

Shelbyville Main Street Project

An Oral History Project of Shelbyville, Kentucky's Main Street

Interviewer: Mark Mefford

Interviewee: Lillian Andriot

Date: 8/22/95

Running Time: 39 minutes

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Lillian Huss Andriot
Interview
August 22, 1995
Interviewed by Mark Meford
Transcription by Susan McMullan Groves

Full name: Lillian Huss Andriot

Birth date: November 29, 1919

What are your parents names? My mothers name was Ella Matthews and her mother had been a Bibb who came from Owen County. My grandfather's name was James Anderson Matthews... he came from Owen County. I think the grandmother, the Bibb, was in some way connected with the people that had something to do with Bibb lettuce.
Oh, is that right?

Well, how did you find your way to Shelby County? Did they grow up living in Shelbyville? No, they came to Shelby County from Owen County but I don't really know when.

Do you know what drew them here? No. They lived out on a farm out on Eminence Road and that's where I was born.

Did you have any brothers or sisters? I have no brothers and sisters. My mother had eleven brothers and sisters and they all really died quite young. She was the youngest one of eleven and, uh, like I said, they all really died quite young but she lived to be eighty-nine. She had wonderful stories about when they were young.

Like what? Uh, well for Christmas they had oranges and apples and, you know, they weren't poor people... they were just an average, moderate family but, I mean, they didn't have Christmases like we have today. They came to town maybe once every three or four months because everything on the farm supplied everything they had to eat and, uh, but they had a surrey with the fringe on top... uh, like you hear the songs about. Like I said, they made everything at home. Of course, they killed hogs and raised gardens... everything was supplied at home. They didn't buy anything.

Did you grow up on the farm? No. I grew up in town and went to the farm in the summertime and on weekends. I grew up in town. In fact, I lived down in the very east end of town on Third Street where now is uh, well, I don't know what's there... I think there's a metal building sitting on that corner now. There was an old two story brick house... that whole end of town had brick... beautiful, brick homes down in there that looked sort of like the west end of town looks now... and, uh, the house where I lived has been torn down. Across the street there was a car barn. There were street cars that went from here to Louisville. They came down and turned around in that car barn and uh....
Oh, yeah, the inner urban? Yes, that's what it was but they called it the car barn. And, uh, we knew the people that lived upstairs, uh... I don't know if their name was Poulter or

Porter... something like that. But, we'd go to Louisville on the inner urban. I remember when I was just a little girl mother would take me to Louisville and go shopping on the inner urban and we'd get off in Louisville and go down off Fourth Street and you walked up and down Fourth Street and you'd get on the car and come back home. That car out here at the fairgrounds went under... you went down in a thing... the road went over into the fairgrounds and the car went down under. **So it went under like a bridge?** Yeh, under that out there. **Where the fairgrounds are still?** Yeh, but you went over that to get into the fairgrounds. The car went under there. And then the street car tracks went down through the middle of Main Street. Of course, this was a two way street out here and the car tracks went through the middle of the street! But, I remember when they were torn up because I was probably four or five years old cause I played in the sand when they... they had big piles of sand on the sides of the street where they tore up the tracks out of the middle of the street. There were homes all the way... right at the creek where the bridge is there was an ice factory that made ice. That was there to not too awful many years ago. Then from there on up there were really pretty houses on up both sides of the street. Of course, there's one left down there. The one red brick with the columns. It's on the left. The old Riner place is still there. Bob had a business there for awhile. That's really about all the houses that are left of the old ones. Well, there's one on the corner where Sid Krieger's insurance agency is but then almost all of them are gone all the way up through there.

Well, when you were living in town, were your parents still living at the farm? No. My parents? No, that's just when I was a child.

You all moved in town? Yes. My grandparents lived in the country and that's where I went... I went to the country in the summertime to my grandparents. We'd go out there in the summertime. No, we lived in town. We lived lots of different places when we lived in town.

