down and Mr. Bruce or myself or someone, usually most of the time Mr. Bruce would go down there. We'd line up the work for the day or what we hadn't finished the day before, the week before or whatever.

Brenda Williams

Oh it's just run down honey. Right in here is where they used for the tobacco. And of course during the week all the men met down here like punching the clock every morning and found out what they had to do and they sent them wherever they had to do.

Freeman Tyler

When I first came onboard with Overhills, the first three or four years, all I'd done was carpenter work and electric and that kind of stuff. But then they got me started helping do controlled burning. We used to do controlled burning out there. Thurman was sort of heading that up at the time. That was another one that got pushed down to me. I ended up being in charge of all the controlled burning that was done out there. I had to be the man to clear it through National

Forestry Service, to notify the sheriff's office that I was going to be burning. And then every day I had to run the fire department off because they were trying to put my fires out. There are so many things out there that I'd done on that place in the time, the 16 plus years I worked out there. I was involved in just about every phase of what went on with Overhills.

There weren't too many things on that place that I didn't do. I was there for a long time. I was their painter. I was their plumber. I was their electrician. I was their carpenter. I even put down the carpet stuff, the vinyl, the tile, whatever they needed. I took care of the pool for them. Bernice Morgan had done it for a long time, him and Thurman, but as time went on that was something else that was passed down to me. I took care and maintained the pool for them, made sure everything was right with the pool so whenever they came in they didn't come in to a green pool, it was nice and clear for them. We used to have a man named Mr. Luther Johnson. He did live down in Fayetteville at the time. He was in his 80s back then. This was probably back in the early part of to the middle of the '80s, whenever I first met him. He took care of the boilers out there because all of those main houses had boilers. So every time he came out I always helped him because I was the carpenter and took care of all their maintenance out there, and I watched the old man like a hawk. After three or four years of working [with] him, I finally took on the responsibility of working on those boilers myself. I ended up being the boiler man, too. I've done it all.

¹ Ed Bruce adds: "Maggie was the primary one in the Croatan that oversaw the day to day operation." Transcript of oral history interview. W. Edward Bruce, Jr. and Barton Bruce. Interviewed by Jeffrey D. Irwin and Kaitlin O'Shea, 15-16 February, 2007, Fort Bragg, NC. Overhills Oral History Project, on file at Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

² Ed Bruce adds: "Everybody else on that line would hear it ring." Ibid.

³ Mr. McNeil was the overseer of Long Valley Farm in the 1930s.

⁴ The Spence family rented a house on Overhills, but were not Overhills employees. In the 1940s and 1950s, Overhills Farms, Inc. occasionally rented homes to families who worked on Fort Bragg or nearby.

⁵ "Farmed on halves" is a term related to sharecropping or tenant farming in which the employer gives the farmer a place to live, but the farmer must give half of his crop to the employer and can only keep half himself.

CHAPTER TEN

FARMING

Agriculture has a long history at Overhills. From the old turpentine plantation that preceded the estate to cotton fields that likely fed the Manchester cotton mills in the late nineteenth century, farming in one form or another was continuous on the property through many generations. By the Croatan Club and Overhills Country Club days, tenant farming provided income as well as valuable quail habitat. Advertisements in the 1925 local newspapers requested tenant farmers to farm on halves with Overhills, a system continued until 1979, when corporate farming was organized and tenants became employees. Over the years crops and stock raised would vary. Like much of North Carolina, tobacco predominated for decades, while hog farming became the focus in later years.

Tobacco and Tenant Farming

Kim Elliman

Mr. Bruce ran Overhills really well until his first heart attack in the mid '60s. And I would say then for about 15 or so years we sort of wandered a little bit. I remember, Don McCoy, our employer, said the only way to make money farming the Sandhills is not spend any money and Mr. Bruce was very good at that. So I think farming did meaningfully contribute to the bottom line, until the '60s. Post '60s it probably didn't as much but the Piggly Wiggly dividend didn't really start growing until the '60s and then it grew to be big, which we had [another] set of problems.

Mr. Bruce, he was very good about cutting timber – not too much but enough, he was also very good at prescribed burning and we were about the only place that did prescribed burning for years which is why we ended up with woodpeckers [when] no one else did. [It was] sort of an accident of history. And Bruce was good at – just as his wife was very good at managing the houses – he was very good in managing tenant farms. Part of that was just being very disciplined, but part of that was also being very knowledgeable about what grew when and what to harvest and all that.

You know, as American agriculture increasingly became dominated by size, Overhills tried to follow and become larger, focus our production on one or two core products, which probably was a mistake. When I came on in the early '80s, the way I calculated it is, it cost us 1,000 dollars an acre to grow tobacco and we grossed 2,000 dollars an acre so our net was 1,000 dollars an acre and I don't think any other crop even netted 50 dollars an acre. So you know, for years Overhills was carried by tobacco and even by the time I came in '82 it was started to be rationed back. It was 70 odd acres, but at one point it had been 200. But as that got rationed down we were just less and less profitable. The only thing – we had some good years with hogs, but the only row crop that matched tobacco on a per acre gross net was strawberries – pick your own strawberries, which we only put in, you know, the early '90s. [Long Valley] took over our strawberries. I think at that point we gave them our strawberries. It was on the other side of the road and they picked it up in '97, because we'd been producing for I don't know, for seven or eight or nine years and they saw how profitable it was so they just moved it across [Manchester] road.

[The conversion from tenant farming didn't really affect the farmers.] They were all offered jobs and they all stayed in their homes. And you know, if they didn't want to stay on as farmers I don't know if they were given a time to move, but you know, most like Mr. Davis stayed on, trying to remember the name of the guy who stayed on the Harp farm, they basically became - Mr. Edward Bruce stayed on, Mrs. Bruce stayed on. I mean they all stayed on in their homes and we paid pensions. In fact, I think as I said, the last pensioner might have died in 1996.

Albert Goins

I was a big tobacco farmer. I lived up there two years and then me and the boss man fell out and I moved down to Spout Springs, which was on the Overhills property. I rented a building and the superintendent wanted to know what I'd like to do. I told him I didn't know about cotton and I knowed about corn and tobacco. So he said, did you want to raise some tobacco? I said I would if he had a barn. He agreed to build a barn and give me the stock and everything and I went at it. I tend five acres and the five acres brought 1,000 dollars an acre and they went all out for it then.

We moved down here in '26 and I started raising tobacco for the Rockefellers and Overhills Land Company. Put out five acres of tobacco and at that time they was raising cotton and had their own dairy and everything and using everything right back on the place. I raised five acres of tobacco and it bought me 1,000 dollars an acre. So that's 5,000 dollars I made and that was much stronger than cotton was at the time so they went all out for it. They got tenants and built barns. When I left them we had 26 tenants and had a 100 acre allotment.

I stayed with them around 30 years and when I left them they had 26 tenants and they discontinued tobacco about 2 years after I left them. I was very successful tending tobacco with them and they was good people. I was 25 years old when I came with them. I had three children that was born when I moved with them. And I had six children all total, three boys and three girls.

Carolyn Lucas

I think it was about 1978 when we moved on Overhills on the farm over there. [We had been] tenant farming with them. It's kindly like on halves. We lived on their place and we tenant farmed. I don't remember exactly how much money was involved but it was, back in those days, it was a very big thing was tenant farming.

We probably were over there about two or three years. I'm trying to remember but I don't know how long. I think it was about two, three years before we moved over to - over here is where I got the fondest memories is over here on the Overhills Farm, the big farm. It's right across the creek bridge down here, up on the left, that big two story house. That was the big farmhouse. That was what they called the old Davis house.

When we lived there it was like he lived on the job. I mean it was a good place to live. We loved it, we enjoyed it, but you were there like 24/7 on the farm because he, when we moved there, like I say back in 1978, I know he had sixty acres of tobacco, just tobacco alone. And I don't know how many acres of soybeans and corn and just farming things in general. That was mainly what they raised because this is kindly sandy soil down here. So you're only limited to what you can raise

farming wise. And I don't remember what year – somebody like Billy Spruill or some else would be more able to enlighten you on the year when they started into the hog operation. They had a lot of hog operations back of the big house where we were at. [And] they sold hay. And see, a lot of people they would call the house. Some would go through the office to want to buy hay and things like that but a lot of them would call the house. And so even when he would be off he would still have to go to work because he would have to go and help them get the hay down. So he put in a lot of hours for the company. He did. But they were good to us too. They provided him with a pick-up to drive. And they paid our light bills. I think we paid our phone bill, but they paid our light bill. They paid our heat bill in the winter. [There was] no rent for the house. They provided the house that we lived in.



Figure 10.1: Farm equipment and sheds behind the Davis house at Overhills, ca. 1992. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

When they converted from tenant farming to the new system they let [the tenants] stay on the property yea. They stayed on the property there and all. We'd go down there and work at the barns, at the bulk barns. And they would still be in the house. But they kindly retired, they had some age on them. See my husband was younger. They had worked hard, anybody that did farm work back in those days worked hard. And so that's when Overhills kindly took the farming back over and my husband was in charge of it.

[A bulk barn] was a barn where they cured the tobacco in it. They cooked it. I think my husband had about fourteen at one time. And you would have to set them at certain temperature and you had to cook that tobacco and you wanted it to come out yellow and pretty because when you took it to the market to sell it the buyers would want a certain type of tobacco and they would pay good money for it. And sometimes it wouldn't turn out yellow and pretty, sometimes it'd turn out brown and ugly. But you would take these big old racks – a bulk barn, they had like I say, about 14 of them and they were on different farms. And I've known him to be ten, eleven o'clock at night going and checking those barns because if the temperature got too high the barn would burn down or whatever so you had to keep a close eye on it you know on the barns.

[The barns were heated with] gas. And then you had to have an electrician out there if the barn went out or whatever. You would have to get somebody that knew what they were doing out there to get the barn going back. If it was without heat for a certain period of time, it would ruin the whole barn of tobacco. It would what they call, go into a sweat and it would ruin it. That's a lot of money involved. You got your labor, you got all that work and all tied up and it's a lot of money gone to waste.

Well when we first started out over [here], I don't remember the first year if they used the primer or not. But anyway, but they did invest in a tobacco primer. We used to use men when we were tenant farming. We exchanged with a couple of more families in the communities. And we would work on their farm if their tobacco needed pulling. We would go and the men would go to the



Figure 10.2: The barn behind the Davis house, built in the 1910s, ca. 1992. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

field and they would hand pull the tobacco off the stalk like three leaves to the stalk. And you start at the bottom. It's what they call sand lugs. Oh you don't want to do it. I mean it is dirty, nasty, bad. A lot of people couldn't do it 'cause it would make them sick. You're out there in the hot and especially after the rain that's when it was the worst. But men would go out there – young guys, young boys most of the time. Grown old men like my daddy, Daddy had to drive the tractor. But he'd done it in his day too, you know. But we would

exchange with families. Like we had another family that we would exchange with. The women would work at the barn and then they'd have one or two men at the barn. But most of the men would work in the field. But the women [have] done that too. I've done that too. It's some hard work in farming. Like I said, real hard work in farming. You don't want to do it, trust me. You don't want to do it.

