

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #450 – Sides A/B

Subject: Thomas Enoch Jenkins

Place: Jenkins Home – Burns, Oregon

Date: June 24, 1979

Interviewer: Kathleen Hudson

(Interview with Thomas Jenkins in Burns, Oregon, on June 24, 1979. Interviewed by Kathleen Hudson for the Horner Museum.)

KATHLEEN HUDSON: Maybe we can start with you telling me when and where you were born, you yourself.

THOMAS JENKINS: I was born at the old place at Riddle Mountain.

KATHLEEN: What year would that have been?

THOMAS: In 1904.

KATHLEEN: 1904. Where did your family originally come from?

THOMAS: Both of them came from the area around Talybont, Wales.

KATHLEEN: Both your mother and dad?

THOMAS: Yes.

KATHLEEN: Do you remember them well and your grandparents, too?

THOMAS: I don't know my grandparents.

KATHLEEN: Oh I see.

THOMAS: I was born over here, and my folks were born in Wales. And I ---- my father lived to be 81 and my mother lived to be 78.

KATHLEEN: What year was it when they came to the states?

THOMAS: My father came here in '81, he left there --- left the old country when he was 17, and he had enough money to get to Pennsylvania. So he was able to come because they had a Welsh settlement in Pennsylvania and he came as steerage rate. You know what that is?

KATHLEEN: Yes.

THOMAS: And therefore he had to come through Ellis Island and be processed through there and on to Pennsylvania. And he worked in the mines in Pennsylvania until he got enough money to come west.

KATHLEEN: Do you have any idea why he wanted to come west, how did he know about it?

THOMAS: He wanted to find a place to run sheep.

KATHLEEN: Had he run sheep in Wales?

THOMAS: He worked; his parents were in the sheep business in Wales.

KATHLEEN: I see, yes.

THOMAS: He worked with them there as a young man and he --- and that's what he wanted to do. So he worked in Pennsylvania until he got enough money to get to Portland. He came by rail to Portland and he didn't like it around there, so he just worked around at different jobs all the way from washing dishes to whatever. And he spent the winter there, then started up the Willamette Valley working from place to place

until he got up to about Eugene, then he crossed over --- He crossed over to Klamath Falls and worked around there and spent the winter in Klamath at odd jobs mostly ranching. And then he signed on with a survey crew, that surveyed the land grant road that came across from Klamath through this country here. And he worked all that year until it froze up in the wintertime out here at Silver Creek.

KATHLEEN: Now this would have been what year?

THOMAS: In '86.

KATHLEEN: '86, okay.

THOMAS: And he quit the survey crew there and went to work herding sheep.

KATHLEEN: And that was the start of his sheep business here in the county, was it?

THOMAS: Right. And he herded sheep for this one man for I think a couple of years, then he took a band of sheep on shares and that's when he sent for my Uncle Tom. And then when Uncle Tom got out here why he bought the other half of the band of sheep and they went into partners.

KATHLEEN: Now where was it he bought the sheep from, Uncle Tom?

THOMAS: Well, Dad had the sheep on shares and he bought out the other half out here at Silver Creek at the Rye.

KATHLEEN: So that the two brothers then together jointly owned the herd of sheep?

THOMAS: Right. And they worked together and bought a little place up for Headquarters out here about eight miles from Burns. And they ran the sheep up North there but then when they found out that the land grant was gonna' go through, as in the way --- you understand what the land grant was?

KATHLEEN: Well, maybe you could explain it to me, I'm not sure I do know all of the details.

THOMAS: The government offered the railroad company every odd section in even township seven miles on one side of the --- as a right of way, the road right of way and three miles on the other side of the right of way. They went out across Harney and Malheur County. So one night Dad found out that it was going to go through, it would spoil the, any plans he had for his sheep operation cause it would take every other section. So he decided to go look over the Steens Mountains. So he went horseback over there and rode all over the land and he liked what he saw. And before he left over there, he bought this place where I was born. And then he came back over and him and my uncle and they moved the sheep over there. And they operated there for --- and built up to where they had several bands.

KATHLEEN: How many sheep are in a band? Is that what determines a band, the number of sheep?