What kind of work did your father do? He was a concrete finisher and he farmed. He... did some farming on my grandfather's farm and he finished concrete... by hand. You didn't do it like you do today. And then he went into Louisville to work as a concrete finisher. He worked on the Brown Hotel. **Oh, really?** And that's really it. In the wintertime, he worked at the warehouse. Made twenty dollars a week. That was a pretty good salary!

How many children do you have? Do I have? I have three.

Now, we know Bobby still lives in town. Yeh. Billy still lives in town. He has a men's shop over in Wakefield-Scarce Galleries. He's married and has two daughters and I have a daughter that lives out on the farm... she's married to Froman Fry and they have three children. They're all married but none of them farmed. Her husband still farms. One son lives in Lexington and works for Ashland Oil and one of them works for an auditor... computer analyst with the State in Frankfort... for the state of Kentucky. Then the daughter works here in town for a plant someplace in the office.

Do you remember anything about Shelbyville during the Depression? I guess you would've just been about ten. Uh, I remember when the Depression... yes. I wasn't too old. I was maybe ten, twelve... I don't know... seems like to me along in there. I really don't remember it being a really bad time. I know that you heard lots of things that happened that were bad but all of us were poor anyway and I didn't really see any difference during the Depression than I did any other time. All of my friends... we were just all alike... in the same situation and I really didn't see any... I didn't see any difference. I suppose you had to have a lot of money to have really lost a lot. You know, we heard about people jumping out of windows and doing all these things when the stock market fell and all those things but as far as it really ever touching close to home, it didn't with me... and I don't think with any of my friends.

Do you have any memories about Shelbyville during World War II that stand out in your mind? The only thing I remember about World War II, of course, Bob was born during that time... uh, let's see, was the war... the war wasn't over when he was born. He was born in nineteen forty... when was the war over? He was born in 1944. **The war was over in '45.** Okay and his daddy didn't pass because he didn't have sight in one of his eyes and uh, he opened a little men's shop over on Sixth Street and we sold army surplus. We had army shoes and towels and diapers and that's where he started with the men's shop... but that's what we had when we started out.

Where was it located at? Sixth Street. That's right up in this next block as you go out... up there at the stop... not this stop light but at the next stop light... and it was on the left up there in a little shop back in there. There were a lot of little stores. In fact, the post office was on Sixth Street. That's where the post office was before it... see, the post office used to be over here on this corner in this red brick building but this was back before then.

Oh, so there have been three post office locations? There was a little post office on Sixth Street and it was just flush to the... in fact, the building is still there--you just don't know it was a post office anymore. It was just a little painted gray brick building and I remember it had a little slot out front that you could drop your mail in if you wanted to. I don't remember when the post office came down here but that was the first post office that I remember. I don't know whether there was a post office before... I'm sure that maybe there was but that was the first one that I remember at my age was the one on Sixth Street.

Why did you all decide to go into army surplus? Did you all just have access to that? Well, no. My husband just worked at the factory and he loved clothing... always had loved clothing... that was really just all he ever knew! He worked at the factory... there was a men's clothing factory here and he worked at it during the week and then on weekends he would open this little shop up that he had and business was so good that he finally gave up his job and opened the little store full time. It kept growing and the factory was selling clothes that they didn't want or maybe were out of style or outdated or

something and it just kept growing and growing and growing. And, uh, then he moved over on to Main Street... I think Bob probably told you these things... then he sold that one but then it just really kind of snowballed and the business turned into a wonderful business and, uh, but that was all he knew and all he really wanted to do. So that's how we got into that.

Did you always work there? Yep. I worked there and helped him. I ran home in the afternoons to be home by three o'clock so the children wouldn't come in to an empty house. Then after that... after he was gone, uh, I ran a dress shop over in Wakefield-Scearce Galleries with my daughter-in-law--the Country Lady, which is still around there. She has that business now. I retired three times! Then I came to help Bob and I work here five days a week now. **You've had four retirements...isn't it about time it's over?** Yeh (laughing).

What kind of clothes were sold at...what was the name of that store? It was Andriot's. It was Andriot's Men's Shop.