I worked at the barn and it's where we racked up the tobacco. It's called rack it up and it's like you would have to see it. It's got prongs down through it and you just load the tobacco. You got this bench here that they built and you put this rack, the bottom part on the bench and you just take big armfuls of tobacco and put it over, off the trailer that Tommy filled in the field. When they get it up to the barn you just take big armfuls of tobacco and throw it over there. You don't have to straighten it or nothing. You just throw it, big armfuls and then there's a top part of the rack and it's got prongs through it. Most of the time that's why men had to be there at the barn because you had to press that rack with those prongs down through the tobacco. It would punch holes in it, but it was okay. It was alright to do that. And then you had to clamp them at both ends. Sometimes you'd have to stand on the end to make it clamp. And then you had a hydraulic thing like a jack, we called it a jack. It would lift the rack because it was very very heavy, probably 75, 100 pounds some of them. And then you had to lift it with that, like a button control, you hooked it on to the rack of the tobacco, you take a button control and then you set up they had like three tiers in the barn. And then you would fill each tier. You go back to the very back of the barn first and you got like one-two-three and the tobacco would cure. The heat would come up through the barn; there was holes all in the bottom of the floor. And the heat would come up through the floor and penetrate through and cook it. And you could smell it. It smelled so good, oh God. It did. I mean I don't know if you've ever smoked or not, but I've smoked and it would smell like a

good cigarette. I don't smoke now, but that's what it smelled like. It had a good sweet smell to it. A lot of people used to love to smell it. But yea, the tobacco would make your hands real gummy. They would get black from that gum stuff. It would get all over your hands. You'd have to wipe them. You'd have to rub them and clean them to get that tobacco gum off your hands.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

I worked several years in tobacco with share farmers around the outside. I worked about every area they had for that. I started off as a sled driver. They'd have mules and tobacco sleds. They just run on sleds at the time not wheels. And each one would have a driver, there'd be two or three of those. Then the tobacco was taken

out of the tobacco barn. They'd need somebody to unpack the sleds. I've done that. Somebody on the inside to pick the tobacco up, like three stalks at a time and hand them in the right format to this looper that would loop it onto the stick. I've done the handing. I never did the looping. Then somebody would take the stick away from the looper, there needed to be two or three of those, and stack the tobacco up. And then at the end of the day when everything was through, everyone got together and you form a line and you hand



Figure 10.3: Row of tobacco barns near the Davis house at Overhills, ca. 1992. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

a stick at a time around this line to inside the barn and up to hang it on the top tiers first and fill those up and you kept working your way down until you had the bottom tier filled up. And then after it was cured then it had to come out and you took it to the pack barn and you stored it there until the season was over with and the farmer and families and everyone went to the pack barn. They graded tobacco then and then got it in condition to go to the market and have it be sold. Overhills would furnish the truck and take them to the tobacco market for selling it. So I did most of that in that area except for the tobacco looping. I never did that.

Jo Ann Locklear

But used to be a big strawberry field out there, a barn and a house but they tore it all down. And the tobacco, boy, me and Momma used to work out there all the time, didn't we out there. Many many of them rows was a mile, mile and a half long of tobacco. We'd go out and work boy. They'd bring all these Mexicans in, the laborers to work in the tobacco. And they did that for many years, worked in the tobacco and stuff, long time. Had some of everything out here. It was beautiful.

Tommy McPhail

Okay, basically they furnished the [tenant] farmer a place to stay. They farmed on halves, him [Dad] and the Rockefellers, straight down the middle. We had to borrow no money from the bank. The company furnished us money to live off of till the crops were harvested or whatever and then the money was split up. Basically that's just the way it was. Sharecrop: you got half the crop and the Rockefellers got half the crop. And it was really a benefit for the farmer not having to go to the bank to borrow money to farm the next year with. They lent them the money and as I know of there was no interest. You sign for it and you get it. I remember, [being] smaller, going with Dad over to the – the first office I remember over there was one of the little small houses down from Bird Song. There was two little houses down there sitting on the side. And I remember going over there on Friday afternoons or whatever to get the money to pay his help for the past



Figure 10.4: The swine complex at Overhills, ca. 1992. Courtesy of North Carolina State Archives.

Overhills Farms or whatever or if it was just Overhills Farms. But the checks were taken directly to the office. All the money was kept by them till the end of the year. Then they settled it. The bookkeeper kept up with it – you brought in so much and after you take out what you borrowed to pay your help and to live of this is what you'd get. Daddy had to furnish his own equipment, the labor, from what I can remember. And like I said, the chemicals, the seeds, the land: that was provided by the company. We stayed in the house but we had to pay our light bill. I often said that was one of the things that spoiled a lot of us over here. Working with the Overhills folks we never made a lot of money per say, we never had rent to pay, fuel bill, or anything like that, heating bill, because they provided that for us.

I remember in high school during the winters I would work at Overhills some. I kept and cut wood and stuff like that there and I'd work weeks in there. It used to be 49 dollars per week; everybody made 49 dollars per week. Like I say, the next year I went back and started making 69 dollars per week. And when I first started [full time] with Overhills I made 89 dollars per week. Plus a place to stay, you know.

week of work. And sharecropping the way it was, the farmer furnished his own equipment and labor and the company furnished the fertilizer, the seed, and the chemicals plus the land to farm on.

Let's get back to tobacco. It was [Dad's] responsibility to sell his tobacco and he was able to sell it wherever he'd like at whatever tobacco market. You'd haul your tobacco to the tobacco market. The check would be in a – I can't remember if the checks were made out to, it'd be, Cleve McPhail and

Well I think one reason they [changed from tenant farming] was the deal – I came back to work on the farm, they realized that they had me here, plus Elmon. He was a sharecropper for a few years. They knew that he and I had some experience with the tobacco and knew what to do. And the farmers that were here were getting older like Homer Frazier and Mr. Williams down here. They were two of the farmers on the Long Valley Farm. And then Elmon was here basically. And they said, this is a good way for us to take it over and use our own manpower, basically, that way they could spend some money on some equipment stuff too and probably help them out with taxes and stuff like that. When we started doing that first thing they did, they bought a mechanized primer, the topper, and all this stuff that we've been doing by hand they had the money to go and buy the good stuff and go bigger.

Roger Mitchell

Come hay time, everybody was out no matter who you was. The only ones who weren't out there were the guys who took care of the pigs because that's an all day thing. But everybody else was out getting in the hay and stuff. In the late spring, fall, [we would] do it about three times a year. Put up enough hay to sell some and the rest of it would go for the horses and stuff. When we had the cows we didn't sell that much.

One place was up here [where hay was] on the Chinaberry Farm. That's where the new high school and junior high and all that is now. There was a field over there on Nursery Road that we used to get the hay in. Course it wasn't nothing like Chinaberry Farm and the other field. We'd get at least two tractor trailer loads, three or four dump truck loads out at one time. There was that much hay and stuff on it.

Ronny Holmes

Well all of the farmers were tenants so they took care of their own labor. Most of it was family, a big part of it was family farmed. But some of the workers like my brothers and I or the Washingtons here, if they needed help that was a way for us to make a little money. So we would work with somebody growing up, but all of the farm stuff went on. I don't know if they did halves or not, Daddy could probably tell you, I think they farmed on halves.

Brenda Williams & Linda Holder

Brenda: Used to use twine, loop the tobacco over a stick and then hang it in the barn. That was hard work.

Linda: We had two, they call them horses. You put one on one end and one on the other end and put a tobacco stick across it. Then you get on the side and you take – these people that are taking the tobacco off these sleds and they hand you a hand of tobacco like four or five stems. They hand it to you and you take it and you take your thread and you loop it over your tobacco, and you throw it over the stick so it would go on that side. Then you loop it on and go on this side. You make a whole stick full. When you get that stick off someone comes and gets it and they hang it up in the barn.

Brenda: Now they have it, it's easy.

Linda: They stomp it and everything else nowadays, but then if you damaged a tobacco leaf your tail got blistered.

The Dairy

Dairy operations began at Overhills ca. 1926, run by a man named Troy Darden, who lived on Overhills with his wife and their six children. The dairy is indicated on a 1926 fire insurance policy as a “frame, shingle roof building known as the dairy barn.”¹ It was located near the buildings referred to as the Coble house, Lowe house, and Cameron house.

A silo accompanied the dairy barn and had been ordered from Pomona Terra-Cotta Tile Company in North Carolina. It was constructed with hollow tile blocks and reinforcing rods.² By 1937, the dairy was relocated to the former hunt stables and the silo was moved in 1939. Dairy operations persisted until the 1940s, after which the Darden family left Overhills.

The dairy was not a large scale operation, as it housed six - eight cows.³ The dairy provided milk to residents of Overhills in glass bottles. A dairy inventory ca. 1929 listed six cows, one DeLaval cream separator, and milk cans and bottles in the dairy.⁴

Ed Bruce, Jr.

The dairy used to be over behind the Bain field. If you take the road past the Bain field back in there and the dairy used to be back there and that’s where the Dardens lived. But later on they moved the dairy over to the horse stable and my father tore out several horse stalls between horse stables and made a long room for the cows. You know concrete floor entrenched in the stalls and put the head and pen them. He moved the silo. That block silo that’s there beside the horse stable if it’s still there, it used to be at the dairy that was at the other side of the Bain field. He and another guy took all those block down, chipped them out and then he reinstalled them and built the silo where it’s located now.

No, in my time it was always like that so it must have been back in the ‘20s I guess. The stable here was a really a nice stable. I don’t know if you’ve been here too. They had cork walkways for the horses. It had a saddle room where they kept the saddles and another work room beside it. A lot of that was turned into the dairy stuff when they put the dairy there. Remember they had the cream separator, one of these things you turn by hand and it would separate the cream from the rest of the milk. And Overhills used to provide milk for the people that worked there. We used to get milk from the dairy. It could come in bottles or you could get in those cans. They’re so tall with the plunger in the top, until that went out.

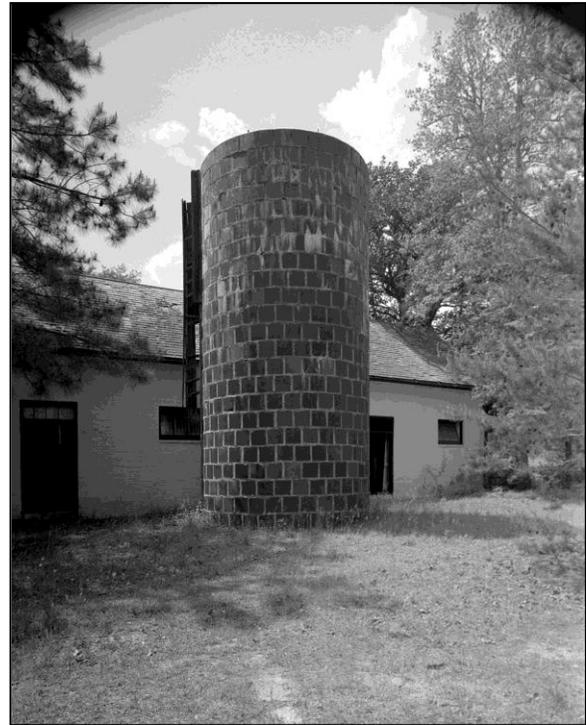


Figure 10.5: Original dairy silo, ca. 2003, relocated to the new dairy location, the former Overhills Hunt stables, in 1939. HABS.

Katherine Stilwell

[Our first house was] right next door to the dairy. And it was - the Dardens lived across a little creek, and he was the dairyman, and I imagine they had 12 - 15 cows at least. You milk twice a day, I think. I believe you do. I thought I could milk if anybody else could but as I said when I tried it I realized I couldn't. I still enjoyed the cows and they were animals and it was happy.

See Overhills had a dairy which provided milk for the Clubhouse and any time the guests were there and for all of the people who lived in the immediate area of the houses. I don't remember the number of cows that they had. The Dardens, Troy Darden, ran the dairy. They were dear people to me because there were six children and they were my playmates when I was a little girl. They lived across the railroad tracks from our home. I followed the older son when he would go get the cows and bring them back. That was my joy to follow him to the pasture to get the cows. And my mother knew exactly where I was if she couldn't find me because I was in his footsteps. And I used to want to milk so one day his father allowed me to try it. The cow switched her tail or kicked at something and it scared me to death and I never tried that again.

¹ OHD1922_009, Overhills Document Collection, on file at North Carolina State Archives.

² OHD1928_028, Overhills Document Collection.

³ OHD1928_028, Overhills Document Collection.

⁴ OHD1932_073, Overhills Document Collection.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CHILD'S PLAY AND SCHOOL DAYS

Though it began as a sportsmen's hunt club, Overhills quickly came to include children. William Kent brought his family in 1917 and Percy and Isabel Rockefeller first brought their children in the same year. Eventually seasonal visits by the extended Rockefeller family and their friends regularly included a youthful presence. At the same time the estate was home to numerous employee and farming families whose children were raised at Overhills.

Child's Play

For a child at Overhills many aspects of the estate held great potential as a playground, whether it was huge tracts of forest, the lake, golf course, railroad tracks, or a family's backyard.

Rudolph Singleton, Jr.

