



Sally Perry Andrews
ROBS History Project
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Sitting with us today about to be interviewed is yet one more example of the richness of Brentwood's cultural diversity; this one reaching back in time for more than a few generations. Our subject's name today is Sally Perry Andrews. She retired as a teacher of First Grade after having devoted herself to children in the Brentwood School District for more than three decades. She and her family are directly descended from Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry on her father's side. He earned his place in history (April 10, 1794 – March 4, 1858.) as an Officer of the United States Navy who commanded ships in several wars, including the War of 1812 and the Mexican–American War (1846–1848) and played a key role in the opening of Japan to the West. Commodore Perry was interested in the education of naval officers and assisted in the development of an apprentice system that helped establish the curriculum at the United States Naval Academy and with the advent of the steam engine, he became a leading advocate of modernizing the U.S. Navy and was considered "*The Father of the Steam Navy*" in the United States. If correct, he is her fourth, great, great, great grandfather. Her father's name was Perry and her mother's name was Sally Perry as she was so named after her mother. Many children in the family have a middle name of 'Perry' as does her son David. Her father's family of sisters and brothers didn't throw anything away so Sally has a big scrapbook about him and things that happened in his life as Admiral Perry. She said she found it all very interesting.

Sally's husband's name is John. Their son's name is David Perry. The family has lived in Brentwood – at the time of our interview -- for forty-three years and, she said, "*It's been good*". She was born in Durham, New Hampshire in 1928. That

was where her father had been working. *“One of the earliest memories she has of her late father had to do with food. She loved Italian bread. She remembers him making her peanut butter sandwiches with Italian bread. He died when she was five but she remembers him and she does remember certain things like, the big birthday cake – because he was a chef -- he made for her when she was five and they had a big birthday party with all her cousins. She can still see the circle and playing “The Farmer in the Dell.” She remembers many things. “We lived out in the country a little bit not right in town, in Durham. It was a wonderful place to live”.* Well as a little girl, she said she was always happy. Then when her father died they went back to live with her grandma because her mother felt she just couldn't take care of the house by herself. Her mother moved her family back to her parent's home which was a farm she loved; with animals and a big barn. When there was snow there was loads of it. She remembers picking berries and wild strawberries and blueberries and raspberries. They were all good memories.

Her mother's maiden name had been Lucy Elizabeth Palmer until she married Sally's father when Barker was added. Sally told us she didn't know that much about her mother's family history. Her mother came from Canada. She was Canadian - French. Her father always lived in Durham or that area. He wanted to remain there. He didn't wish to go to anywhere else. He worked there, he died there, and was buried there. That was his wish.

My mother was always there for us. She worked very hard. I also remember from the time we were very little she always taught us *“I don't care what you learn to do, but I want you to learn to do something. Because you don't know what's going to happen in your life and you've got to be ready”* – because she was left with three little girls and she was only in her middle twenties. She taught us a good lesson. At that point she had a hard life. She worked cleaning at the University of New Hampshire in the girl's dormitory. She never complained and if her ride wasn't there when we were living in New Market, she walked to work. It was a good five miles or more. But that didn't happen very often and she was a hard worker. She also loved to be with friends, to do things with friends. She loved people. She was always helping people. With the little bit she had she was always sharing. She was a wonderful, marvelous mother and she's still living and she turned ninety-one this month.

Her father was a professional chef. He worked at the University of New Hampshire and had worked at other places before then but that was the job he held at that time. He was a very good chef who worked hard and took care of his family. He had a beautiful home and he was a good person.

He was about fifteen years older than her mother and had served in the US Navy during World War I. He served aboard a transport ship going back and forth between the United States and France transporting essential war materials making five trips during the war. It was on the fifth crossing of the North Atlantic on his ship called the USS Covington (ID-1409) that it was torpedoed and then sunk off Brest, France, July 2, 1918, by the German submarine U-86. He survived, got home safely and was shortly thereafter discharged from his active service.

Sally has twin sisters who were only a year old when their father died. They have no memory of him. Their names are Lucy Sheehan and Lillian Jablonski. Lucy lives in Texas and Lillian lives in New Hampshire. Lucy has eight wonderful children and Lucy has two. She sees her sister in New Hampshire every year. She doesn't see Lucy as often. Her children live in and close to Texas but they don't all live in Texas. Lucy was a nurse who is now retired. She has spent time recently in New Hampshire so we've had a chance to catch-up with family. As far as Lucy's family is concerned there are so many of them that there has always been a sense of family togetherness. They've always been helping each other since they were little. We've all been very close and have been there for each other. Growing up was like that, we were always very supportive of one another.