Uh, what kind of clothes did you all sell? You mean brands? No. Church-going clothes or everyday clothing? Yes, no, they were traditional dress clothes. They were good lookin' clothes. In fact, I have lots of people today... young men who are grown that come in and they'll see me and say, "Oh, I remember your all's clothes!" You know, all the young people in town shopped with us... we just really had a lock on business. It was high school kids and people... they were good clothes... they were dress clothes. In those days, men wore hats, wing tip shoes and everything men wore... suits, shirts, ties, underwear, socks... good lookin' shoes... gloves, top coats... just everything...

You say you sold a lot to young men. Did you sell all sizes for everyone? Yep. We started about where boys would be in high school and I remember when jeans first came in. Uh, we couldn't... well, first, I think, before jeans though there was a fad of black and pink. Every boy in the United States of America wore black and pink! And they had black hats with pink bands on them. I mean, that was THE rage! It was the rage... literally the rage!

What decade was that? Well, it would've been about... oh, what's Bob... Bob's fifty... it must have been at least thirty-five years ago cause he would've been like fourteen, fifteen or sixteen years old. And it just... like I said... it lasted for maybe two years. That and Jade East perfumes... cologne... Jade East. All anybody wanted was Jade East. And then after that, uh, I was trying to think what else had really been a... a faddish thing with uh... well, I don't know. I'm thinking about high school kids. Whatever we were talking about... there was something you asked me... what did you ask me for when... before I got into... before you asked about the hat... you asked me something else. **What kind of clothes you sold?** Yeh... **Church clothes?** Yeh, but that wasn't it though. You asked something about the kids... about what age we started. We probably started with sixteen... and just like everything else depending on the size of the boy... but they

could hardly wait to be old enough to shop at Andriot's, I mean, that was just kind of a... coming of age? Yeh.

Well, did you all do most of your business...did you do any of your business on credit? Yeh, but it wasn't credit like you see today. We just had charge accounts and it...you know....

Did you all charge interest or anything? No. Never thought of doing anything like that.

Did a lot of your bills get paid...your outstanding bills...at tobacco time? Yes. They got paid around tobacco time...or if somebody sold a cow or if... well, a lot of them just never got paid but I don't know... we didn't... maybe some people did and we never bothered to try to take anybody to court or do things like that. We had a lot of people that came in and paid us by the week or by the month if they had jobs. You know, just as they got paid they'd come in and pay on their bills and we just sort of trusted people.

Did you know most of the people personally that you did business with? Yeh, uh-huh, yeh. And, like I said, I still see people today that always talk about Mr. Andriot because they... he had a really wonderful mind about being able to remember everybody's sizes and then anybody, I think, in Shelby County who ever knew him would say, "I could go in at Christmas... I could go in at any time and say I need a shirt and tie," or something for a party and Mr. Andriot could say, "He wears a size 13 1/2 and a 32 length sleeve," and he just knew what size everybody wore. He did! He could remember what size everybody wore so it made it real easy. We gift wrapped all of our... that was when gift wrapping really just sort of started and we gift wrapped for so long free of charge and never did charge for it... even after stores in Louisville started charging... we never did charge for gift wrapping. It was just sort of a service that we did.

Did most of your customers come from the Shelbyville/Shelby County area? Yes, but we had an awful lot of customers, at that time, from Eminence, New Castle, Henry County because, I reckon, I-41 wasn't over there then. People didn't go into Louisville as easily as they do today. In that area now you can get into Louisville a lot easier than you do now... I don't think anybody could ever have a store up town here anymore and... it's been tried and it just... it won't work.

What's different now than then? Because then everybody shopped in town. When I was a kid we went up town on a Saturday night and Daddy would take the car up town and would park it on the street on Saturday night. Everybody came up town on Saturday night! There were two theaters. There was a theater down, oh, between where the Christian Church is and the bank... the Louisville bank... Shelby County Trust... where the fountain is. Then there was one up in this next block between Sixth and Seventh. There was a movie... there was an old Bon Ton Theater and an old Strad theater. Everybody came to town and came to the picture show and ate ice cream and sodas at the soda fountains. We stayed in town and people... the streets were full on Saturday and

Saturday night. Of course, you come up town now on Saturday night and you won't hardly find three people on the streets! There's nobody! Everybody's gone off in all directions.