Well we lived in the country and there was considerable space between each house, I mean maybe a mile, half mile or whatever. I was not unfriendly with anybody but I was three - five years old and I played more by myself than I did with these other children that maybe lived two or three miles away or something. But that was not particularly by choice, it was just by restricted environment or unrestricted environment.

[I got into] any kind of mischief I [could] get into. I mean I'm out in the country with eight horses in the stalls and 64 fox hounds in a pen and 24 rabbits in a pen and no brothers and sisters and a tricycle and wagon and my daddy off doing something and Momma in the house, and I'm on the edge of swamp or the woods and I'm just looking for things to do and to get into.

Kim Elliman

Capture the flag: my mother played it different. [The cousins gathered at Overhills every year and every evening we played]. One flag was somewhere around the front porch at Croatan. The other flag was somewhere around Sycamore, and there was a dividing line. That path between the two houses, it was always [in the middle and we used an imaginary line between the pines. Bushes and azaleas marked each side]. And so you could range far down as far down I think as toward the old Alabaster Cottage. And you go out as far as the flag pole on the golf course. Those were sort of the parameters. The first and second cousins all got out there and played [for an hour or more]. It was just a lot of fun. And again [there were] multiple ages and there was always a lot of friends. Between my cousins and my brother, and everyone's friends, there were always a lot of eager enthusiasts, [even as teenagers].

Ann Elliman

We were there a lot in the winter. I remember swimming once or a few times in the lake [at Christmas]. I also remember as a child the lake frozen over and we would play you know those games, what was it fox and hound. Do you know that game? On the lake. It would be a circle, I

don't remember really, and somebody was the fox and the hounds would try to get the fox. And I don't remember all of the various permutations.

We had "kick the can" too, out on the golf course. [Adults didn't play], it was really children, this is in my childhood, children were one thing and adults another. Perhaps we were more with our children, but now Kim's generation is much more hands on with their children.



Figure 11.1: Visitors at Overhills, ca. 1940. From left to right: (back row) Pat Rockefeller, unidentified, unidentified, Ann Rockefeller, Isabel Lincoln; (front row) Calista Lincoln, unidentified, Joan Rockefeller, and Dot Bruce. Courtesy of Kim Elliman.

practice. And that means they were camping all around the house. They would have night maneuvers at nighttime where right above our house, on just a little country roads and half traction and have search lights they'd pull. You're probably not familiar with those but they used to be great big lights like this they'd shine up and try to spot airplanes so you could shoot at them. And they'd have those set up and I used to watch that. We'd sit on the bank and watch the trucks go by and everything. Then they might move from one site to another or either go back to Fort Bragg for a while. I can remember I'd always walk out to the site where they'd been camping. I'd find various things. I know I had a lot of Army field jackets that I picked up. We'd pick up these five gallon gas cans like you'd see, used to be attached to the side of a Jeep or something like that. We had a slew of those when it [the war] was over with: canteens, various things they'd leave out. A field telephone, you know it's in a leather case about that high [motions about 12 inches high]. And then between us boys there we'd play Army at times. We'd go through the woods and dig those fox holes in the ground. We'd divvy up between two teams to tact each other and charge and see if we could get up to their fox hole. That was one game we played all the time. We'd make our own guns out of wood, lumber. Wear our helmets, we had some helmets, I guess we got those too. So that was one sport we had during the war years doing that. And other than that we didn't go outside of Overhills much until after the war when we started driving. I started driving about 1948; I was 16. Then once in a while we'd go to a movie or a drive-in or some gathering associated with the school.

Florence Short

[For "kick the can"] you have two teams and you start at different places and then whoever kicks the can wins. And so then you have to have guards around the can. I don't remember all the parts but it's a great deal of sneaking around and capturing all the prisoners and so on. There's the freeing of the prisoners, all that. We would play beyond the flagpole. That's where it would start. [We played] everywhere.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

During World War II, which was an interesting time for me, the military used Overhills for

During the war years we didn't do much traveling away from home. The [gas ration existed then]. My father's car had the lowest gas ration sticker you could get, so our traveling was limited. He used a company pick up truck for work. Unless there was something like a basketball game the school was having, we'd get together and pool everybody, that's about the only time the car would come out of the garage. We had to entertain ourselves in the area. There was always plenty to do in the area. Very seldom did we ever go to Fayetteville except for the weekend. The car came out of the garage on Saturday and we'd go to Fayetteville or shopping. The car came out on Sunday to go to church. And it went back in the garage locked up again until Saturday unless there was something special during the week.

Ella McPhail

Back then [1930s, 1940s], well you take now, most everybody goes to town on Saturday or through the week or anytime they want to. Just take a trip to town, go to town. We just had one car. It was six children, two grown-ups. That was a car full. So we didn't usually get to go much all at one time. As far as going to town to get groceries and things like that, most children didn't go. I heard people talk about being poor. I said I guess we was one of the poor poor. I said at least we was lucky enough to have a car. Some people around us didn't even have a car.



Figure 11.2: Walter Edward Bruce, Jr. outside his family home in 1933. Courtesy of Ed Bruce, Jr.

Katherine Stilwell

This creek was shaded with trees overhanging and you could see the bottom in some areas but the further up the creek you went the darker it became. There was an old log I remember as a young child, and occasionally there would be a snake lying on that log. We would throw rocks at it until he came off in the water, and then we would go swimming. But those were happy days really because it was so hot and it was just wonderful to go swimming in the creek. Some people don't know what a creek is but it's a runoff from a river or it comes from somewhere that just meanders through the woods. This one was wonderful because it was deep enough for us - well we thought we were swimming but we weren't. But it was a cooling off period.

Patricia Penny

It certainly was different from today. It was very quiet, very peaceful, very laid back. I can remember there were no girls anywhere around. All I had to play with was boys. The Dardens had

boys. They also had girls, but the girls were older than me. We played in the woods. We rode bicycles all day long. We played in the creeks. We were outdoors nearly from sunup to sundown. Of course, mothers never had to worry about their kids. I guess the worst thing could've happen, we would've gotten snake bitten. But you didn't worry about getting kidnapped because I don't think many people knew anybody lived there.



Figure 11.3: Children playing in snow in front of the Alabaster house on March 12, 1924. Courtesy of Louise Alabaster.

go to school. But anyway I did. She says, "You have to see this." And slowly coming down the railroad track was the train and it was pulling all of the animals from the Ringling Brothers Circus and they were going the back way and they were going down to Fort Bragg to set up a tent on the other side of Fort Bragg near Bonnie Dune. It had snowed and of course they were the first train there so it was silent, very silent. And it was just moving along extremely slow. Momma said, "Now I can't go to work until they pass." But it was a long time before it passed. The animals were in there, but they were quiet and everything was really still. I was so glad that I got to see that, that Momma had woke me up. That was there at the house by the railroad track.

Isabel Elmer

One thing I do remember: when I was a little bit older we would always hope they would leave a box car on the railway tracks at the freight station so we could climb up it and play. We did a lot of that. We climbed the water tower which was scary but fun. Of course we rode all the time. I don't even remember my first horse ride I was so little. And we would go with my grandmother - she would take us quite often down to where they had the stables and the dog kennels for the fox hunt. We'd watch them getting fed. That was a big activity, watching the dogs getting fed. That was very exciting. I remember that. And we'd play hide-n-seek. We would play when we were a little older - I think it's called Spud. We'd always play it down there. You'd throw the ball up and everybody would try to get as far away as possible. Then somebody would say Spud or something like that. I don't know what, we were always playing that. We were always playing that game. That went on in my children's generation. They always played it too. We always played croquet, quite a bit. My grandmother would take me walking on the golf course very early in the morning. She was an early riser. We'd walk the whole golf course. I never really did [play golf]. We'd play tennis later on. When we were older there was a tennis court. There was paddle tennis too, built later on.

Dorothy Yantis

I have to tell you this. This is one of my best memories. This is a wonderful memory. When I was growing up we actually got snow, but we got lots of sleet. The sleet would pour down and there would be lots of icicles around our house. This one time it had snowed at night and Momma always got up and cooked Daddy breakfast. Then he would be gone by seven. She says, "Get up, get up." I didn't want to get up because I think I had to

go to school. But anyway I did. She says, "You have to see this." And slowly coming down the railroad track was the train and it was pulling all of the animals from the Ringling Brothers Circus and they were going the back way and they were going down to Fort Bragg to set up a tent on the other side of Fort Bragg near Bonnie Dune. It had snowed and of course they were the first train there so it was silent, very silent. And it was just moving along extremely slow. Momma said, "Now I can't go to work until they pass." But it was a long time before it passed. The animals were in there, but they were quiet and everything was really still. I was so glad that I got to see that, that Momma had woke me up. That was there at the house by the railroad track.

Bob Model

That was road was called the psychological barrier and it was - did you hear about that? And [Posy's] father actually would go out there and would get himself situated where we couldn't see him, probably in a bunker and then we'd go out there. Did Posy tell you that? He'd hoot and holler and gosh we'd quickly try to run across the road and run all the way back to Croatan.

Walter Bull

This would go where we came out and turned on the road going to my house, that little trail through there. We used to ride bikes through there. I was riding a bike, my brother was on the handlebars and Barbara, my sister, was riding sidesaddle. And that's a real steep hill and we were going flying and I lost control of it and he hit the bridge and took stitches. We told him we'd kill if we told our parents what actually happened, what we were doing. But he was accident prone anyway so we said he just fell down.

Tommy McPhail

These steps bring back memories. I [will never] forget them. I came home one day from school and Momma said, "Daddy's sitting on the back steps waiting on you." I came out through the door and I came out here and I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "I want you to get me a switch." He said, "Bring back whatever kind you want. You can bring a little one back or you can bring a good one back." I said, "What have I done?" It was during Christmas. My cousin had come home with me during the Christmas holiday and - we'd always kept our tractors, Daddy had two little Super A tractors what we farmed with and they were parked in the shed. He'd always tell you, "Y'all stay off them tractors." Well we got on the tractors, played, and my cousin had switched one of them one. The battery [had] gone down. He asked me, "Were y'all on the tractors this weekend?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Who was on such and such tractor?" I said, "Well I was on the one on this side." He said, "That there, well somebody left one of the tractors switched on. The battery's dead." I was standing up, I was trembling. He said, "I'll be back in a minute." He went in the house and I heard him get in the pick-up and leave. I stood there and stood there and went back in the house and said [to Momma], "Is Daddy come back or what?" She said, "No, he found you told him the truth. It wasn't the tractor you were on that the battery is dead, it was the other one." I said, "Phew."

Linda Holder

I don't ever remember coming home late but one night in my life, from a date, because we knew we'd get our tails. We had to be home at ten o'clock, ten o'clock at night. If you went to a movie, whatever. If the movie wasn't over you had to get up and leave and come home. If you don't, you got your tail tore up. Well one night Johnny and I went to see *The Ten Commandments*. It was that old drive-in, old timey drive-in like you pull your cars up and we went. I looked at the time and I likely had a fit, it was after ten o'clock. We had to leave the movie and come home. Well Brenda was already home. I came to that window right there and knocked on the window. I [will never] forget it. Knocked on the window and Brenda let me in. Daddy never knew. I told him years later, but he never knew I was late.

This room right here. It was Mom and Daddy's bedroom. And they had their bed right here. Well I was sitting on the bed one night. Randy was in the basinet, my little baby brother. And I heard

somebody at the door. I looked up at the door. Nobody knocked but they turned the door knob. I looked up and they had these prison clothes on. This is not a lie. It is true. He had on prison clothes. And he turned the door knob. I couldn't scream for anybody because Brenda was in another room and Patsy was in another room. And I knew if I screamed he might shoot or something. Well my husband - he was not my husband at the time but - his brother and his mother kept our baby brother while my mother sick, six or eight weeks. Anyway they would bring his crib and all back home because we were able to look after him during the summertime. That guy saw car lights coming up and he took off running. But that was the scariest thing I have ever had in my life, that prisoner coming up on our steps. I wonder what would have happened if they had not shown up because us girls were here with the baby by ourselves. And we were 14, 15 years old.