"We had very dear friends living next door to us when my father died and her mother and father had a very strong influence on me. They really helped me to grow and mature and they always helped me and they were always there. Their names were Ester and Kenneth Baracloud. I was always friends with their daughter Carolyn. They had another daughter and son but they were older while Carolyn and I were only eight months apart and we became very close. We worked...when we started to work to make money to go to college we worked five summers together. They were just a wonderful, wonderful family and meant so much to me".

At some point in my life I began to feel as if I would really like to teach. My mother and this other woman had certainly influenced me but the Principal of my

school influenced me a lot. But I felt that maybe I couldn't do it. I didn't have enough trust in myself but he encouraged me. Then I began to think, well, if this other person and these people can do it maybe I can do it too. I was in high school at that time. I didn't really make that decision until I was in my junior year of high school. That was when I made my mind up that that was what I was going to do.

"I've maintained some of my contacts with people I attended High School with. Not that we keep in contact all the time but we do speak with one another. Now that we're getting together each summer and having a sort of reunion like we had our fiftieth reunion two years ago. It was so great we decided why not do it every year? So we're trying to do that. I think about Loretta, we hung out, played basketball together and were cheerleaders at the same time. I had wonderful high school years, really! Some of my friends were the same ones I attended school with in elementary school because we remained together as a group all the way through school. The first two years I was in Durham, because my mother didn't leave Durham but then we moved to New Market and I sort of went right along with most of the people I knew. The first house we lived in we had one big bedroom for the three of us and my mother had her room but when we moved we each had our own bedroom. My only other move was when I left New Market in New Hampshire to come down to New York. We had certain chores that we had to do to help my mother. We made our beds, we did the dishes, as we got older we ironed our clothes, and you realized our mother couldn't do it all and we had to help her and we wanted to help her. We also wanted to go to work to help ourselves and help with the family once we were old enough. Everyone worked mostly in hotels and the pay wasn't much but we got paid a certain amount for the summer plus whatever tips we made. She said it helped her at that time because she needed something for herself. When she went to college, she said her mother helped her financially because she wanted her to concentrate on her studies and school work by making it a priority knowing it was going to be especially difficult that first year. She later found out her mother borrowed the money she gave her that first year. Otherwise the rest of the time she worked in the cafeteria and that paid for her room and board. It may not have paid for her board and room today but it helped her at that time and she would make money over the summers to pay for books and other expenses. Her mother did whatever she could do to help all her children".

“Christmas was the Holiday that brought us all together. Christmas Eve was when we hung up our stockings. Stockings were a big thing then because apples, and oranges and nuts were not something we had all the time. They were considered special in those days. I played basketball in high school but I wasn’t a great player but I played basketball and I was a cheer leader which I loved. I also played some softball. I learned to dance and I loved that. I remember going to the socials where we learned to dance. I remembered the beginning of World War II when we had relatives and family members called into service, like my Uncle Stanley who was drafted. She remembered how many things were in short supply and rationed when they weren’t easy to come by due to shortages during the War. Sugars were rationed and coffee was too. Butter was scarce and margarine was introduced at this time as a substitute for spread and the consumer was expected to mix the coloring agent into the margarine him or herself before using it. She remembered Pearl Harbor falling on a Sunday and the end of the war occurring in the summer when we all went outside to make noise, or beat a drum, some pots and pans and cheer as the end of it was announced on the radio. There were no black and white televisions in homes until several years after the war but that happened during the fifties”.

Sally listened to Amos and Andy who were popular on the radio. As she and her friends got older they would enjoy listening to cowboys shows like Gene Autry who sang some of his popular hits like “Back in the Saddle Again” and even “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer”. They were some of the first movies she was allowed to go to see on her own, along with Shirley Temple and Jane Withers. As she got still older she was permitted to go see Roy Rogers and Gene Autry pictures in the afternoon at 10 cents a movie. She remembered the time when she found a nickel and hunted to find another nickel which she never found. She enjoys waking up with the sun but she also likes staying up late. Spring is her favorite season of the year. She doesn’t enjoy the humidity during the summer but she loves the winter too because it reminds of the country in New Hampshire where she grew up. It was always winter when she was little and there was always snow on the ground. I always loved it, she said.