When did people stop coming downtown on Saturday? Been a long time. Probably, uh, I don't know... I'm trying to think how long we've been out of business. Probably thirty or thirty-five years.

What do you think is responsible? Oh, I think outside. I think cars, shopping centers, just things getting bigger all the time. The first shopping centers here made a difference in downtown. A lot of people liked to say they didn't but they did. Of course, the first was Village Plaza out here. That made a difference. However, there weren't any men shops out there that I remember but it just made a difference. You get a lot of variety type of stores that handle all the different things. And we had, let's see, we had three men's shops up town and they all did well. I mean, we probably were the last one because there had been Rothschild's that had been here for years and they had a fine little store. And then there was a Briggs-Hower, but Briggs, I suppose, had a store before he bought Rothschilds but he was on the corner and then there was our store. Everybody did a really good business. So, you could tell that a whole community bought in this area. If they hadn't, all three men's shops could've never survived. And they did!

When did the store close? Oh, I don't know. I really don't remember. I'm not that good with dates. I really don't remember when it closed. Bob probably remembers when it closed.

Was business slacking off or were there other factors? Oh, I think there wasn't very much business because my husband had died and Billy kept the store and tried to keep it going. He was equally, if not as good as... if not better... than his father was in the clothing business. But you just didn't have the traffic! And our Lawson's. Oh, we had a wonderful department store! I see people today and say, "Oh, I miss Lawson's so I wish they hadn't closed." I always say, "Well, if you'd bought from them they wouldn't have closed!" I mean, you can't keep a store open when you don't have any traffic. Now, I don't know why Bob has been as successful here because we're sitting downtown, but it's a different type of thing... and we've got parking. The parking got to be really bad up town. You couldn't find any place to park. So, people didn't try to come. You know, if you went to a shopping center you could pull in and even if you walked a block sometime... but still it was a little bit different.

Well, was traffic a problem? There's a lot of cars that go up and down Main Street nowadays... was the traffic the same way in the '50's and '60's? Yeh. A lot of traffic. And, of course, it was two way and there was parking on both sides of the street. I do remember on Derby time you would come in and park on the streets because people didn't fly in for the Derby and come in like they do now... there were cars that came through and you sat up and watched for the out of state licenses on cars... the cars with

people that came in for the Derby! There would just be a stream of cars that came for, like I said, people didn't fly in.... **Did they come US 60?** Uh-huh.

Was that a tradition...even when you were growing up? What the Derby? Watching folks come in for the Derby. I know Derby has been going on for a hundred and seventeen years.... Yeh. A lot of people came in and watched people go through. That was just something you did at Derby time! Of course, there was an old hotel that was on this other corner that burned.

What was the name of it? Armstrong. Armstrong. We have a piece of furniture back here that came out of the Armstrong Hotel. It's got the "A's" on it. It was a big old hotel and, like I said, it burned. We never had too many fires, I don't think, that have destroyed things. I think most of the things have been torn down. We've had a spell of people tearing down.

Well, what ways of the appearance of the Main Street downtown area changed? It's changed a lot! I know that some of the buildings are still up there but we hardly have anything except for the antique malls uptown. I'm really thankful to have them! They've kept downtown looking good and people on the streets and they're not... it looks real good. It looked like for awhile that we were going to have nothing but empty stores sitting up there. So, I mean, of course it's entirely different! Two or three department stores, a drug store, soda fountain, your banks were all downtown... all of our bigger banks, you know, were downtown and now we really have ended up... what, maybe we've got one bank but the really main location downtown... all of them have moved out. So, it's changed a lot. Like I said, the buildings themselves... pretty much of the buildings uptown are the same buildings. So, they really look pretty good.

So, the buildings are the same it's just different occupants and different types of businesses? Uh-huh. Looks real good.