Ronny Holmes

When [the Rockefeller family kids] were growing up, [we always played together]. Some more than others, but we lived on the Hill so we were right there in the circle. We rode golf carts with them and we didn't ride much horses with them because the horses were sort of a *no, no*. You worked at the stables but - later on we rode horses with them. Whatever you do after school. They were here on vacation, but we were always in school. Our vacations never coincided. So whatever you did in the afternoon, pop firecrackers with them. I don't know if you asked Kim about what they used to do, out on the golf course there was a great old big sand trap there. And every year they'd put on this show, a reenactment of some Civil War battle. Every year they did it. It was elaborate. They had the money to buy all the stuff. They had the cannons going off; firecrackers would be the cannons or whatever. Those boys would put on a pretty good show, pretty impressive for us. But the Yankees always won, always whipped us. But that was a big show, everyone went to that. Put on a production up there. But that was back. But they did it just about every year. And Kim and his brothers generally did it. Kim and his two brothers I think. Played golf some over the years with some of the kids. Hunted: bird hunted, quail hunted some with them.

But you're way back in the boonies here so whatever friends you had right here, growing up that was your friends. We played: blacks, whites, Indians, it didn't matter, that's who you played with until we got our drivers license and could get away, that sort of thing. But it was good, it was quiet. Nobody else had a golf course in their backyard. You could walk out the door and go hunting, those kinds of things, so that was a lot of fun.

Dennis Washington

I could see where you would say estate because my life was different than most kids. I could go 10 miles from Overhills and kids were living a totally different life that I was living. Totally different. I could talk to that child and [he would] have no conception of what Overhills was to me, they would not appreciate it. To grow up in an environment where I could play on a golf course like that when a lot of black kids at the time could not go on a golf course, and to not even really know that I maybe not have that experience outside of that environment, I think it allowed me to take things for granted to some degree. I don't think we've experienced a lot of racism.

School Days

Atlas Simpson Davis, manager of the Lindley Nursery, encouraged community development by building a school and community house in the Anderson Creek area near Jumping Run Creek. Possible names for this church/school include "Valley Mount School," "Mount Carmel Church," and "Nursery School." The Nursery School (named for Lindley Nursery) was in session from ca. 1911 – ca. 1925, during which the children who lived on Overhills attended school here. At the start of the 1925 - 1926 school year, Anderson Creek School opened near Lillington, consolidating smaller schools like that at the Nursery. Segregation persisted into the 1960s, with African American and Native American children attending school in Johnsonville until that time.

Andrew Jackson, Sr.

Well they didn't have a high school. We went to the Nursery, which was about five miles and we went on horse and covered wagon. And we went over there and built a stable and they would haul hay and feed over there and put it out. We'd drive the wagon over there, had it covered, a little covered wagon with a small sided wagon. Hauled about 12, 14, 15 kids. Had two seats, each seat along each side. That's the school bus. There was no school buses then. But in 1921 I had to go to high school, and the Alabaster boy [did too]. So we came over here to Lillington and they had the boarding school. We lived in the boys' dormitory and I went to school there two years. And that time, the third year, they had buses come on. So they gave me number seven and they said, you can haul kids over the Nursery, and get all the high school kids and go to Fayetteville. That was a long haul then. We went to high school in Fayetteville in '23. Then in '24 they built Anderson Creek. And they said you can take them and take the school bus and go to Anderson Creek. So I went over there and I was the first one to graduate in Anderson Creek, first one and only one. I don't have any trouble having a class reunion.

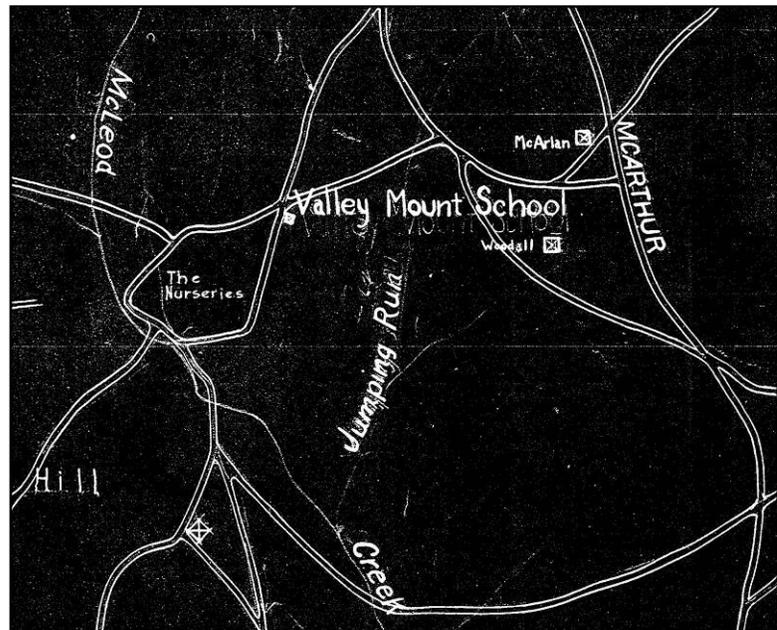


Figure 11.4: An inset of a ca. 1923 map showing Valley Mount School and the area around "The Nurseries." Overhills Maps Collection, Fort Bragg Cultural Resources.

Dorothy Yantis

So we had to go all the way over to Anderson Creek School and it was 30 miles each way and we had to drive those dirt roads. High school boys drove the bus back then. Of course we were always landing in the ditch. We never got to school. First period I had algebra. I was rarely ever there for algebra. Sometimes the bus wouldn't even get to our house. They had to go way over back of

Overhills to pick up somebody one time. The bus driver was in my class so he would honk the horn as he went back. Then I would be almost ready but then I had to really get ready. Then as he came back he'd start blowing the horn up by the Cobles' house up there on the hill. So then I would run down there.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

I went to Anderson Creek High School. Anderson Creek High School at the time was one building and it had grades one - twelve in it. My class was one of the largest [graduating] classes at that time. I think we had 32. The year before I think there were 16. And we didn't have a gym. A lot of the other schools in the county at the time had a gymnasium but our basketball goals were outside, dirt court type. But we had a strong basketball team in the county. And we didn't have school athletic buses at the time that would take you home after school events. We'd play baseball on the field beside the school. Of course we had to go out ahead of time and drag the field, put the bases down. We'd play what ever other team came in. When it's over with you got home the way you best could. You either thumbed home or there'd be somebody there from Spring Lake



Figure 11.5: School children pose next to the bus, ca. 1925. The bus driver is likely the young man on the left, possibly Andrew Jackson, Sr. Courtesy of Louise Alabaster.

with a pick up truck going back. We'd have seven or eight people in the back of a pick up truck going back to Spring Lake. From there I'd get onto Overhills.

As far as school goes, we would all catch the bus there in front of the kennels. It would be the Darden family that lived down in what used to be the horse stable. There were six in that family: three boys, three girls. We all went to school together. And the house down below where we lived there was a family there that had two that went to school. That was the Spence [family] at the time. And then the Shaw [family] - Charles Shaw and Jack Shaw lived up there in the studio. So we had those from around our area plus my sister and myself. Then we'd go on over the road and there was the Cameron house where Mr. Archie Cameron lived at what I call the gas pumps over there. It was Dot Cameron that went to school. And my cousin that lived with my aunt and uncle, Dot Bruce, would be on the bus. And then we'd go on over the road. The bus ran on a dirt road the whole time except for about 300 yards when we got on near the school. We went on that dirt road through the golf course a little ways and turned back to the left and Overhills had a farm down there on the river. We picked up students there and came back up and continued from there on up towards Anderson Creek picking up students. There was enough in the area between the children and adults that we could have ball games and things like that. I was talking about that, riding on the school bus. It seemed like it was a long trip from the time we got on until the time

we got off at school and there back in the afternoon. Of course that bus went down through the Nursery picking up people there and on around through what I call the flat bottom part of the Nursery, go around across the bridge, turn left out by the sanatorium area, picking up students there and on down that road picking up more where the Taylors used to live. And then turn back and come in where that golf course is located now towards Anderson Creek picking up more. We'd have a bus load by the time we got to school. And I think the last ones to be picked up were the Shaws, where the Shaw family lived over there. I can remember our bus was never too reliable. It was always late to school and half the time it just broke down and another bus would have to come get us. It was always something like that. Very seldom did we make it to school on time.

Katherine Stilwell

I may have mentioned the other day that we [Overhills children] had up to the seventh grade. That was before I started the school [at Anderson Creek] over beyond the Nursery. There was a one room schoolhouse [at the Nursery] and I'm sure it's been torn down. But Miss Lillian Black, for whom a school in Spring Lake is named, was the teacher and she was my seventh grade teacher at Anderson Creek, but she taught in that one room school for quite a period. One of the Jackson boys, my cousin, drove a wagon and all of the kids from Overhills who were up to the seventh grade rode in that to the school. I don't know how long it took them to get there but I don't imagine they had much of a day by the time they go there. From Overhills to the Nursery was a pretty good distance [by wagon].

Oh if our bus got in the ditch, if they had dragged the roads there

was so much sand and if our bus got in the ditch you just stayed there till somebody came along to pull you out. That was horrible. And my mother had a fit because she could imagine all kinds of things. I jumped out in a yellow jacket nest one morning and they just clung all over me. I must have had 100 bites before they got them off of me. But the teachers took care of you and somebody took me home. It was a wild existence wasn't it? It really was.

Dennis Washington

I went to Anderson Creek with Ron and Rick. But before that there were segregated schools so we had two school buses come in to pick up about six or eight kids. So you had a bus for the black kids to go to Johnsonville School and a bus for the white kids that went to Anderson Creek School. And in the seventh grade they did away with all of that silliness and then there was just

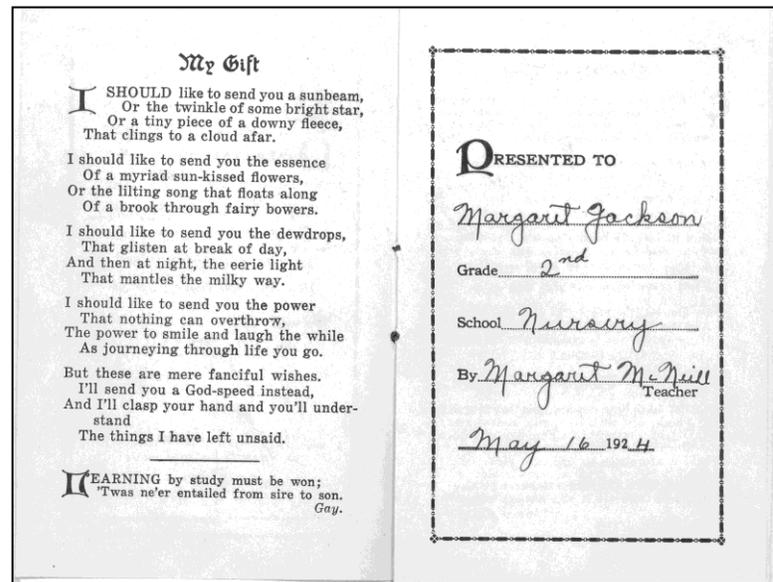


Figure 11.6: The front inside cover of a book given to Margaret Jackson, an Overhills student at the Nursery School in 1924. Courtesy of Brenda Mathews Hollenberg.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

one bus that picked up all the kids and took us to Anderson Creek. It was around '67 or '68. Two school buses to pick up about eight kids.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CHURCH

For many Overhills residents and some seasonal visitors, occasional trips off the estate included visits to an area church. Some of the local places of worship included Bethel AME Zion, Gourd Springs Church, and United Pentecostal Church. One church that stood in the old Manchester village area served numerous employees and some Rockefellers. At least two long-time Overhills employees¹ were elders in the Church of the Covenant Presbyterian Church, located just south of Overhills on the south side of the Lower Little River.



Figure 12.1: Church of the Covenant at Manchester, ca. 1940.
Courtesy of A. Bruce Strauch.

