

SUMMARY OF TAPE A111.1
INTERVIEWS WITH ETHELIND ELBERT AUSTIN AND
HOLCOMBE AUSTIN
August 23, 1989
Interviewer: Sandy Crain

Ethelind Austin is a descendent of one of the prominent pioneer families of Colorado. She is a grand niece of Sam Elbert, Territorial Governor and Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court. Much of the tape relates stories about her Aunt Louise Elbert Everett. From the ages of four and six, Ethelind and her brother, Sam, were sent to Evergreen for the month of August. Her parents were farmers in Iowa.

Aunt Louise and her husband, Uncle Leonard built the Everett house in 1910. Now the home of Ethelind and Holcombe, it is known as the Elbert Austin Ranch. The house was built by Jock Spence, a well known builder, who added innovative features to homes of the era such as built in bookshelves, and open, burnished beams. The architect for the home was J. C. Jensen of Omaha, Nebraska; but another local architect, Burnham Hoyt is mentioned. He was the architect for the Evans' house on Mount Susan and for Red Rocks Theater.

Ethelind's early memories of her visits with Aunt Louise are vivid and full of information about the lives of the wealthy residents of Evergreen during the first half of the last century. Aunt Louise was a friend of Ann Evans, daughter of the Governor. Ethelind tells a story about a very young Ann Evans that was related to her by Aunt Louise. Ann was riding around the Evans summer ranch as a child, accompanied by sometime ranch worker, Dutch John, when they found the corpse of Scarface Jim. Another story tells of Ethelind and her brother, accompanied by their Aunt and Uncle, climbed Mt. Evans in 1917. As the brother and sister grew older, their visits included mandatory appearances for tea at 4:30 every afternoon, and dressing formally for dinner at 7:00.

Holcombe Austin grew up in Laredo, Texas. His father was a physician and a relative of Sam Austin. In 1914 Holcombe accompanied his parents on a trip to Troutdale. He vowed to return and build a cabin there someday. Holcombe was at Harvard graduate school when he met Ethelind, who was attending Radcliff. He taught at the University of Texas, Scripps College, Harvard, and spent 36 years teaching at Wheaton College in Massachusetts before retiring. Ethelind is still working at Wheaton as a librarian. Their winter home is in Norton, Mass.

Mr. Austin's memories also center on the ranch and Aunt Louise. In 1931, engaged to Ethelind, he traveled to meet and be "approved" by Aunt Louise. He has many memories of summer entertainment in the 1930's. Holcombe sang duets and played tennis with Margaret Davis, the granddaughter of then Governor Evans. He reminisced about the country roads and delicious fresh-springs drinking water.

Ethelind and Holcombe discussed the relationship between Aunt Louise and Ann Evans. Both women had an interest in Indian art. Aunt Louise's uncle, Sam Elbert, had been sent to Colorado as a Territorial Governor by Abraham Lincoln. There was some discussion about mishandling of the Indians by Governor Evans. Ann Evans was empathetic to the Indians. She and Louise traveled through Indian country purchasing artifacts, many of which she later gave to the Denver Art Museum and Natural History Museum. Ann Evans also had a role in the revival of Central City.

During the interview, the Austin's discuss turning over letters and other historic Evans and Elbert family communications. The ranch is now owned by Ethelind and Holcombe, as well as her brother, Sam Elbert.