THOMAS: Well, when they --- in the spring of the year after lambing there's usually about 1,000 ewes and their lambs. Then when they take the lambs away from the ewes in the fall, they would put two bands together which would make 2,000 grown sheep and they would run that way during the winter until lambing time again. And that's when some of these other Welshmen, well they wanted to help and they would write back to different ones that they knew in Wales and sometimes some of those people in Wales would write to them. And what they needed was enough money to get over here and a letter proving that they would have a job when they got here.

KATHLEEN: Now when your dad and brother first came were there other Welshmen already here in the county, in the area?

THOMAS: Not that I know of.

KATHLEEN: So they were kind of the first ones then?

THOMAS: I think so.

KATHLEEN: Made it possible?

THOMAS: In that --- that is, in that there wasn't many people at all then.

KATHLEEN: Yes, limited numbers we're talking about then, aren't we? How much longer was it before your mother came out?

THOMAS: Well, Mother --- my dad went back in about late '86 or '87. And he met my mother and they were married in Wales. And then she came --- what date was it --- June, she came in June of '98.

KATHLEEN: June of '98. That would be then about eight years after they first met.

THOMAS: Oh no. My error --- I mean '96.

KATHLEEN: In '96 he went home. So he didn't know her when he first came out to ---

THOMAS: No.

KATHLEEN: I see. What basically was your father's reason for leaving Wales?

THOMAS: Well, they just had a small acreage there and a large family. There was --- let me see --- I think four boys and there was just, wasn't anything for him to do.

KATHLEEN: Just not enough land to go around.

THOMAS: No, and it was hard --- most people just had a little place and they don't have any work and if you got a chance to work why then hardly didn't pay anything.

KATHLEEN: Do you know if your dad had any schooling back in Wales, perhaps as a youngster?

THOMAS: All I know of is just --- I have no idea what grade, just to elementary education.

KATHLEEN: What about your mom?

THOMAS: She had an elementary education and some college.

KATHLEEN: Did she ever work outside of the family when she got here?

THOMAS: No.

KATHLEEN: I thought perhaps she might have been a schoolteacher of something.

THOMAS: No.

KATHLEEN: And what was your father's full name?

THOMAS: Jonathan Richard.

KATHLEEN: And your mother's name?

THOMAS: Margaret Mary Jones.

KATHLEEN: Do you know what church they belonged to?

THOMAS: My father was a Baptist, and my mother was a Methodist Episcopalian.

KATHLEEN: What did they do about attending over here in the, Harney County? Was there any church, for instance, for ---

THOMAS: There wasn't any. The very first time we --- any of us kids --- and there's three of us children. And when my sister, which is the oldest, got to the eighth grade, my parents bought a home in Boise and we moved there for the school year and that's the first time that we ever attended any church. And my father being a Baptist why I guess

he wanted to stay with his and my mother with hers, so when he would come down there, we would go one time to the Baptist church and the next time to the ---

KATHLEEN: You mentioned three children in the family; your sister was the oldest, what was her name?

THOMAS: Mary.

KATHLEEN: And do you remember what year she was born?

THOMAS: 1900.

KATHLEEN: And who was next?

THOMAS: My brother, Richard.

KATHLEEN: And that would have been what year?

THOMAS: 1902.

KATHLEEN: 1902.

THOMAS: Then we had another little brother that --- he died when he was just, after he was born.

KATHLEEN: When you were a child, do you ever remember hearing Welsh spoken in your home?

THOMAS: Oh yes.

KATHLEEN: You did huh? Do you yourself speak any?

THOMAS: No.

KATHLEEN: Did you when you were a child?

THOMAS: Yes.

KATHLEEN: Were you ever around Welsh people?

THOMAS: Well, I have been around my relatives in Wales. But not for extended periods of time, and as a matter of fact, they mostly speak English now.

KATHLEEN: Yes.

THOMAS: But you know what the Welsh language is like?

KATHLEEN: Yes, I do know what it sounds like.

THOMAS: Well, it's one of the hardest languages to learn after you are grown and it's the hardest to remember. Now, my cousin Tom came out here, you know, oh he came out here in '28. Well he went back for a short time when he was married and then he wasn't back there again until all of us went back in '72. And in that time why he practically had to learn the language all over. He couldn't carry on a conversation.