Dorothy Yantis

When I was little I went up there [to Cypress Presbyterian Church], when I was real little. And this is a unique church because it was all Scottish people there. And only the men could sing in the choir. It was an old Presbyterian Church and there were two doors. You went in the front door and I think it's still like that. I'm not sure. The men would go in the left hand door and the women and children would go in the right hand door. And the children would sit with the women and the men would sit together on this side. And they had a pitiful little choir and there was a very old man directing the choir. I don't think Daddy ever sang, but he would be sitting over there with the women. One Sunday we got there early and Momma was greeting everybody. That's where they greeted everybody, all their kin and all the country people. So when she started in the church I ran ahead and I went in the men's side just to see what it was like. It was just a door. But she called me and I went in the right side and I sat with her. Daddy had worked for some of these people. I think

they were the McDonalds and they had a big farm out there. I read the name in there [on the Christmas list]: Duncan Darroch. And somehow he was related to us, that name rings a bell. They were way out in the country and they gave them presents. And Mrs. McDonald, Daddy lived with them and he was sort of Mr. McDonald's person that went with him everywhere because he liked to drink. Daddy would take him somewhere and put him back in the carriage and drive him home with the mules or the horses or whatever they had. And she was always there in the front row with a gigantic hat on and her daughter the same way, because they were people of wealth. Of course everybody wore a hat and gloves. I went there while I was little.

[When I was older, I went to] the Church of the Covenant with the Bruces. They would drive by and pick me up every Sunday morning without fail. Mom and Daddy would go off to the country church because they were all older people and all of the people that lived on the place and everybody went down to Church of the Covenant. And I went. I think Mrs. Rockefeller gave - there was a church and they had to build a Sunday school room there. And I think Mrs. Rockefeller said I'll give you half and they had to raise the other half. So they had a building there, which I guess now is kind of like the social hall or something. I don't know. It was on the left hand side.

When I was a teenager my sisters had beautiful clothes. Ruby lived in Fayetteville. Frank Darden, the oldest Darden brother, taught Sunday school and had youth at Sunday night and led singing and things. But a lot of times when the youth had a program we always did the Fallen Woman thing. So I would get to be the Fallen Women and I would borrow some of my sister's clothes or she left some of them there at the house sometimes. And I would put those on and I would be the Fallen Woman.

Katherine Stilwell

The church was more of a social institution as well as a religious institution because that was our point of coming together. And we went about three times per week to church. My mother was born and reared a Baptist and my dad was a Lutheran but the little Church of the Covenant was the only church that was available to us and it was Presbyterian. So I grew up a Presbyterian. Doesn't matter to me, what difference does it make? At the time I thought that was the way it should be. The church was the center of activities. My mother was active in the Ladies Auxiliary. She cooked; she made beautiful cakes and pies from scratch. You didn't know what a pastry was to buy at the store. She made everything from scratch and to make for the church they had bake sales and they prepared things for the air force men who came and that was how they made money.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

That church that's located down there on the riverbank, I called it Church of Manchester, but it's called Church of the Covenant. It's a Presbyterian church. That's the church my father and mother were married in it. I think they were the first ones to get married in. I think the manse that's across the road from that church, I think I heard my mother say that Mr. Percy Rockefeller helped build that or had it built or contributed to it being built, which goes back to before my time.

Patricia Penny

Our family went there. My Aunt Thelma and Uncle Bryan went there and then Dardens went there. And I had a cousin and [she and] her husband went there. That was Virginia and Arnold Strauch that lived in the garage down below the Croatan. They went there. And a family that rented in the kennels went there. Dardens, did I say the Dardens? [The] Dardens went there. So there were several families from Overhills that went to that church. And the Holmeses all went there.

Bob Model

That's where we used to go to church when we came down. We used to go to church there every Sunday. Mother would take us there. The Dardens were very important. I was just thinking Frank would always get up there and close his eyes and lead everybody in prayer. The Bruces went, the Holmeses went. The Dardens were always there. I'm sure others, but those are the ones that stick out.

Cookie Model

Always went to church, to the sunrise service. Church was very much a part of my mother's life, so we always went to the little church and Mrs. Bruce could really belt them out, the hymns.

Dennis Washington

I remember going to church and our car was always the dirtiest car at church. I remember that. And I would do whatever I could on Saturday before we went to church on a Sunday. I would wash the car. That was my thing, I just didn't want it - you get a point where you say that I don't want my car to be the dirtiest car on the parking lot.

Sundays came; [my dad] went to church. He would get up and go and visit certain houses we were doing things like, he would collect what was called "pastor salary." So he would go around, visit people, collect their little envelopes, take it to church turn it in and then go home and shower and get ready to go to church. So this was like eight o'clock in the morning and he'd already been around visiting the neighbors and stuff, turn that in, go home, and get ready for church. Sunday was his day to maybe visit some friends.

Jo Ann Locklear

Way back in the day we used to go to right here, right there by the Tastee Freeze over on 210. It's a small white church there. We used to go there for a while but then the pastor of that church, Pastor Crosby, he moved out of state. And then Hubert and them, they go down there on the left hand side, that's United Pentecostal Church on 210, the big church there. They go there where Brother Chavis is. We went there for a while when Brother Crosby was there but they kept changing ministers so we just stopped going.

¹ W.B. Bruce and A.S. Davis.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CORN, CHRISTMAS, COSTUMES

Certain occasions were cause for celebration and recognition at Overhills. Customs established in the 1920s that honored the working men and women and their families included corn shuckings, pig pickings, and Christmas parties. Over the years these traditions diminished, though some informal celebrations and gatherings continued.

Corn Shuckings & Pig Pickings

Corn shucking was a rural southern tradition dating to the nineteenth century. A celebration of the harvest and a gathering of labor, these shuckings were organized at Overhills throughout the 1920s and 1930s. About 800 bushels were shucked in 1933. Isabel Rockefeller funded a barbecue and W.B. Bruce coordinated the event. Corn shucking events faded away over time, but in the latter decades, employees recall pig pickings as special occasions.

Katherine Stilwell

Oh we had barbecues at Overhills, did anybody ever tell you about that? I can remember going to barbecues because the women always made the cakes and pies. And that was in the Davis yard really next to some shrubbery that they had. I can remember they made pits in the ground and had spits for the pigs. As children we would run by where they were working with the pig and they would give us meat to eat. Then they had a big corn shucking following the barbecue and then a barn dance.

Ella McPhail

Over here is where they'd have the parties at. And they used to have corn shuckings too, in the fall. They'd have corn shuckings. They'd have a big supper. I know a couple of them they had over at the big house, but most of them they'd have down at Long Valley. I was small then. There's just some things that you can remember like that. We'd always remember things like that because we got to go to the party and we got to have a good time. Back then kids didn't get to go much. There was not a lot of places to go that we could afford to go. So many people didn't have cars back then. We were fortunate enough to have a car, but we didn't get to go a lot. But I guess that's why she would take the people to town and buy things for them. And she'd take maybe a couple of families to town and buy clothes for them during the year.



Figure 13.1: Overhills employees and friends at the corn shucking, ca. 1933. Courtesy of Sandy Hemingway.

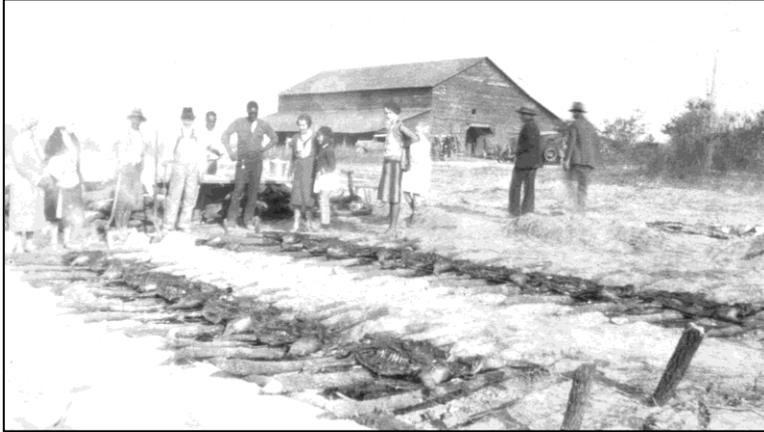


Figure 13.2: Overhills employees and friends gather behind the barn near the Davis house to watch the meat cook. Courtesy of Ed Bruce, Jr.

Locklear, and Elmon, my husband, they would do a pig picking. They would get a pig and they would cook it. Sometimes they'd get up really early like four o'clock in the morning and put it on or three o'clock. I have known them to cook them all night depending on what time they wanted to eat. And they loved it. And Elmon and I would make the barbecue sauce. We'd make up the sauce and they loved it and Elmon would just let them come to the grill. Sometimes he would chop it up. Sandy would order maybe from a grocery store or different places, hush puppies and slaw. And sometimes the girls would fix that, [those] that worked over at the houses that cooked and all for them when they come down. But most of the time Sandy would order it, the goodies that goes with it. Also, Elmon, my husband, he would take hogs from the hog operation over there and he'd take them to a slaughter house and he'd have country sausage made up. The best sausage I ever ate in my life because, it was good and lean. It was just hardly any fat because they put the hams, the best part of the pork, all together.

Rosie Tyler

A lot of times they would have parties down at the garage where they built that last garage and they would [have] Christmas down there. Like if they'd given out bonuses, they would give out bonuses every year, so they would have a Christmas party down there. Pig pickings in the summer and stuff like that.

Jo Ann Locklear

That was like a yearly thing. They would do that two or three times a year because they raised their own hogs and they get like Daddy and Freeman, they might have two or three of them great big grills. Like I said they get coolers and tin tubs full of anything anybody want to drink. They look out for them boys. They would have all kinds of food. It would go on – they would let everybody off early. We get off early and they start cooking that hogs and go till twelve, one o'clock at night just having a good old time. Just out there cooking and everybody just, fellowshipping amongst each other and laughing and joking and having a great time out there. They would go over there and everybody would clean up and go up on the hill and they would finish up there. And the next

Ed Bruce, Jr.

Has anybody talked to you about over at the nursery when they used to have barbecues over there and cook hogs? See them spread out right there. It's over in that area where that full two story house is located, where Mr. Davis used to live.

Carolyn Lucas

Before we left from over there they got to where they loved pig pickings, a southern type pig picking. Jo Ann's daddy, William

day a lot of them would leave and Daddy and different ones would take them and drive them to the airport and stuff like that. It was a blast. It was a blast. We had so much fun up there.

Glodean Robinson

Now towards when they realized that they was closing up, they had all kind of special events and big parties. They had one big event where they invited just about everyone that had worked for the family throughout the years and let them come back on

the estate and gave them a pig picking. They had a band, an

outdoor band and it was right behind Croatan. It was so nice. Their best party, they had a square dance, they had a big thing for Kim's 40th birthday. They gave him a – I think it was like a three day celebration. And he had all his friends. In fact, they had every house filled up with his friends for his 40th birthday. It was a big to do. So that was really nice, his 40th birthday. Somebody sent him a card that said, "Lordy, Lordy, Kim turned forty."



Figure 13.3: Employees at a pig picking, ca. 1980. Courtesy of Jo Ann Locklear.

Christmas Parties

Beginning in the 1920s and lasting into the 1940s, Christmas parties for employees were held each year in the Clubhouse, funded by donations from Overhills Land Company shareholders and syndicate members. Beginning in the late 1920s, Isabel Rockefeller hosted a Christmas party for the employees and neighbors. She treated everyone to a party with music, a Santa Claus visit, and presents. Christmas lists from 1927 - 1933 list every adult and child on Overhills with their ages and what presents they received that year. Narrators recall Christmas parties in the Clubhouse, set mostly in the 1930s and 1940s.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

And then on in the early days I can only remember this on one event here. There was a gathering in the Clubhouse for Christmastime for the people on the place. About the only thing I can remember there was in the Clubhouse it had one room and it was a library room and they had big fireplaces in the living room and the library. When it was time for Santa Claus to come for all the children, I was just a tot at the time, you'd hear this bell ringing and this ho-ho-ho and there was a curtain across in the front of the fireplace where Santa Claus was going to come out. I was standing next to the fireplace and I remember my mother pulling the curtain back and I remember I saw Santa Claus sitting in there with a stool ringing his bell coming out. So there was events like that but I think a lot those events went on prior to the time that I can remember. Father and

Mother talked about the '20s, the early '30s. I think Ms. Percy Rockefeller had a lot of them. She would buy gifts for everybody and the whole place.

