

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #144 - Side A

Subject: Katherine Fine

Place: Frenchglen, Oregon

Date: June 27, 1979

Interviewer: Kathlean Hudson

The following is an interview with Katherine Fine of Campers Corral, Harney County. The interview took place in Mrs. Fine's home on June 27, 1979. The interviewer is Kathlean Hudson. For the Horner Museum Number 979128.

KATHLEAN HUDSON: We're going to start with who was the first of your family to come from Wales.

KATHERINE FINE: The first of my family was my grandfather came over.

KATHLEAN: Would that be your paternal grandfather?

KATHERINE: No, maternal. He come over in 1912. Owens was his name, Dave Owens. And he came over to herd sheep for Jenkins'. And then, I don't know, it was a, I suppose within the year, six months to a year then he had his family come over and ---

KATHLEAN: So he was already married when he came?

KATHERINE: Yes, uh huh.

KATHLEAN: I see.

KATHERINE: And he sent for his wife and three children, and so they came over. And they came, well by boat to New York, and then from New York to --- they got on the train and came to Crane, Oregon. Because that was the end of the railroad there. And then they went to Jenkins', and then they went on over to Cord which is nothing there at Cord anymore. It's between, well Crane and Folly Farm, I don't think there is even a ghost town

there anymore. But that's where they went to school; kids went to school there. Then my parents --- grandparents divorced. And then my grandmother remarried another Welshman by the name of Jake Hughes, and I don't know when he came over. But a lot of these people came over and settled in Pennsylvania, they didn't come directly here. A lot of them, that's as far as they went.

KATHLEAN: But actually Dave Owens did come.

KATHERINE: Yes, he came straight over.

KATHLEAN: Was that because he knew about Jenkins?

KATHERINE: Yes. Yes, and because, I don't know just how but then that's the chain of events I guess because a lot of them came over.

KATHLEAN: Do you have any idea if they might have lived like in the same town?

KATHERINE: Back there?

KATHLEAN: Over in Wales.

KATHERINE: Yes.

KATHLEAN: Is that the case?

KATHERINE: I know some of them did.

KATHLEAN: Yeah, I just thought perhaps maybe your grandfather had lived in the same town as Tommy Jenkins' dad and ---

KATHERINE: See, I don't know that. I don't know anything about Tommy Jenkins' dad. But I know that there was a few of them came over here, and that they had gone to school with my grandmother. So they all had to be pretty well, they knew about it.

KATHLEAN: Uh huh. Okay.

KATHERINE: That's kind of like the Basque, you know, they --- one friend writes, finds out, and they write back, and they just send somebody over.

KATHLEAN: Yeah. Yes, it is very similar. Okay. So Dave Owens, what was his wife's

name, your grandmother's name?

KATHERINE: Annie.

KATHLEAN: Annie. Do you know her maiden name?

KATHERINE: Williams.

KATHLEAN: Annie Williams. And she obviously then was also a Welch woman? Yes.

KATHERINE: Yes. They ran a store in London.

KATHLEAN: Oh.

KATHERINE: And they lived above the store.

KATHLEAN: In London?

KATHERINE: Uh huh.

KATHLEAN: Okay. And who were the three children then?

KATHERINE: Ah --- I've got them here.

KATHLEAN: All right, Garfield, Jenny, and Trinan?

KATHERINE: Trevor.

KATHLEAN: Trevor, okay, I'm sorry. Okay, great. Now which one of these --- Jenny was your mother? Is that it?

KATHERINE: Yes.

KATHLEAN: Okay, and who did she marry?

KATHERINE: She married a Scotsman by the name of McDonald, Joe McDonald.

KATHLEAN: Was Welch ever --- was there any Welch on the other side? I want to ask that first. It was all Scotch on the Joe McDonald side?

KATHERINE: Yes, but Welch was --- yeah, they spoke it when I was a kid. I could understand a lot of it, and I could speak some of it, being young, you know. But my mother and my grandmother always spoke Welch.

KATHLEAN: Was there any continuing contact with Wales? Interest in what was

happening in Wales in the political scene, or with the family ---

KATHERINE: Oh yes. My mother, until she died, she passed away about 6 years ago; she knew everything that happened over there. And they were very loyal to the Queen.

KATHLEAN: I see.

KATHERINE: Yes, they were always, you know, kind of leaned that direction. Although I don't think they ever wanted to go back. But now my grandmother, see, she was from a family of twelve. She was the oldest child, and so she kind of helped raise most of her brothers and sisters. And she did bring her youngest brother over, Dave Williams. If you've ever looked at the Steens Mountain book, there is a picture of this cabin with a tree growing up through it, and it has something out the Welshman, Dave Williams. That's his cabin.

KATHLEAN: Okay. Is he still living?