KATHLEEN: It does get difficult when you've been away awhile, doesn't it? Haven't heard it spoken. Were there any community activities where people who had the Welsh background would get together and speak Welsh?

THOMAS: Oh yeah. A lot of them --- well we had, at one time we had several Welsh people working for us and then some of the Welshmen that came over here to work for my dad when they --- well they'd work steady and they didn't fool around. I mean go and spend their money, they saved it and then when they got enough money together they would go in business for themselves. Usually not too far from where we were and usually on Christmas we would have a get together ordinarily at my folks' place. And they would talk Welsh and sing --- the people they loved to sing, you know. And we had a piano, my dad he played enough to play the cord and they would maybe sit up practically all night just singing old Welsh songs and ---

KATHLEEN: Do you remember if there were any special dishes, any cooking that was particularly brought straight from Wales?

THOMAS: No. Outside of their bread. They had a way of making bread that was just, you can't --- you've probably tested one when you were back there --- this something special and baked it in those big ovens which we didn't have one.

KATHLEEN: This was the ranch where ---

THOMAS: The old place where I was born, Riddle Mountain. (Where he brought his bride.) We had a reservoir right back up here that my dad put in after he bought it. It was built in 1900. He tunneled through a ridge there for an outlet and made a natural reservoir. It's still operable. The place is small and he had it all in alfalfa and had (there Mrs. Jenkins with two of the kids, just had two of them when he first brought her, you see.)

KATHLEEN: And this is the same ---

THOMAS: (That's the same place and then after they got their house all painted and built on to and some trees and vines around.) Dad wasn't there.

KATHLEEN: That says Indian Creek on the back of that one actually.

THOMAS: (You can imagine coming from Wales and landing out there.) I hadn't come here yet.

KATHLEEN: No you weren't quite born yet, were you, at this time? Now we were talking about the Christmas celebration a while ago, was that one of the few occasions on which the people would get together or just one of many occasions they took together ---?

THOMAS: It was the biggest. Oh, on occasion one --- when they happened to be close they would all come there because they were always welcome. They would spend a day or two or whatever time they could visiting.

KATHLEEN: Do you recall if there was much talk about what was going on in Wales, for instance, what politics, what was happening in the political field in Wales? Did the people retain an interest in what was going on back in Wales?

THOMAS: Oh yes. They got newspapers from back there. And they got a newspaper from that Welsh settlement in Pennsylvania. There was quite a few of them that had relatives that lived there and they got the newspaper from there so they pretty well kept track.

KATHLEEN: And had a kind of a feeling of unity in their Welsh background?

THOMAS: Oh yes.

KATHLEEN: Did you feel yourself as if you have a part of this in you, a distinct national; did you feel a close tie to Wales?

THOMAS: Oh, yeah. Yes. The --- I spent so much of my time when I was a youngster with Welsh people and they're such a friendly people that it --- I just felt like I was part of it.

KATHLEEN: What about when you were going into school now, were there a number of other youngsters in this school who also had the Welsh background?

THOMAS: Yes, at one time --- the only time that see --- we lived too far from any public school out here, that my dad had a private school.

KATHLEEN: Oh, and who taught?

THOMAS: (I'll find it for you.) That little house way up there on the hill, that was the schoolhouse.

KATHLEEN: Oh.

THOMAS: One room.

KATHLEEN: And a teacher was brought in then from elsewhere?

THOMAS: Well, where ever my dad could find one that would go out there and teach, why --- and yet the only time that we ever had other students there is when the Catherine Fine's mother, when her folks --- well he came over here to work for dad and then he sent and got --- he had the family back home. And then he sent and got them. And they came and lived there with us and went to school there.

KATHLEEN: That would have been Catherine's parents who went to school with you?

THOMAS: That's right Catherine's mother and brother.

KATHLEEN: And did the schoolteacher then live with your family?

THOMAS: Yes.

KATHLEEN: Do you recall playing any games that were typically Welsh games or reading any books that had been brought by your folks?