<u>CHRISTMAS LIST 1932.</u>		
<u>NAME.</u>	<u>AGE. 1933</u>	<u>GIFT.</u>
+ COBLE C T		BLACK SWEATER <i>2.50 \$1.0</i>
" MRS C T		POCKET BOOK
" CATHERINE	10	DRESS -JERSEY <i>Paper dolls + scissors</i>
+ DARDEN TROY		TAN SWEATER
" MRS TROY		SPORT SWEATER
" RUTH	8	DRESS-JERSEY <i>Pocket-book</i>
" FRANK	7	PULLOVER SWEATER <i>Harmonica</i>
" ISABEL	6	DRESS <i>Sea suit</i>
" THERESA MARIE	4	2 DRESSES <i>Loll</i>
" DAVID	2	COAT <i>Red Trunk</i>
+ CAMERON A C		BLACK SWEATER
" MRS A C		POCKET BOOK
" LONA MAE	14	JUMPER <i>Beads</i>
" RUBY	11	JERSEY DRESS <i>Paper dolls scissors</i>
" ARCHIE JR	8	SWEATER <i>Bolo</i>
<i>slightly over</i> MCKAY MRS	<i>8 mo</i>	BLUE SWEATER

Figure 13.4: Part of the Overhills Christmas list, 1932, with employee families listed, their ages, and their presents. Overhills Document Collection, North Carolina State Archives.

Ella McPhail

She [Isabel S. Rockefeller] was certainly was good to all the people who were farming. Every year they'd have a Christmas tree and get everybody gifts and have a big supper for them. They'd get all the kids some kind of a little toy and something to wear. And the grown-ups, they got something to wear like sweaters and pants and things like that.

My niece, Margaret Allgood, her name [is] on there. She used to Charleston. She could do a good Charleston and one Christmas Miss Rockefeller got her a little red outfit because she could get her to dance when they'd have a Christmas tree. They'd have dances. They'd have a good time over there. She found out she could dance and she got her a red outfit to wear.

Dorothy Yantis

[My sister] Lona was the one that knew Mrs. Percy Rockefeller. She [Mrs. Percy Rockefeller] died I think right after I was born, I think two or three years later or something like that. But they always told the stories about Mrs. Percy Rockefeller. She would always shop and buy all these presents for all of the people. And she would have Lona come and wrap them up. And then they would have a big Christmas tree in the Clubhouse. And they even did that after she died. They had a big Christmas tree in the Clubhouse.

And then one year I went back of the Coble's house - I went back in there and I thought, I'll just find us a Christmas tree because it had snowed. And then, which was an absolute no-no, I broke a lot of holly berries off of the tree and brought them home to decorate. Of course Momma was the disciplinarian and what she would do, she would get a switch. There were pear trees in our backyard and she would pull off one that was very limber, a young branch, and then she would just switch me a couple times. It only took a couple times till I got the message, then I wouldn't do that.



Figure 13.5: The Bull family children, grandchildren of Archie and Annie Cameron, celebrate Christmas at Overhills in the Cameron house, ca. 1960. Courtesy of Betty Deer.

Katherine Stilwell

And at Christmas we always had a square dance at the Clubhouse. Everybody on the estate was invited. My father called square dance figures. He knew them. We had live string bands from the Shaw family over in Bunnlevel where we were the other week. We didn't know what canned music was. These live string bands were present and they danced until twelve and one o'clock in the evening. And they went on and on and on. And that's how I learned to square dance because my dad would let me dance. He took me as a partner. I thought it was wonderful. Then they had the Christmas tree when people were given gifts and that sort of thing. It was an exciting time because there were refreshments. Children looked forward to that. And we could be together.

Well everybody who lived on the estate [came to the parties]. Farmers, you know the people who farmed or grew tobacco or whatever. I don't know who all they were. But anyhow all of those people came with their family. They were invited. I don't know whether they all came or not. I always went because my daddy and mother danced. They always had a string band and they always

had plenty of food. They had, the Christmas tree was when you got a gift. I loved the party; the atmosphere was what meant so much to me.

[The Christmas tree was a] tremendous thing, it was a tremendous tree. And that probably came off the place, well any year that – I can't remember but my dad would say, "What kind of a tree do you want this year?" Sometimes we had a holly and sometimes we had something that was akin to cedar because we cut our own. You would never have thought of buying a Christmas tree.

Patricia Penny

[At Christmas] you didn't go down to Spring Lake or Fayetteville and buy a Christmas tree. You just walked out in the woods with your Dad and chopped one down. Very memorable experiences going to get that Christmas tree every year. Always chopped down a cedar and brought it home. Mrs. [Faith] Model had the big Christmas party for all the people over in Croatan. I don't remember [how long that continued]. I know when I left home I no longer got gifts but I used to get some gifts at Christmas. Nothing real elaborate but nice things.

Tommy McPhail

In the earlier days Momma said they always had something every year. Maybe a couple years. Bob [Model] came in one year. He had a big party for all of us. He and his family were there. Matter of fact, we had it out in front of the old Croatan, the circle out in front of Croatan. That's where we set up tables and all had a get together right there. I couldn't tell you what year, but we did do that one year. During Christmas the workers would always have a dinner, this is when Billy was there, he was into all of us getting together a lot. We'd always have a sit down and eat during Christmas and Thanksgiving or something. And it'd take place down there in the shop, what we call the shop down over there on the hill. We'd always have something in there. [Work stopped for a few days.] The folks who did the feeding of the animals, no, naturally they had to do their stuff. And too, poor Thurman and the guys at the stables they may get a half day or something but if the folks were down during the holidays they had to be there to service them, get the horses ready and all.

Glodean Robinson

Okay now, they per say never came Christmas [except for] every now and then. They try to let us have Christmas with our families. They come the day after Christmas and they stayed through the New Year. After we do their dinner and stuff we leave so they have their privacy and that way they get to do whatever they want to do. Now for Christmas they would be very generous with us. They'd give us ham, turkey, a fruit basket, cookies, cash. They would be very generous Christmastime. Like I said most of the time they weren't there Christmas. They come in the day after.

Bill Shaw

They used to have what they call a clubhouse out there. And every year, well at Christmas that was the biggest thing in the whole country around here 'til about '40 'cause that's when Rockefeller's come down. They'd just give them all kinds of lavish things, something we'd never heard tell of. But they really give them a lot of good stuff at Christmas. But then my cousins, all of them are musicians, and they played a lot of music out there and they'd have square dances out there three

or four times a year, at least. I used to go out with my daddy and some of them when I was just a little fellow.

Costume Parties and Square Dances

While little is known about such occasions, a group of 1920s photographs showing revelers near the Hill and a childhood recollection of square dancing suggest that the Overhills staff enjoyed parties in that era.



Figures 13.6, 13.7, 13.8: Overhills employees and friends prepared for a costume party in the Clubhouse, ca. 1925. Photographs are from a collection of Percy Rockefeller's valet, Albert Alabaster. Courtesy of Louise Alabaster.

Louise Alabaster

They had a lot of parties. A lot of them were costume so when you see some folks dressed up crazy, that's what they were doing. My husband [told me about the parties] because he didn't like them too much. He didn't like dressing up. He enjoyed the parties but he wasn't too crazy about dressing in those costumes. They were all really sociable. They'd get together very often I think to have a good time. Well you know being that far out they had to make their own entertainment or do nothing and they didn't have television like we do now. They didn't have a lot of things. Of course they had a lot of good things we don't have now. They managed to have a good time.

Katherine Stilwell

My father and mother had square dances in our home in the first house we lived in. They would put me to bed and I would get up to see what was going on because who could sleep with all that [music] going on. Of course the Shaw family would furnish the music. We had a huge living room/dining room. That's where my mother did her quilting. We would come in and two or three women would be quilting with her and she would have the sideboard just laden with ham, fried chicken, baked goods, and food that they had had for lunch. Now in the evening we usually had leftovers from lunch and you didn't have to build a fire in the stove. Most of them played some instrument. And some of them spoke Gaelic. They were straight from Scotland.

EPILOGUE

HOME, HEAVEN, AND A FARM

With the sale of Overhills to the U.S. Army in 1997, the end of an era and the abandonment of a special place became a reality for those who knew Overhills as their own. With years, and in some cases, decades of separation from the estate, those who lived or worked there and those who considered it part of their family legacy offer personal reflections on and definitions of Overhills.

What is Overhills?

Overhills can be difficult to categorize as any one thing – it was a place for fox hunting and horseback riding, a beautiful, quiet stretch of Sandhills forest, an old railroad stop, a vacation home for the Rockefeller family, a collection of tenant farms, a post office, and more. When presented with the challenge of defining Overhills, several narrators offered their own unique perspectives.

Florence Short

Oh, what is Overhills? Well it's just heaven. And I have to tell you that I was at Mohican Ski Lodge many years ago. Some people were talking at a table. "This place is just heaven. This place and these pine trees. And then you can do this and then," – and I thought, well that's amazing, it sounds just like Overhills. And then they said, "And then I went. And I hope Lucia Rockefeller asks me again," or something. And it was. I never said anything to them. They were quite a bit younger than me. I don't know why I didn't say, "Oh I heard you talk about Overhills." They said, "Oh I hope we get asked again."

As far as our family or the guests or something going down, it was the staff that made Overhills because you were truly loved unconditionally. It doesn't matter what I would do or say or look like or [who my] friends [were]. I was Isabel and Freddy's daughter, Posy. I am totally adored as are my children. And they say, looks just like your father, all this kind of thing. So whatever people say, it's the staff that made people return. You wouldn't need to have a therapist or anything, you could just go on a ride with Thurman and he'd laugh and then what could be wrong? So there was always things of certain children of this person was related to that and all that kind of thing. So it was a real, I'm sure, community. It was very intricate.

Katherine Stilwell

We were pretty isolated from other people really. Overhills was a closely knit community – if you could call it a community – because we knew each other and we had a great deal of trust and faith in our families so everything seemed alright when you were in somebody else's home. They were our friends and neighbors.

I never felt that they were any different though because they were kind people. We all just felt that we were part of a community. We felt at home. I know I have people in Fayetteville now say, oh you were reared at Overhills? I say yes. And they say, how wonderful. And it was wonderful but not in the sense that they think of. It was a wonderful experience to be that close to nature. They had

two Shetland ponies called Amos and Andy. We could ride those until our feet dragged the ground. They let us – we thought we were grooming the horses. They let us do that sometimes. And we would ride, just practice riding in the circle. That was fun.

Dennis Washington

It is home. It is a special place. It's home. Where do I go now? Where do I take [my daughter Hannah] to and say, hey this is where we did this and this is where we did this.

Cookie Model

One of my biggest memories are the smells of the Sandhills, the wonderful smell of the pines and the soft, soft air that never leaves you and then walking into Croatan and having it smell always the same, very special. I think you guys [William and Stillman] had the same feelings, you felt as though you were home. And it was a place of great happiness for, I would say, probably everybody. It was a magic spot as a child to be able to be completely free, well taken care of.

Boy, let me tell you, don't ever drop your garbage because Thurman would find whoever threw it and make you throw it out. There was always a sense that you were protected. Mary Lee and Bernice, nobody, there would be no need for gates because everybody knew what was going on, it was a small community but it was respectful. I don't feel as though it wasn't a respectful community that people weren't happy. That's what Stillman and I were saying also, everybody seemed to be very happy.

That was the big thing, Stillman was saying too, was how they knew what you did like and what you didn't like and how they always made you feel very special, sort of queen for the day.

I would describe it as; we were going to the farm, when I was a child. I don't know what Uncle Avery thought of it, but when we would be going we'd tell our friends we were going down to the farm. There was cotton, tobacco. But as a child I remember we went to the farm. I will frequently say to people, my kids are in North Carolina, I will say, "We had a family farm in North Carolina." And then I'll talk about the family farm or Overhills and stuff like that. I grew up as the family farm. After Mr. Bruce died, different things started happening, there was more stuff going on. There was the car agency and then the pigs and the fallow deer. Then it became the recreational side versus the farm side. But it wasn't fancy, so that's where the estate word would not be fair. It was country casual, comfortable, safe.

William Hanson

Home. It felt like home. It felt like a family farm. It honestly felt like a home away from home.