Where did you go to school around here? I went to grade school over on College Street. That school has been torn down. Then I went to high school which is up here by where West Middle is. That was Shelbyville High School and then, of course, it closed when they consolidated. I live right by it now. I don't even remember when it closed. I graduated in 1937 but I don't know when that school closed. I don't remember when the schools consolidated. I do remember when the gymnasium was built. That was built in about 1936 maybe. It was up there. And the west end of town pretty much is the same except... well, I shouldn't say that... the streets... Washington Street stopped about where Logan's Laundry is. That street didn't go through there then.

What street is Logan's on? Logan's is on Washington. It's on Washington and Tenth.

So, Washington stopped at the end of the street? Uh-huh and that was an alley on up through there. There were those side streets... there wasn't any alternate road where I lived but that was not a street. The house I live in had been a carriage house to the big

house on Main and my front yard had been a tennis court. It's a clay court that was built by a man named Armstrong... who lived at this big house... I think it's one of the oldest houses in Shelbyville... that lived in this house and behind it they had tennis courts which were clay courts. Like I said, that's my front yard and, uh, my house has been a carriage house and there were formal gardens on down through there but then a street was cut through there... and there's houses now all the way through there. But, then, at that time, the fairgrounds were really the end of Shelbyville. The Baptist Church was down there. You know, all the churches were downtown. All the churches were there. I remember when they built the Baptist Church out as far as they did and they said, "You know, nobody will be able to get to church that far out!" I think the Baptist church is the one that caved in. But, the town really stopped around the fairgrounds. It was farm land all past that. You probably have heard these same things a thousand times today? **No, not today. I've heard a few things over again and I've also heard some new things but you're a different perspective. Like when you talked about the inner urban and the car barn... I had never heard it called that. Everybody else just said there was a place down there where it turned around but nobody ever called it a car barn.** Well, it was the car barn and we knew the people that lived upstairs real well cause I used to go over there and visit with them. They lived upstairs and the tracks went in and they curved around and the car turned around inside of this thing and came back out. They lived upstairs and I remember between a door up in her apartment she had beads. You've seen pictures of beads that hang... there were beads that were real short and they got down real long on one side and you went through the door and the beads rattled. You know, with a child that would really... it stayed with me. I remember the car barn real well and then the creamery was back over all the cars. You know much about the creamery? **I don't think anybody has mentioned it.** Well, the Bonds lived on the corner in that big, pretty red brick house on that corner and behind it they had a creamery that made ice cream. You ought to remember the creamery (*to Bob evidently*)... from real cream and milk they made ice cream and it was in big jugs about this big... freezer things about this big and they brought them out and set them... they were metal and they dipped the ice cream out of those and put them in either ice cream cones or little paper cartons about that big and the older family had it and then the son had it. In fact, one of the sons is still living and has a lot of history... you should go there. **Who is that?** Bond. Paul Bond. He lives up here on Main Street in the white house that has all the wrought iron. He'd be wonderful. He does a lot of history type things. But his father... he worked down here in the creamery after his father was gone and some of them. But everybody went to the creamery and would get an ice cream. It was wonderful ice cream! And they lived, like I said, they lived on this corner of Main Street and then the creamery was back on the back corner. That was wonderful! And then... I'll tell you another place that's gone now, uh, when my grandmother and grandfather came in off the... they lived on the Eminence Road and that's where I was born... and they left out there and moved out on the State Pike, as we called it, as you go to Frankfort... but my father lived in the house on that state road going out here that had been a toll gate and it's right past the Old Mason's Home. But they lived in a big house on out there that was in later years turned into the poor house farm. And, uh, it was where that... it wasn't my grandmother and grandfather but, I mean, when they left that farm it was bought and

turned into a poor house farm. I think it belonged to the Middleton's maybe in the beginning and people that didn't have a place to go or a place to live were sent out to the poor house farm and that's where they lived, I suppose, like people do in nursing homes today. I don't know. There were people there that took care of them but they lived there and were fed.

It was called the poor house farm? It was called the poor house farm. Uh, and it wasn't torn down till too awful many years ago. There was a little airport out there first, wasn't there? *(Bob replied there never was one out there)* There wasn't? Okay. Well, they built a little landing strip...not an airport but a landing strip where airplanes could come in there and then they tore down one of those subdivisions now is on the left...is where the poor house farm had been. And mother used to tell me that it had a gate where you...when they went in the gate with the surrey they would pull on...you pulled on a...