THOMAS: No books that --- No, there wasn't any special ---

KATHLEEN: What about furniture, you were saying that in 1933 wasn't that it, that your folks went back to Wales and brought back a number of things with them. But when your mom first came over did she bring a number of things to set up housekeeping?

THOMAS: No. Because in those days, she came by train to --- I guess to West Fall and then came by stage from there. Horse ---horse and buggy. And there was no way to bring outside of your bare need ---

KATHLEEN: Just the personal necessities and that was it?

THOMAS: Yes.

KATHLEEN: Can you tell a little about what a typical day in the life of a herder --- a sheepherder would have been when your dad was doing this kind of work? Like what time you get up and what's the first thing you do in morning ---?

THOMAS: Damned early.

KATHLEEN: Yes.

THOMAS: Well you got to get up and you have your breakfast before daylight. And when the sheep start out and you just well --- you always had at least two dogs and you let them spread out quite a bit of territory but you just have to watch and see that they don't get split off and get lost. Then in the afternoon why then you turn them back towards camp and let them graze back in and then they will naturally --- along towards dark --- they will naturally come together and bed down.

KATHLEEN: Was the range fenced or was it just open?

THOMAS: Oh no. It wasn't fenced any place. That's the reason my dad decided he didn't want any part of this out here because they, every other section would be deeded, you'd have to, leases to go over. Well, you'd have a lease of some kind on it. And out of the Steens everything was wide open. You could go any place, no fences and until the homesteaders started coming in then they would file on the first as a 160 and then it was raised to 320 and finally to 640.

KATHLEEN: When did the homesteaders begin coming in large numbers?

THOMAS: Oh about from 1905 on.

KATHLEEN: So that cut down the amount of grazing land that was available and then it was --- how long did your father have sheep --- he switched to cattle, is that correct?

THOMAS: Yeah.

KATHLEEN: Uh huh, somewhere along the line.

THOMAS: Well, we had sheep until --- well it was straight sheep until '35 and then we started changing over to cattle, but we still had some sheep at least one or two bands until 1943.

KATHLEEN: Did the Taylor Grazing Act have something to do with the change to cattle?

THOMAS: Absolutely.

KATHLEEN: It made it ---

THOMAS: That's what put most of the small operators out of the business, because you had to have a base property where you could raise hay and then you had to have some property on the mountain too for summer, to be able to get a permit to operate the rest of the year and that put a lot of the fellows out of business. Some of them --- you say you've met Bill Griffith. Well Bill, he came over here, my gosh, well when he came over we didn't have a place for him but we --- his brother was, had come over here and was working for us then so we promised Bill a job. Well we knew if we didn't have a job, well, we'd get one for him. So we got Bill a job with my sister and her husband and he worked for them for a while. And then he decided he wanted to go and work with the sheep so he left for a while and then he came back and worked for us again. And then when he was working for us he decided to go into the sheep business himself.

KATHLEEN: Do you remember about what year that would have been?

THOMAS: Well, I can't say for sure. It was in the '30's, late.

KATHLEEN: After the Taylor Grazing Act had already been passed, then?

THOMAS: Yes. And Bill didn't have a place for a base property, so we had some land that we weren't using and we leased that to him up on the mountain and then we --- had what you would call a bogus lease on some of our hay property for his winter graze. But he didn't necessarily have to put up hay on that but he had to have the lease on land but he could buy hay wherever he wanted to. So he got by with that. And Bill ran sheep on that deal for several years until he sold out.

KATHEEN: Can you tell me a little bit about the conflict between the cattle ranchers and the sheep people, the basis for the conflict?

THOMAS: Oh, there wasn't too much of a conflict out on our mountain there, it was mostly sheep excepting the Pacific Land and Livestock Company which owned the Highland Range and several big ranches down south in the county, and of course they would bring a lot of cattle up around that country and turn them loose and let them go anywhere they wanted to. But there wasn't any --- if the cattle were in your way then they didn't --- with that whole country around our end of the mountain there, there was only one man that rode for that company and he couldn't be in every place at once. We knew where he was and if the cattle were bothering us why we just get together and move them, so there wasn't any cattle wars or anything like that or fights. In fact they furnished the beef for nearly all the homesteaders out there.