Stillman Hanson

The feeling, I'm not sure, and it's a weird thing – if you say protected that sort of implies that there's a danger coming at you, but I never felt that there was any danger ever. It was just sort of utopia. It was bizarre. Well there were snakes, but that was fun because you get to go watch Bernice kill the snakes. I remember a couple of times, there's a snake, Bernice would come down and kill it. That was excitement. I never perceived that there was danger out there, that they were

protecting. It was just everyone was there taking care of you. I don't remember too much or about how other people treated staff but I just remember when we went it wasn't necessarily a division. My feeling was you were checking in with just the people that were there that were taking care of you and you were thankful. It was very – in the mornings – you really didn't feel that they were sort of on top of you, but you would always go in in the mornings and say, "Good morning, Mary Lee, how are you?" And she'd always have a couple of things and you'd say, "Can you bring out two eggs," and she'd say, "No problem." But then they weren't sort of on top of you, oh what can we do for you? It was always taken care of in the background, understated. You'd wake up in the morning and all of the laundry would be pressed and would be on the top of the stairs. You'd pick up your laundry and bring it to your place. And then as a kid, going down to the stables, this was Tony and Jerry, we always used to take them cookies and brownies. It was a big thing. And sort of older, you'd always be horseback riding with different people. When I was growing up it was sort of a treat to ride with Mother sort of at the end of the trip. After a week of riding you got to ride with Mother and Thurman and that was a big deal. That was awesome. Otherwise you'd be riding with Tony or Jerry or someone else. But it was more of checking in with old friends and they knew who you were and what you like.

Bob Model

I guess it all depends on who I'm trying to describe it to. I don't mean to be a wise guy but I think it all depends. First of all I never really talked much about it and tried to describe it. I always compartmentalized it. The golf was one part of Overhills. The hunting was another. The riding was one part of Overhills and just the beauty of the landscape. I think that my answer to people is that it was a lovely place for me personally. It was my home. I consider it as much of my home as I can consider my ranch in Wyoming. The other places that I've lived in my life have never really been my home but I can say Overhills was my home. So I guess to answer your question, first I would say it was my home for an important period in my life much like my ranch where I brought my family up, which is their home. If I look at my roots I say it's my home. What did I do there? I tried to know everybody on the place and tried to understand how it worked and spent as much time enjoying it as I did looking at the operation of it.

Some people have also called it a plantation. I always called it a farm, not to draw attention to it. I always thought describing it, it was more the beauty of the country and what happened there you could pick and choose what was important to you. Some people would say that bird watching was the activity that they like the most. Some would say golf. Others would say the riding and others would say the quail hunting. And others would say it was just the peace of the beauty of the blue sky and the pine trees and the sand. So I think it meant a lot of different things. To me it was my home in an important time in my life. I never considered Florida where I first lived or Greenwich where I lived second, but I always considered Overhills is really my home. And Wyoming is where I've lived most of my life. Interesting enough, the majority of my life has been lived in the west in terms of years.

Carolyn Lucas

All the memories I've got of this place is good. I loved it. I loved it on Overhills. I did. I loved it. It was a good place to stay. It was a good place to live. And they were good to their employees. You

worked but I mean you worked anyway. You did farm work on our side, you did. And they did work over there on the other side.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

I told [people who ask about Overhills] it's a place out in the country next to Fort Bragg between Fayetteville and Sanford. I lived out in the country. If they didn't want to know any more than that I just dropped it if that satisfied them. If they wanted to know more about it I told them it was a resort, a large resort owned by a private family and had family come down and had the capability for horseback riding, a lake for swimming, and a golf course for playing golf. To me it was a great place to live. I had the [use] of all those things especially when [the owners] weren't there, during the wintertime. My uncle wanted them to have the privilege of everything and didn't interfere with them. We didn't play golf or anything like that if they were there. When they weren't there I could play golf, I could fish, whatever.

Rosie Tyler

That's a hard question. Overhills to me was family. They helped a lot of families. They have housed I think like 60 families on the place at one time. And they helped everybody. It was about family, when we first went there. After we was there for while it kind of drove away from family. It all depended on who was the supervisor. Head departments, they take change command and they change different things. Not saying it wasn't still family, but it wasn't pointed family as much as it was in the '70s and '80s. That's when Mr. Rockefeller was alive. One thing that really pointed out to me one time, he found out my little girl was sick and he had Mr. Bruce come to take her to the doctor because we had no transportation. And he would arrange, [for] my oldest girl, he would have Mr. Bruce arrange to have her go to Chapel Hill that time she had bad nosebleeds and stuff like that. That's things that really stuck out to me. If they knew we had to go to the doctor he would make sure that there was someone to take us if we didn't have transportation. To me, Overhills, you went there with nothing, but if you had a mindset, you could save and have a better life. So therefore it was family.

Freeman Tyler

Oh man, what is it to me? At the time I was there, it was my life. Let me explain what I'm talking about. My whole life at that time was surrounded by my family and Overhills. I mean, folks that lived out there - this may sound silly to you - it's like you're in another world. You don't bother with the hustle and the bustle and living in a neighborhood somewhere where you're hearing your neighbors hollering all the time or fighting or you hear the cars running up and down the road all times of the night. Like you're cut off from everybody else. You're in a private surrounding. You live there. You go to sleep there. You wake up there. You go to work every day. You work right there on the place where you're living at. You work there. It's just a different world. My whole life was surrounded right there at Overhills, if you know what I'm talking about. And you get so attached to something like that. Man, I'm going to tell you, it tore me up when I had to, when they finally told me, "We've sold it." Man, you might've cut my heart out. So much of my life was invested in that. I gave, 16 ½ years of my life was out there.

And I mean, I was there just about every day. You couldn't lay out of work and hide from your boss because they knew where you were at. So if you laid out of work it had to be legit. You had to be sick or something, unless you were taking vacation. And in a place like that I didn't want to lay out of work. I didn't want to stay at home, because that there – and I told all the guys that I work with, I told some of these guys for years, and I told them, you guys can be content with being one of the boys but I got a goal. My goal is to be one of the people that runs this place. I said, I'm going to be your boss before it's all said and done. They told me I was crazy and stupid, but when I left there, I was the one calling the shots. I mean I had a general manager that I answered to, but everybody else answered to me. I was their boss. And it felt more than just a job to me. It went above and beyond just a job. Overhills was my home. That's what it was. It was my home.

Missing a Dirt Road

For some Overhills employees and residents, Overhills was their childhood home and/or a place of work for many years. Reflecting on time spent there, some become nostalgic.

Jo Ann Locklear

I miss it, God I miss it. It was wonderful living up there. I mean it was just so much fun. You'd get out and you could just walk all day. A day like today you could walk all day long and never be on the same road. You'd better know where you're going or you're going to get lost. See somebody waving, "Hey how you doing today? Hey how you all doing? Alright." And keep on going. Get out and just walk on the ground by the golf course or go down to the ponds or to the waterfall. It was beautiful.

I tell ya, I'd never knew you miss a dirt road so much. I miss that dirt road, oh Lord doggone, missing a dirt road, it's that bad. It was just so much fun.

Dorothy Yantis

Well, I did [miss it] when I would go back there and I would think, now I'm living in the fast lane in California. And I would go back there and it would be such a struggle to get back [to Overhills] and leave the kids and my husband and I would get back there and it would take me two or three days to just slow down. And then everybody would want to see me and they'd want to take me to see everybody. And then I would just be all relaxed and everything and then I would have to jump back on the plane and fly back and get back into the rat race. But I remember how fortunate I was, but at the time it was very lonely. It was very very lonely. But I was in school. I went to school 12 years at Anderson Creek and I loved that and during the summer was in the lake all the time.

Pat Penny

It was very laid back and I loved it when I was little. But as I got to be a teenager I would just as soon have lived somewhere else. You had no friends around you. The rental people had gone and there was just no one around and it was very lonely. As I look back on it now, I guess I never really had it so good. My kids I know loved going down there when they were little. They thought they'd died and gone to heaven to go to Overhills. Go to that lake and play in the sand, which they don't have here.

Glodean Robinson

Oh you know [Bernice Morgan] had a real hard time when Overhills left. He used to go there, he'd forget because all his life that's where he was. He would go and when they put that gate up, wow. You know, he really missed that place. You know him and Mary Lee lived in one of the log houses.

Lotes Holmes

I can truly say that overall, I still miss the place. I was there for 28 years. It was a wonderful place for our children to grow up in. I can truly say that even now I miss it sometimes.

Last Entry

Visitors to Croatan Lodge signed the guestbook, beginning in 1929 and lasting until 1996. In the early years, entries were as simple as a visitor's name and home residence. As years progressed, long notes recanted the pleasure of their visit, the weather, the horses they rode, and more. The last entry in the Croatan guestbook was written by Avery Lincoln Chappell Smith, great grand-daughter of Percy and Isabel Rockefeller. Aware of the imminent sale of the property, she and her family stayed at Overhills for the last time from November 14 – 17, 1996. This is what she wrote:

“Even though we did not stay here in Croatan, I just had to write one last thing. Goodbye beloved Overhills, Croatan, and all of the most wonderful people in the world. I will always love you and never forget you. So many great memories here, so much fun. Never will there be another place like Overhills again. Goodbye.”

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEWEE PROFILES

These brief profiles provide basic background information on the oral history interviewees in terms of their family, employment, and time spent at Overhills. Everyone listed here participated in the oral history project interviews.

David Alabaster

David is the son of Louise and the late Bert Alabaster. His grandparents were Albert and Lettie Alabaster. David occasionally fished at Overhills Lake with a family friend, Fred Mutzberg, who lived near Overhills and was good friends with the Bruces.

Louise Alabaster

Louise is the widow of Bert Alabaster, who was the son of Albert and Lettie Alabaster. Albert Alabaster kept a photograph album with many Overhills photographs included dating to the 1920s and 1930s. Louise and Bert had two sons, David and Albert, and occasionally visited Overhills to spend time with W.B. and Thelma Bruce.

Barton Bruce

Barton married Ed Bruce, Jr. in 1959 and they had two children together. They visited Overhills with their children on vacations until Vernice retired in 1976 and moved from Overhills.

Ed Bruce, Jr.

Ed, Jr. is the son of Walter Edward Bruce, Sr. and Vernice (Harris) Bruce. Bruce lived at Overhills from his birth in 1932 until he attended college and joined the United States Air Force. He continued to return to visit Overhills with his wife, Barton, and their children, until his mother retired and moved from Overhills in 1976.

Byron Bull

Byron is the youngest of seven children of Walter Leroy Bull and Ruby Cameron Bull. His maternal grandparents were Archie and Annie Cameron. Although the Bull family moved often due to military assignments, when his father was stationed at Fort Bragg, the Bulls rented a house on Overhills. The Bulls lived at Overhills intermittently from the 1950s-1970s.

Walter Bull

Walter is one of the seven children of Walter Leroy Bull and Ruby Cameron Bull. His maternal grandparents were Archie and Annie Cameron. Although the Bull family moved often due to military assignments, when his father was stationed at Fort Bragg, the Bulls rented a house on Overhills. The Bulls lived at Overhills intermittently from the 1950s-1970s.

Betty Deer

Betty is one of the seven children of Walter Leroy Bull and Ruby Cameron Bull. Her maternal grandparents were Archie and Annie Cameron. Although the Bull family moved often due to military assignments, when his father was stationed at Fort Bragg, the Bulls rented a house on Overhills. The Bulls lived at Overhills intermittently from the 1950s-1970s.

Ann Elliman

Ann is the daughter of Avery and Anna Rockefeller and the granddaughter of Percy and Isabel Rockefeller. She and her late husband, Edward, have three sons: Ted, David, and Christopher. Ann began her visits to Overhills as a child in the 1930s and continued until 1997.

Kim Elliman

Christopher “Kim”, son of Ann and Edward Elliman, grandson of Avery and Anna Rockefeller, began visiting Overhills during the 1950s, when he was a young child. Kim continued to visit with his family and eventually assumed management of Overhills Farms, Inc. in 1982.

David Elliman

David, son of Ann and Edward Elliman, grandson of Avery and Anna Rockefeller, began visiting Overhills with his parents and brothers during the 1950s. He and his family continued to visit Overhills in subsequent decades.