—END OF SIDE A—

Now tell me about the cannon in front of the...? *(Laughing)* There was a big cannon that set over in front of the Methodist Church on that...in that...that's a city park right there that...on both sides of the street and there was a large cannon that sat there and during the war...that was given to the war for the metal. I always kind of missed it. It was kind of neat sitting over there.

Where did it come from? Do you know? No, I don't know. I don't know where that cannon came from. It was as far as I ever remember that cannon had been sitting there on that corner so I don't know what war it came from or where it came from. And then, of course, there was Jail Hill going down beside the old jail over there. There used to be a great big hump in the road and they called that the "dutchman". Have you heard that? They called that the "dutchman" cause they always said there was a dutchman buried under there. Of course, there wasn't...it was just a big hump in the road but you had to be careful going over...and that bridge was covered with...not a wooden covered bridge but an iron covered bridge with little planks and then the one down at, uh, as you go up towards the cemetery at Second Street...that bridge was covered with iron also with Shelbyville and the date on it. I tried to get that when the bridge was torn down but I wasn't able to get my hands on it. It was just thrown away, I think. But, it had a date and a Shelbyville thing on it. I'm trying to think of something else.

Where there any other businesses that were downtown that you can remember that were unique businesses? Well, the only business that I remember was a business that when I was a child was Kohl's company. It was on the left...on the other side of Main Street up here and they had...I remember going in there as a child and they had little cages up front where you paid your bill. You know, like a teller at a bank would have. You went to those little cage windows. But they had these great big, uh, almost like a wheelbarrow that would be full of nails or full of maybe screws, I don't know what else were in those wheelbarrows...barrows...and then, of course, they had big barrels with crackers and big barrels of things. Then there was a...let's see...what other businesses

where there... that were real neat... there was Kohl's, there was Hall, Poe and Ruff and there was... of course, I reckon the drug store was one of our favorite places because we got sodas. What other businesses there were... oh, there was Ruben's Dry Goods. It was right below where the bank is uptown now and they sold women's clothes and ladies shoes... they were strictly ladies. Like I said, they had ladies clothes and ladies shoes. And when you paid up front they put your money in a little round thing that was about the size of a teacup or a mug and they hooked it on to a wire here and pulled a little thing and that went down that little cord all the way to the back of the store to where the bookkeeper sat with the change and the things and she took the tickets and took the money and made out the bill and put it back in the little thing and pulled the tag and the little thing came back up front. It was a little thing about that big and about that tall... there were wires up over head that it went down on. I always loved that! That was the Mr. Ruben that owned that but, uh, they had come here.... There were two or three Jewish, uh, men... they were brothers and they left a good bit of money to Shelby County when they were gone. They had a dry cleaners and that and there's a Mose Ruben Fund and they give money to different charities and things. It was left all to Shelbyville. Uh, I'm trying to think what else there was up town. Oh, down on this corner right over here had been an opera house... **Oh, do you know the name of it?** No, I've got an old, uh, program from the opera house, uh, but I don't know it... the only thing I ever remember seeing on that program was just Shelbyville Opera House... now that probably was before... when my mother was young because on Main Street up here there was a livery stable and things that I don't remember... just things I remember her talking about. This was a women's college over here where this post office... now not this building but there was a college over there... a women's college. So, uh, I don't remember too much more about uptown.

What do you think makes Shelbyville a unique...and I know you haven't lived too many other places...? I've never lived any place else! Well, do you like living in Shelbyville? I love Shelbyville. I said I was born here and I've lived here and I hope I die here.

Well, I sure appreciate you taking time to talk to me. Well, I don't feel like I've really told you a whole lot! I told you all the things I've heard but I hadn't heard about the opera house, the car barn...I hadn't heard about the ice cream...people told me they got ice cream but they never told me there was a creamery. There are all kinds of things you've talked about that I hadn't heard. Well, I hope so and I hope I've helped you.