KATHLEEN: How did your family happen to change from sheep to cattle ranching?

THOMAS: The lack of help.

KATHLEEN: I see. You need more men then to run sheep, do you?

THOMAS: Well, it's a different kind of help. You have to have good steady help to make a go of it in the sheep business. Where with cattle if you have, move a bunch of cattle or something like that why you, and gather up a bunch of kids and move the animals.

KATHLEEN: So the sheep needed more daily ---?

THOMAS: Yeah. All the time.

KATHLEEN: How many men would work on your dad's place at any given time?

THOMAS: Well, especially after my brother and I left school, and my dad wanted us to come back and go into partners with him then we started to expanding a beef outfit. At one time we ran around 10,000 head and that would be about, usually about 6 or 7 bands of ewes and lambs, and 1 band of yearlings. And it would take one herder for each band and a camp tender for two bands.

KATHLEEN: Now what did the camp tender do?

THOMAS: Well, when we got fed up in one place why you'd move the camp to wherever you wanted to and it was up to him to move it. Then we had a --- what we'd call a supply camp where we would haul the supplies up in bulk and whatever's available in bulk comes as mostly canned foods, and dried fruit, canned milk, potatoes, and onions, and stuff like that. We'd have that camp usually pretty well up in the – up in – where the camp tenders would have too far to go to get to it. They could get there in a day with their pack and they come one day and maybe spend a day then get what they wanted and go back to their camps.

KATHLEEN: So the shepherders themselves really didn't spend too much time at the farmhouse?

THOMAS: Oh no.

KATHLEEN: They were out ---

THOMAS: Long gone.

KATHLEEN: Well, what's the best land in the county for sheep herding? Was it down there in the Steens area? Was that prime sheep?

THOMAS: Yes. Of course then the seasons had a lot to do with it. Spring and fall we'd go down to the low country and out on to the what we called a high desert where the ---

SIDE B

THOMAS: In the fall after the snow came you go out there and you'd have the snow for water. Sheep will live on snow.

KATHLEEN: They just chew it, do they?

THOMAS: Well, they just ---

KATHLEEN: Swallow it, or whatever?

TOMAS: Eat it.

KATHLEEN: You don't have to heat it.

THOMAS: You don't have to go to water everyday. That country out there has a lot of good --- that's the only time of year you could use it because there wasn't any surface water.

KATHLEEN: What about feed, what did you --- if the snow was covering the ground, was it hay that was brought in for them?

THOMAS: No. They would live on mugra (sp.?) brush and sagebrush and the tall bunchgrass. And the sheep will paw down for its forage.

KATHLEEN: So basically the sheep are away from the ranch then almost all of the year.

THOMAS: Oh yes.

KATHLEEN: I see. Well, then is the life of a sheepherder a pretty lonely life?

THOMAS: Very.

KATHLEEN: Very lonely. What about, what would they do when they came into town, I assume occasionally they would have ---

THOMAS: Raise hell.

KATHLEEN: Raise hell. Yeah. Where would they go? What would be the closest town around?

THOMAS: Oh, they'd like to get together with, oh like the other people that worked on ranches and stuff like that and play poker and drink whiskey

KATHLEEN: Did they tend to stick together in little groups like the Welsh sheepherders, as opposed to the Basque sheepherders and the Irishmen or the Scotch, or did they all just kind of ---?

THOMAS: No. They all mixed. No we had Scotch sheepherders, and Irish, in fact we had one Scotchman that worked for us steady for 44 years.

KATHLEEN: Were they sponsored in the same as the Welshmen?

THOMAS: Yes.

KATHLEEN: What were some of the big towns around at that time? Where would you go if you wanted a little bit of social life?

THOMAS: Burns.

KATHLEEN: It was still the main town?

THOMAS: Well, for a long time after --- well the railroad came in Crane in 1916, I think. And it --- there was several pool halls where they had card games and saloon type things. There were about 5 of them there in Crane at one time, if I remember. And there's about, oh let's see, four hotels and some of them would go in there and just stay there until they got ready to go back to work.

KATHLEEN: Now was there a time of year when they weren't needed as much on the ranch to do the herding? When did there times off come?