I asked how did she define the word “old”? Her answer was “I don’t know, but I’m getting there”. “That word gives you power to feel that way”, she said. Sally remembers the very first teacher she ever had in school. Her name was Miss Farley in First Grade and she remembered Miss Chamberlain in second Grade,

which surprised her, since she often forgets names of people after a long time but she did remember those two teachers.” There was no Kindergarten in the Public School. If you wanted Kindergarten then you had to go to a Private School when she started at the Elementary School in Durham, New Hampshire. Next she attended Third Grade in New Market Elementary School when they moved there. Her next school was New Market High School and then she matriculated to Keen Teachers College in Keen New Hampshire. It had been a Normal School before she attended. At that time you didn’t have to pay any tuition but you did have to promise to teach in New Hampshire for two years after you finished your schooling. But it wasn’t that way when she attended. It became an even better and better school as the years went on. It’s much bigger now. She felt very successful and happy with her first job teaching First Grade in Hanover, New Hampshire. Way back then even in Hanover New Hampshire they didn’t allow classes to have more than twenty five students in a First Grade Class. It was a wonderful, wonderful place to start. I had a woman Principal, who we called “Bunny”. She was a wonderful person who helped you to grow and I think that she helped me a lot. And I met some wonderful teachers there too. I asked if there were other teachers that she had who she wishes could thank today for the ways in which they helped during her career. She immediately thought of someone. *“The one I think about”, she said, “is Miss Lock. She taught Sixth Grade. My husband had her and I had her. I think everybody in New Market had her. She was a devoted teacher. And in those days a woman couldn’t be married and teach. During the Sixth Grade I first had measles and then a ruptured appendix and I was out of school for almost six months. It was much more serious in those days given treatments they have now. She suggested that I stay back and do the year again. She was willing to help me and another girl who had rheumatic fever. She said I’ll take you during the summer. You’ll come to my house and the other girl’s mother said I’ll take you and I’ll help you. But she actually realized that that wasn’t good for me so I repeated that grade and I think it was the best thing that ever happened to me because I gained so much confidence in myself after that and I did much, much, much better after that. She was a wonderful, wonderful person. A summer that my husband and I were going together we went to visit her and she remembered. She was hearing from students all over the world. She didn’t remember right off, but when I told her she said, “Oh yes! She remembered.” Marvelous! I was so glad I went to visit her because the following year, she passed away.”* She was a wonderful, wonderful person. She was a great role model. There was also Mr. Foster who helped me a lot.

I liked Geography and Social Studies. I had trouble with Mathematics but when someone helped me I learned to really love it. When I came to Brentwood I had all the Certifications I needed to teach here but then I took so many in-service courses that I was required to take here in the District. We had to take a lot of Math courses that utilized the Cuisenaire Rods, remember those? We had a vision program and I sometimes wonder why we got rid of all those good courses. I thought the Cuisenaire Rods, were an exceptionally good aide to help children see numbers. Numbers are abstractions but when you can manipulate those little blocks and make the abstract become a real object it really aides in their understanding of mathematics. They could learn the many combinations of numbers that make up numbers. They did it. Then I would say, "How do you know that's true and they would say – see? "Well show me." It was a great aide to understanding. It wasn't the only thing we did but I thought it was a great program. And then there was the vision program. I went to classes for that for three years. It taught them to listen. They had to look. Flash something on the screen and then they had to mark it on the paper what it was. It taught them to concentrate and listen and watch. They didn't have it in the system too long but I thought it was an excellent program. We had to go to courses for that to learn about it. I think for three years I did that. But it faded out eventually. I don't know why.

"You first came to Brentwood in 1955 and there were only three schools, Southwest, Northeast and Village School. Southeast was being built and they thought it would be completed that year but because it wasn't completed we taught in churches. I taught in the Episcopal Church; the Sunday School area. I taught in the Presbyterian Church while others taught in the Firehouse. Then the classes got so big that they had to open another building on Islip Avenue so they'd have enough places for teaching. It was quite an experience for me because I came from a school that didn't allow more than twenty-five students in a class and I had forty-four at first in a very small room and there was just a leather curtain between my class and the class over here and the class downstairs. You either could handle it or, you couldn't. I remember a new teacher that year who taught downstairs in the Episcopal Church where I was. She couldn't handle it and left at the end of that year. We moved into Southeast Elementary the next year and it was a brand new school and it was great. I remember when Dr. Hoyt interviewed us he told us that "It's a growing school system." It certainly was that.