Isabel Elmer

Isabel “Belle” is the oldest daughter of Frederic Lincoln, Jr. and Isabel Rockefeller Lincoln. Isabel has three sisters: Calista, Percilla (Percy), and Florence (Posy). She remembers spending time with her grandparents, Percy and Isabel Rockefeller, at Overhills, in the 1930s when she was a young girl. Isabel visited until the 1970s with her husband and children. After that, they visited infrequently. In 1987 Isabel wrote an autobiography, Cinderella Rockefeller: A Life of Wealth Beyond all Knowing.

Albert Goins

Albert (1902 - 2002) was a longtime tenant farmer with Overhills. Born and raised in Virginia, Goins began working for Overhills in 1926 and continued as a tobacco farmer for thirty years. He and his wife raised six children. His interview was conducted in 1999 as part of the public research report: *Sandhills Families: Early Reminiscences of the Fort Bragg Area; Cumberland, Harnett, Hoke, Moore, Richmond, and Scotland Counties, North Carolina*, (Fort Bragg, North Carolina: Fort Bragg Cultural Resources Program, 2000).

Stillman Hanson

James Stillman, born 1971, is the son of Cookie Model and Ervin Hanson. His grandparents were Jean Model and Faith Rockefeller Model and his great-grandparents were Percy and Isabel Rockefeller. He has two older brothers, Fridolf and William. The brothers spent many vacations at Overhills throughout the 1970s-1980s.

William Hanson

William, born 1969, is the middle son of Cookie Model and Ervin Hanson. His grandparents were Jean Model and Faith Rockefeller Model and his great-grandparents were Percy and Isabel Rockefeller. He has two brothers, Fridolf and Stillman. The brothers spent many vacations at Overhills throughout the 1970s-1980s.

Sandy Hemingway

Sandy worked on Overhills as the secretary from 1978-1992; she worked in the office organizing payroll and executing numerous, miscellaneous tasks, gaining responsibility over time. During this time she lived in Fayetteville, NC and commuted to Overhills.

Linda Holder

Linda and Brenda Williams are twin sisters in the Strickland family, daughters of Clyde and Beatrice Strickland. They lived at Overhills from 1961 -1964 with their parents and brother Randy and sister Patsy. Their mother died while living at Overhills.

Imogene Holmes

Imogene Ladd married Lotes Holmes in 1950. The Holmeses lived, worked, and raised their children at Overhills from 1953-1981. In addition to raising her children, Imogene worked part time.

Lotes Holmes

Lotes was born in 1926 in Harnett County. He married Imogene in 1950 and they had four children: Claudia, Robert (Bobby), Ronald (Ronny), and Richard (Ricky). Lotes' uncle and aunt were W.B. and Thelma Bruce. The Holmes family lived on the Overhills Estate from about 1953 until 1981, during which time Lotes worked as the bookkeeper and later as the superintendent for the estate.

Ronny Holmes

Ronny, son of Lotes and Imogene, was born in 1956. Ronny grew up at Overhills and attended Anderson Creek High School. Ronny worked on the estate in his youth and returned to work after college, until 1981. He has worked in the stables, on the golf course, and on the tenant farms as well, helping out on the farms.

Andrew Jackson, Sr.

Andrew, Sr. was the son of Luther W. Jackson and Ada Coble Jackson. He was born in 1906 and was the oldest of six children. The Jackson family moved to Overhills about 1918, when Andrew was about 12 years old. Luther was hired to take care of the bird dogs. Andrew lived at Overhills until the mid 1920s when he left to go to college. The Jackson family moved from Overhills in 1926. This interview was conducted in December 1990 by Barney O'Quinn, a friend of the Jackson family, and Andrew Jackson, Sr. Andrew, Sr. died in 1998.

Jo Ann Locklear

Jo Ann is the daughter of Rosie and William Locklear (d. 2006). The Locklear family lived on Overhills from 1974-1997. Jo Ann was about 11 years old when they moved to Overhills. She worked part time with the domestic staff. William Locklear was the Overhills mechanic.

Rosie Locklear

Rosie is the widow of William Locklear and mother of Jo Ann and Barbara. The Locklear family lived at Overhills from 1974-1997. William Locklear passed away in September 2006.

Carolyn Lucas

Carolyn was born and raised in the Spring Lake area. She and her husband, Elmon Lucas, worked as tenant farmers for Overhills in the late 1970s before Elmon became farm manager. Carolyn and Elmon and their two children lived at Overhills until 1995, when they returned to the Spring Lake area. Elmon passed away in 2000.

Bonnie McPhail

Bonnie Griffith grew up in the Anderson Creek area. Her grandparents were tenant farmers at Overhills. She and Tommy McPhail were high school sweethearts. They married in 1971 and had one son, Bobby. The McPhails lived at Overhills until 1989.

Ella McPhail

Ella Dinkins was born in 1924 in Yadkin County. Her parents died when she was about seven years old, so her sister and brother-in-law, Al and Sallie Allgood raised Ella and her other sibling, Katie, and Johnny in addition to their own three children. They lived near the Preventorium, where Ella was a patient in 1934 because she was recovering from pneumonia. Ella Dinkins married Cleve McPhail and soon moved back to Overhills to be tenant farmers. Ella and Cleve had two children: Tommy and Sheila. Cleve died in 1973, at which point Ella moved from Overhills.

Tommy McPhail

Tommy, the oldest child and son of Cleve and Ella McPhail, was born in 1951. He grew up at Overhills and attended Anderson Creek High School. Tommy and his wife Bonnie lived at Overhills in the 1970s and 1980s. Tommy worked for Overhills, farming and eventually becoming one of the farm managers until they moved from Overhills in 1989.

Roger Mitchell

Roger Mitchell lived at Overhills with his wife Mary and their children in the 1980s -1990s. Roger worked in the shops, maintained the roads and trails, worked in the stables, and worked on the farms. Mary worked in the houses. The Mitchell family lived in the Riding Stables apartment and left Overhills in 1997.

Bob Model

Bob is the son of Jean Model and Faith Rockefeller, born in 1942. Bob lived most of his young childhood years in Greenwich, Connecticut, but moved to Overhills to live with his Uncle Avery

Rockefeller after the death of his parents (Jean Model died in 1955 and Faith died in 1960). He attended Elon College in North Carolina, years when he spent much of his time at Overhills. Bob moved to Wyoming in the 1970s and visited Overhills infrequently after that.

Cookie Model

Jeannette “Cookie” is the daughter of Jean Model and Faith Rockefeller Model. Her grandparents were Percy and Isabel Rockefeller. Cookie visited Overhills throughout her childhood. Her parents died when she was in her teenage years, and from then on Cookie spent a lot of time with her Aunt Isabel Lincoln and her cousins. She married Dr. Ervin Hanson in 1964 and they had three children: Fridolf, William, and Stillman. She later married David Ogilvy. They visited Overhills until its sale in 1997.

Robert Morgan

Robert was a patient at the Preventorium in 1935. The doctor thought he had rheumatic fever so the county welfare agent of the time, Flora McQueen, took him to the Preventorium. Robert stayed there for only a few weeks because he was homesick. Robert is a lifelong resident of Lillington, a U.S. Air Force veteran, and a former United States Senator.

Patricia Penny

Patricia “Pat” is the daughter of Edward and Vernice Bruce. Edward Bruce was the brother of W.B. Bruce. They also had one son, Edward “Ed” Bruce, Jr. Pat Penny was born in 1935 on the Overhills Estate and lived there until 1957, when she graduated from college. She married Edward Penny (now deceased) and they moved to Danville, VA.

Kathy Riley

Kathy is one of the seven children of Walter Leroy Bull and Ruby Cameron Bull. Her maternal grandparents were Archie and Annie Cameron. Although the Bull family moved often due to military assignments, when his father was stationed at Fort Bragg, the Bulls rented a house on Overhills. The Bulls lived at Overhills intermittently from the 1950s-1970s.

Glodean Robinson

Glodean worked on Overhills from 1986 until 1997 as a cook. During this time she and her husband lived on the Haire Farm. After leaving Overhills they moved to Columbus, Ohio.

Bill Shaw

Bill was born in 1923 and raised in the Anderson Creek area of Spring Lake, North Carolina. As a boy he recalls visiting Overhills and the Clubhouse and helping his family with tar kilns and turpentine. He drove the school bus, bringing kids to Anderson Creek School when he was 16 years old. He joined the Army in 1943 and came home in 1946, married, bought land and started his family. His construction company built Bird Song in the early 1960s and did work at Overhills through the years.

Florence Short

Florence “Posy” is the youngest daughter of Frederic W. and Isabel Rockefeller Lincoln. Her grandparents were Percy and Isabel Rockefeller. She has three older sisters: Isabel Elmer, Calista Harder, and Percilla Chappell. Florence was born in 1940. She spent most holidays at Overhills with her family. Florence continued to visit Overhills in her college years and then with her own family.

Rudolph Singleton, Jr.

Rudolph, Jr. was born on May 24, 1930 in Lexington, Kentucky. In 1933 he moved with his parents from Lexington to the Overhills Estate in order for his father to work as the Master of Hounds under Mr. Percy Rockefeller. Rudolph Singleton, Sr. was employed from 1933-1935 when Percy Rockefeller died.

Diane Smith

Diane is one of the seven children of Walter Leroy Bull and Ruby Cameron Bull. Her maternal grandparents were Archie and Annie Cameron. Although the Bull family moved often due to military assignments, when his father was stationed at Fort Bragg, the Bulls rented a house on Overhills. The Bulls lived at Overhills intermittently from the 1950s-1970s.

Katherine Stilwell

Katherine was born in 1923 at Overhills, to her parents Charles and Sabra Coble. She lived there until going away to college and then moving away from home. They first lived in a house that was near the old dairy along the railroad tracks and later moved into the worker’s house above the lake. Katherine attended Anderson Creek High School. She married Joe Stilwell and taught school on Fort Bragg. Charles and Sabra Coble lived at Overhills from the 1920s -1950s. Charles “Chub” Coble worked with the hunt operations to prepare food fields, as a farm laborer, and as a teamster.

Freeman Tyler

Freeman grew up on and near Overhills property. As a child in the 1950s, he lived on a tenant farm with his mother Patty Tyler, his brothers Tony and Jerry, and his uncle, Hubert Tyler. In the early 1980s, Freeman returned to Overhills with his wife and two young daughters. Freeman worked as a carpenter, plumber, and electrician at Overhills. The Tylers lived there until 1997.

Rosie Tyler

Rosie grew up in Robeson County and married Hubert Tyler and they began tenant farming for Overhills in 1960. They moved to and from Overhills a few times before settling there in 1971 with their three children: Sheila, Joseph, and Mary. Eventually the Tylers stopped farming but continued to work for Overhills in other capacities. Rosie worked in the houses full time and eventually part time in addition to a job with the school district. They lived on Overhills until 1997.

Dennis Washington

Dennis lived on Overhills from the time he was born in 1956 until he left for college in 1974. His parents were Thurman and Louise Washington, longtime employees and residents of Overhills. Thurman, the stable manager, died in 1997. He has one sister, Sheila. Dennis grew up with the Holmes family, the Bull family, and the McPhail family. He attended Anderson Creek High School.

Paula Washington

Paula is the wife of Dennis Washington. They met while in college in Logan, Utah. Paula and Dennis visited Thurman and Louise at Overhills until 1997. Dennis and Paula have one daughter, Hannah.

Barbara Watts

Barbara is one of the seven children of Walter Leroy Bull and Ruby Cameron Bull. Her maternal grandparents were Archie and Annie Cameron. Although the Bull family moved often due to military assignments, when his father was stationed at Fort Bragg, the Bulls rented a house on Overhills. The Bulls lived at Overhills intermittently from the 1950s-1970s.

Brenda Williams

Brenda and Linda Holder are twin sisters in the Strickland family, daughters of Clyde and Beatrice Strickland. They lived at Overhills from 1961 -1964 with their parents and brother Randy and sister Patsy. Their mother died while living at Overhills. Brenda moved from home before the family left Overhills.

Dorothy Yantis

Dorothy Cameron is the youngest child of Archie and Annie Cameron, born in 1933 at Overhills. She lived there with her parents and older siblings, Lona Mae, Ruby, and Archie, Jr. until she graduated high school. She then moved to Texas, married David Yantis in 1954, and settled in California. They had five children. She visited Overhills infrequently until the 1980s.