THOMAS: Well, you needed extra herders after you lambed out and split up the bands and that would last from April until about September, and then they'd be put together again. And that would be, let one man go.

KATHLEEN: Were there some men then that were unemployed from September until April?

THOMAS: If they wanted to be, or they could find other ranch jobs or some of them just done that. They would work that long and save their money and then just not do anything until the next year.

KATHLEEN: Do you have any idea if they were working to save money to send home or if they just enjoyed the adventure of being out here in Oregon, or what was it that brought them here?

THOMAS: Well, most of them I would say were just either, had lost their wives or split up and wanted to leave, but they were mostly the older people and most of them never did get married again. There's only, well let's see, the ones that I can remember of, the Davies boys, there were four of them and they all came out or three of them came out to work for my dad.

KATHLEEN: Came out from Wales, you mean?

THOMAS: Yes.

KATHLEEN: Were sponsored by your dad?

THOMAS: Yes. And the other brother came out to his brother after he got set up in business. And well one of the Davies he married one of my schoolteachers.

KATHLEEN: Oh did he. Were they fairly young then when they came?

THOMAS: Yes. And the other brother he didn't get married until he's pretty well along in years. And the one brother he never worked with the sheep very long, he didn't like them, but he was a singer. He had a wonderful Welsh voice, and he came out here and he worked with the sheep for a while for his brother and took up a homestead and then when he proved up on it, he sold it to his brother and went to Montana. And he died in Montana. And he sang in nightclubs and stuff like that.

KATHLEEN: Most of the men that came out from Wales, did they come with the idea of working for a while and then being in a position to have their own place, their own ranch and their own herds?

THOMAS: Most of them.

KATHLEEN: Who actually then chose to do the day-to-day sheep herding tasks? These were men who weren't quite so fortunate maybe or who were building up their reserves in order to buy their own place?

THOMAS: Well, it would --- for a young fellow to come over here and learn the ways of handling sheep over here --- by the time well, in order to have enough money to branch out on his own it would take oh --- maybe 8 to 10 years to get enough money to start. So, we'd have a good steady man for that long and then you'd know that's what he intended

to do so when by the time he was ready to go you'd have somebody coming to take his place. My father was --- a lot of the fellows who came to work for him they proved that they wanted to stay when he'd have them take up a homestead up on the mountain there and then you had to live and make an improvement on that homestead in order to prove up on it, so he'd arrange so that they could live on it. They made it their home for at least six months, a year, and he'd arrange it so they'd be making their home there. And he'd have it fenced for them and build a log cabin or some kind of lumber, and then if they didn't have enough money saved by the time they proved up on the homestead why he'd lease it from them. And then when they did have enough money to go into herd for themselves why he'd buy the homestead and they'd have that money to help them out.

KATHLEEN: How long did it, men come from Wales under this kind of system where your dad would sponsor them? What was the last year that somebody came under this kind of setup?

THOMAS: I think Bill was the last one.

KATHLEEN: And he was in the 1930's, is that right?

THOMAS: Yeah.

KATHLEEN: And that was kind of the end of the immigration of the Welsh into this area?

THOMAS: Yeah. I don't remember of anybody after that. I don't know when the quota system started. I think now you can sign up and you just have to wait your turn, but I don't know how many years is allowed. I think that most of the quota now goes to the Eastern like Pennsylvania. That's all textile and mining. Have you ever read any of the history of the Welsh in the textile industry?

KATHLEEN: Yes. Although I have read more about the mining industry than the textile industry. I didn't realize that textiles was really big. It is?

THOMAS: Yeah. And they depend on the Welsh ingenuity for the textile industry.

KATHLEEN: Did you know of other people here in Harney County who are of Welsh descent? Now you've told me about Bill Griffiths and Catherine Fine, do you know of anybody else?

THOMAS: Art Evans.

KATHLEEN: Art Evans?

THOMAS: He's an electrician. He runs this --- he has this Jiffy Wash. He's an electrician. His dad was a Welshman. But I'm not sure whether his mother was. (Mary Jenkins was her name.) She'd have to be Welsh.