KATHERINE: No.

KATHLEAN: Was there any sort of Welch community as such? People who, you know, getting together for social events, inviting other Welch people?

KATHERINE: Not that I know of. Now maybe years ago there was --- might have been, you know, just friends. There was some people by the name of Evans, they were related to the Hughes. But, that was kind of a, really --- I was so small, and I don't know. And then some of them went back to Pennsylvania, but I'm sure back there they had a regular Welch community back there. Because Jake, my step-granddad always used to keep in communication with them.

KATHLEAN: What about different holidays, do you have any customs that you happen to know are distinctly Welch? Like say at Christmas time or anything?

KATHERINE: No, I don't.

KATHLEAN: None that you are aware of.

KATHERINE: That kind of petered out when it got down to me, I guess.

KATHLEAN: It does that, doesn't it?

KATHERINE: I think it's because there are so few. And like I say, my grandmother, you know, was a very strict lady. For her to come out from the middle of London, out here to this country, was quite a change for her, you know.

KATHLEAN: Did she bring anything with her?

KATHERINE: Yes, they brought lot of things. In fact I have a couple of vases over there that she carried with her, and she didn't pack them on the boat, you know, she carried them with her all the way. I'm scared to death something is going to happen to them. But she brought all her China, all her dishes, and every-thing.

KATHLEAN: Then your maternal grandfather was Dave Owens. And he came to herd sheep, right?

KATHERINE: Yes.

KATHLEAN: With the Jenkins'? Okay. And then, I'm sure I don't have the spelling right, Jake Hughes, was your ---

KATHERINE: Yes.

KATHLEAN: Okay. Was he also in herding?

KATHERINE: Yes, that's what he first did, and then he had sheep of his own. And then from there he went to cattle.

KATHLEAN: Okay, would that have been in the 1930's, after the Taylor Grazing Act?

KATHERINE: Well, he was still in the Taylor Grazing when he went out. That was in the '40's, when he went out of business.

KATHLEAN: Do you know if they ever hired any hands who were Welch?

KATHERINE: No, not that I know of. There was just so few people that are really Welch.

KATHLEAN: Do you know of any others around the community besides your uncle, and

Tommy Jenkins?

KATHERINE: There are some people over at Princeton by the name of --- have you been, contacted to them?

KATHLEAN: No.

KATHERINE: There was two brothers came out, Matt Davies and Bill Davies. And they are both dead. But they are Bill Davies boys still around, live around Crane. Well, maybe Princeton, I think maybe that's the country.

KATHLEAN: You don't happen to know the name?

KATHERINE: Yeah, one is Tommy and one is Jack.

KATHLEAN: Tommy and Jack.

KATHERINE: Well there's two more, then there's Maurice. There was four of those boys, Maurice and Dick. But I don't know what they'd know. I know that those two, Matt and Bill Davies, went to school with my grandmother back in Wales.

KATHLEAN: Oh, really!

KATHERINE: Yeah, so --- But I don't know much about their family.

KATHLEAN: Do you have any idea how much schooling your grandparents had back in Wales?

KATHERINE: No, I really don't.

KATHLEAN: What about your parents? Your mom in particular here.

KATHERINE: Well my mother, she, well she came over, she was 13 when she came over. And they started them to school when they were 5, I remember that, and she was really a little person. And they were so afraid that she'd get lost in the pea soup fog over there, you know, going back and forth to school. But anyway, she had to learn English and Welch right along, you know, in the first grade right on up. Then when she came over here why she went to school. And then she went to one year of high school in Ontario.

Then from there, she went to Portland to be a hat maker, a millinery business. And that's where she met my dad. He was in the Navy. He went to Nova Scotia, and then settled in Boston. So ---

KATHLEAN: Then, how did they happen to come back to this area?

KATHERINE: Well, because this was where my mother's parents were. They came out here. Then they had a grocery store in Crane.

KATHLEAN: Oh, how long did they have that?

KATHERINE: Oh, I think they had it a couple of times. I suppose about two or three years.

KATHLEAN: About what year would this have been?

KATHERINE: Oh, it had to have been --- it was in the '20's. Well the fact of the matter is, we came here to the hotel. My folks came and ran the Frenchglen Hotel, and that's how I got over here. You see so --- and we came here the fall of '29. So we came from Crane --

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KATHLEAN: You came from Crane to run the Frenchglen Hotel?

KATHERINE: Uh huh.

KATHLEAN: Oh, that's kind of neat.

KATHERINE: You see my father-in-law, well he wasn't my father-in-law then, but he lived in Crane. He ran the Swift and Company, used to be the Roaring Springs Ranch. So part of it was, well it was the P Ranch then, and --- so everybody was living at, or eating and everything at the P Ranch, and that's how come the town site of Frenchglen came about. Because about five years or so earlier, around in '24, '23 or '24, they built the store and the hotel.