There were only two grocery stores in Brentwood; the Fishers on Suffolk Avenue and the Koehler's Market across the railroad tracks. The other shopping area on the other side of Brentwood Road was not there then and we did most of our shopping in Bay Shore. There was no movie house in Brentwood. If you went to the movies you went to Bay Shore.

I heard about the openings in Brentwood because Dr. Hoyt had worked in White Ridge Junction, Vermont and my friend Lucy Ann had worked with him and under him. Anyway, we both were thinking about moving on. We wanted to go someplace different. He had it printed in the paper that he'd be at this Hotel on a certain date at certain hours and anybody wishing to come to Long Island to teach should come and see him. So we did. In fact there was about five of us who had come to see him. And he said to come down in April and he would show us around the schools and Lucy Ann and I decided to come here. At that time we decided "Well if we don't like it, we don't have to stay". Everybody needed teachers at that point. He told us how it was a growing system and he showed us the schools and he also took us on a ride down to Bay Shore, Brightwaters and so forth and told us how it was so near to the city and you could go into the city and you had the railroad service that was right there. He was a smart man. I liked him a lot. We got the job from the interview we had in April.

My first impression of Brentwood when we came into it by train from New York City for the interview was "I don't know!" It wasn't very big, What's here? Then he took us to the schools. We were questioning. We weren't quite sure. The more he talked to us and took us around and showed us what's nearby the more we concluded...well Lucy Ann and I decided, we'll give it a try. The other three girls didn't want it. They didn't stay. But then as I came to teach I found some wonderful people here. I can only think of two people that I didn't get along with in all those twenty-eight years that I was here. As a result I have some very good memories of my experience here. Yes I do."

I taught first grade for most of my life but I taught Second Grade for two years and Third Grade once when they moved us from East School back to Southeast I was put into Third Grade. I wasn't that happy in that but I was there for just a year and put back into Second Grade. I liked the First and Second Grade the most. There were a lot of in-service courses we had to take. I took a lot of Reading Courses and so forth but I didn't have to have a Masters Degree like they

require today. I should have but you know, "You do what you do". My Principal was Mr. Mitchell. He was in Southeast. Then he took certain of his people with him over to East when he moved. So after that he relocated to Alabama and I worked under Mr. Harney and he was great! Way back there were some other teachers, Mrs. Mitchell; Eloise Mitchell, Helen Burns, in fact for five years I picked them up and took them to school with me, and Mrs. Cutchanello, I think her daughter teaches in Brentwood now but I can't remember her married name, and Mrs. Manning, Mrs. Smith. As an elementary teacher you're never really "off." You're always thinking about what you can do tomorrow for this student or that student and how you might help this group or that group. It never stops. I find I still think about certain individual children I've had in class. Eneesa Faz wrote to me until she was married. She lives in Florida now and also there was a boy that I had in Hanover, New Hampshire, Leonard Reesa. He wrote to me until he was in the Fifth Grade. He was just a joy ... a joy. I can name others but there are some that you can never forget. Eneesa became a teacher too.

The year 1982-1983 was a memorable year for me. Not because it was my last year but because I had an outstanding group of youngsters to work with as I was retiring.

My purpose was to make my students more knowledgeable than they were before. For example with respect to their behavior, I would watch them fighting over nothing and for no reason. Behavior was important to me. I wanted to help them like each other and to help each other succeed while at the same time being kind to each other. I hope I did that. I would answer a question about what makes me angry by saying that it makes me really upset to learn how some children are treated at home. That *really* hurts me. I've always loved children. See, my sisters are all younger than I and I was their big sister and I've always been expected to help them. I taught Sunday school when I was in High School. Children have always been important to me. I love them. Whenever you see a child today in a baby carriage and you smile at them they'll always give you a smile back. They react to goodness I think.

