

Story of Ellen Douglas

Ellen Douglas - Born October 31, 1905 in Cedar Rapids, IA, Died October 20, 1984 in New York, New York

My home is called "Bruce more," and I lived there with my parents, George and Irene Douglas, my older sister Margaret, and my younger sister Barbara. My father and my Uncle Walter founded Douglas & Company which is a factory that turns corn into starch and other products.

My favorite servant* was Ella McDannel. She was our nanny, and my sisters and I called her "Danny." She taught us many things before we even entered school at Johnson Elementary. My sisters and I spent our free time roller skating, dancing, playing ping pong, learning music, and exploring the gardens and grounds. I especially enjoyed reading, swimming, playing baseball and basketball, and eating sweets like chocolate and ice cream. Danny and I both captured our many adventures in scrapbooks and journals.

Many of our servants also lived in the mansion or in other buildings on our grounds. Some servants were immigrants and came from places like France, Bohemia, and Germany. We had servants to do everything from cooking to cleaning and taking care of the gardens to driving us around in our automobile, a fairly new invention.

Courtesy of The History Center; Linn County Historical Society

*Servant – A servant is a person who performs duties for others, especially a person employed in a house on domestic duties or as a personal attendant.