KATHLEAN: Who do you mean by this?

KATHERINE: Swift and Company.

KATHLEAN: Swift and Company, okay.

KATHERINE: They had it built. Because everybody was living at the P Ranch and they already had lots of hands, you know, at least 30 hands. And they always had a Chinese cook, and he didn't like cooking for everybody. Of course people just traveled by horses. And you know you'd come, and they'd stay several days, you know. So then they built the hotel. They only had five rooms in it then, it was just a little old hotel. So anyway, Joe Fine was the manager and he came to my mother and dad, because my mother was a real good cook, and asked if they would come and run the hotel. And she ran it for 20 years.

KATHLEAN: Wow. So is that kind of where you grew up? Right there in Frenchglen?

KATHERINE: I was born between Crane and Burns.

KATHLEAN: You mean on route?

KATHERINE: Yeah, on route. I think they got Burns as my name, my --- And then, well I came here when I was six and a half, and I've never left.

KATHLEAN: And you are one of how many children?

KATHERINE: Just two.

KATHLEAN: Just two of you. Who is the other one?

KATHERINE: Well I've got a mean brother, Finley McDonald.

KATHLEAN: Finley McDonald.

KATHERINE: He lives in Portland.

KATHLEAN: He didn't stay in the area then?

KATHERINE: No, he didn't really like it out here.

KATHLEAN: Do you remember any particular games you played as children that might have possibly come down from your mom, and have some sort of Welch traditional background to it?

KATHERINE: No, not so much that. But I know we used to have some Welch, well I shouldn't say, habits. You know, like they always had tea in the morning, about 10:30 in the morning. And then in the afternoon around 4:00 everybody just stopped and sat down and you had tea.

KATHLEAN: Now by tea, do you mean just the beverage or the food?

KATHERINE: Ah, well it seemed to me that there might have been a little food, I don't remember. I just remember the tea so much. Anyway, no matter how little we were, everybody just sat down and had that old strong tea, and cream and sugar. And I hadn't had that till I was over in England, and I had forgotten all about it.

KATHLEAN: What about singing? Did your mother sing Welch lullabies to you or anything like that?

KATHERINE: Well my grandmother did, of course the Welch are quite noted for singing. And lots of times when everybody would all get together they'd do a lot of singing.

KATHLEAN: Can you remember times like that when you were a child?

KATHERINE: Well yeah, my grandmother would always sing. She'd sing all the time. I remember when we stayed down there on --- like on Sundays, she never did a tack of work at all. Everything was done on the Saturday, or anything. You didn't even cook. You just took time to read the Bible and sing, and just do the least you could on Sunday.

KATHLEAN: Did you kind of do the same thing in the home when you were growing up, or ---

KATHERINE: Well, no not so much because we lived here at the hotel, and it just wasn't very feasible to do that.

KATHLEAN: What about clothing? Did your grandmother have any clothes that she had brought with her, say just traditional dress?

KATHERINE: No, at least I don't remember anything like that.

KATHLEAN: We're talking about the Swift and Company owning the P Ranch.

KATHERINE: They sold it to the refuge.

KATHLEAN: I see. Okay, so they owned it from --- have you any idea from what years, from when until when, they might have owned it?

KATHERINE: No, I'm really not much on dates.

KATHLEAN: But they owned it around the 1920's then?

KATHERINE: Oh, yes.

KATHLEAN: At which time they decided that they needed another little location for ---

KATHERINE: Well yes, they needed some place for them, that's how come the town site of Frenchglen was built. I mean the reason it was built. And then when they got ready to sell to the refuge, it held up the sale for almost six months, because the refuge didn't want to buy the town site of Frenchglen. Well, what really was the hotel and the store, actually. And of course the Swift and Company didn't want it either, they were way back there in Chicago, so what do they want with a couple of houses out here. So finally the government gave in, and they took it too.

KATHLEAN: Frenchglen, the hotel and the grocery store, then would they have both been built in the late 1920's?

KATHERINE: Early '20's.

KATHLEAN: Early 1920's. Okay. And was Joe Fine the first manager then?

KATHERINE: No, I don't think so. See because there was an outfit by the name of Craven in here from Texas. And then of course Swift and Company bought it from them, and so --- But he ran this for 32 years. I don't know what time he came, but ---

KATHLEAN: Ran what?

KATHERINE: The cattle ranch, which was Swift and Company, then later became Allied, and whatever it is now. Then they moved, you see. When they sold the P Ranch, then

they moved their headquarters up to Roaring Springs.

KATHLEAN: Are they still there?

KATHERINE: Uh huh, only it isn't Swift and Company now, it's something else.

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