Dr. Hoyt organized a group of teaching professionals before there was an organization of professionals in the district and I was one member of that group. I don't remember if he named it but he wanted people from each school. There weren't as many schools then. And they came and I remember a few times they

were at his home. And we had a meal and we discussed things; things that were bothering us or problems that we had. And then the next time we'd go to somebody else's home. Another thing Dr Hoyt used to do when I first came here, was he had workshops, once a month when school was closed for half a day where all teachers went say first Grade teachers would be in one place and they would discuss problems like how do you solve this and what do you do with this, and it was very beneficial to all of us and we learned different ways to do things and ideas that other people had and it was very good. He did that for quite a while but that didn't continue once there got to be more and more schools I was a delegate from my school to go to BTA meetings and then I was considered a Chief Delegate and I had to go to two meetings to discuss things. My teachers would tell me things they wanted brought forth at that meeting and then I would come back to them and tell them things that were happening every month. We met in the Brentwood Teachers Association Office on Motor Parkway. We met there in the Conference Room downstairs. Teachers from all the schools were there at that time. Jack Zuckerman was in the position of leadership when I first started and then it went to Les Black and he was the leader. Joe Hogan had just started when I retired. I enjoyed doing that because you learned a lot about what was going on that you didn't realize before. I know we helped to solve certain things like class size. They finally limited it to 28 students in a class when it had been forty-four when I began. And then I had thirty-five for five years. With no helpers; you didn't have teacher's aides then and you had to be in the Cafeteria to take care of situations. You had to be on the playground (taking turns) in addition to your regular classroom duties.

When I first came here there was a Junior High where the Village School is. But there was no High School here then. Students from Brentwood went to Bay Shore to get credit for High School.

"Franklin Roosevelt was a hero to me. He was President for most of my childhood. She remembered hearing about him dying on April 12, 1945. It felt as if we had all lost a personal member of our family that day. It was a very sad day for the country".

Sally had the distinct feeling that the kids parents liked her, the children liked her so she thought she must have done some things right and that gave her the feeling of being proud of her service to the Brentwood Community. She

retired in 1983 and it took her a little over a year to make that decision. The problems in the classroom were increasing to a certain extent, but not because of the children. Her husband was ten years older than she is so she began thinking;

“Why not retire at age 55 if I can because life is too short and I’m not getting any younger and we don’t know how much longer we’ll be able to be together. In fact that summer, on her birthday, her husband John, had a heart attack. But once her decision was made she stayed with it and it seemed the right decision to make at that time. Sometimes I wish I hadn’t retired early but, then again I think it was the right thing to do because I made that decision. Once the decision was made don’t look back. Her last teaching assignment was teaching First Grade in Southeast Elementary School. She taught for a total of thirty-two years including those two years spent in New Hampshire”.

Sally loves poetry. When still in college she met Robert Frost whose books she has in her library to this day and still reads. What did she believe most teachers who retire from teaching miss the most about their careers and what did Sally miss the most when she retired? This is what she said:

“I think they miss the children and the people that they’ve worked with. I missed the children but I also missed the people I worked with and had known for a very long time. I try to remain in contact with them. In fact for seven years I went back to school every Christmas and because I like to bake I took a lot of my little goodies with me and I’d go and spend time and have lunch with them and visit and give them plates of cookies I had made and sometimes I’d find myself going to three different schools because I wanted to see those people too. I couldn’t continue to do it because then my mother had a stroke and because of sickness in the family I needed to be home and helping with things. “

I always thought I should have worked harder and gotten my masters degree and so forth. But then I thought would it really have made that much difference? I don’t know. We’re here. It’s 1999 and I retired in 1983. What have I been doing?

“When I first retired we had a Daycare at my church. They needed volunteers and I volunteered a few days a week. But then that closed down and now they hire someone else to use those rooms to have the daycare. I taught

Sunday School, I became an Elder at my church and now I'm a Deacon at my Presbyterian Church in Brentwood. We always used to take trips home to New Hampshire, in the summertime especially. Now I'm busy with my family and the house and the lawn and I haven't traveled as much as some people because my husband's health didn't allow some of that. I'm really busy all the time; busy with friends, going out for lunch and things like that, sleeping late if I want to. For those people entering the field she would offer this advice: "Never give up and always love those children. If they don't have love in their lives nothing we do will ever work for them". What did she hope for the young people she has devoted her life to serving? "I just hope that they will find their way; the niche that they are looking to work in and they'll do it in the best way they know how because you have to stick with it sometimes".

"It was like when I first came to Brentwood, I was feeling a little sad at first because I said, "Oh, what have I got myself into. I have forty-four children in my class and all this but..... you don't quit, you don't quit, and it works out. It works out. My experience taught me, I really and truly believe that it does."