KATHLEEN: If his mother's name was Mary Jenkins, Welsh, uh huh. She probably was Welsh. Well, did his dad --- was his dad also in the sheep herding business or did he come in some other professional capacity?

THOMAS: No. I don't know what he done before he came here. They came here, Art was --- well, they had a tire shop. And gun recapping and stuff like that, at first. And then he --- I guess he was studying to be an electrician then, and then after he got his license why then he's been an electrician ever since. I don't know what he --- I never did talk to any very much about the Welsh people or ---

KATHLEEN: Is there anybody else you know of?

THOMAS: No.

KATHLEEN: Did your father ever tell you anything about his childhood back in Wales? About how it was when he grew up?

THOMAS: His --- he had a very tough childhood. He's a big family and just a small leased acreage and they had to do all the farming and everything by horses and they grew most of their own vegetables and stuff like that. I think that's one of the reasons that he wanted to get away from there.

KATHLEEN: When you were growing up with your sister and brother what sorts of things did you do? You went to school?

THOMAS: Yes.

KATHLEEN: And what did you do when you were not in school?

THOMAS: We had three big gardens. And we had to work. And we had --- several milk cows. And we had to milk them and help our mother. She made all the butter for all the people that worked on the ranch and all the camps and everything else. So she had --- we always had --- it would be quite a few to cook for and she done --- most of the time --- she done most of the cooking.

KATHLEEN: Did you ever go off with the shepherders and spend any time in the camps when you were growing up?

THOMAS: Oh yes, some.

KATHLEEN: Did your sister get to go?

THOMAS: Not up in the camps.

KATHLEEN: That's a nice picture, isn't it?

THOMAS: I still have that little suit.

KATHLEEN: Oh do you really?

THOMAS: Ontario, before that, was the place that they took the wool to as the closest railroad.

KATHLEEN: Now when were the sheep sheared?

THOMAS: In May and June.

KATHLEEN: Pretty soon after lambing season then, is that right?

THOMAS: Yeah.

KATHLEEN: Did you need extra men to help with the shearing?

THOMAS: Oh yes! There's a band of sheep.

KATHLEEN: Oh yes. Then after the sheep were sheared you, what you put all of the wool into big sacks like that and carry it down to the --

THOMAS: Then load on wagons. Now that wagon there is loaded, you see it is two lengthwise on this first wagon, it's two wagons there. There'd be two lengthwise or four of them lengthwise and the rest of them cross wise. There'd be one ---

KATHLEEN: And each sack holds about how many pounds of wool?

THOMAS: About 400.

KATHLEEN: Wow! And how much wool do you get from the average sheep when it's --- ?

THOMAS: In those days they ran mostly finer wool sheep and they --- their wool was quite a bit heavier than the sheep that we ran later. The sheep that we ran --- oh the last years that we're in the business --- we were raising lambs more than we were wool. And it's much coarser wool and it didn't weigh near as much. About the average --- oh that wool bale would be 13 either 14 pounds per sheep.

KATHLEEN: Now when you say you were raising the lambs more than raising the sheep for the wool itself? Do you mean lambs to be led to the slaughter, is that it, or were

they lambs to be --- yeah, that is it. Would the meat be processed here in Harney County?

THOMAS: No. Most of it, well, most of the time why the buyers would come in from outside, say like down in the Snake River Valley where they had alfalfa hay and grain and all that stuff and they'd go into feed lots, but the top end would go straight to Denver or Ogden.

KATHLEEN: What do you mean by the top end?

THOMAS: The heavy, fat end. They're ready for butcher.

KATHLEEN: How were they sent there, were they shipped by rail?

THOMAS: Yeah. There's a bunch of Dad's crew; there's my dad. About all of them are Welshmen. This was taken down --- up at our old shearing coral.

KATHLEEN: Did you ever get to help with the shearing?

THOMAS: Oh yeah. We'd move up there every --- and stay there while they were shearing.

(This conversation was taped while looking at photographs; some of the information is impossible to relate to any particular subject.)

THOMAS: There's a good mixture. There's a Scotchman and there's a Welshman and that's my Uncle Tom and there's my dad and there's another Welshman and there's another Scotchman.

KATHLEEN: Is this your sister?

THOMAS: I don't know. It's taken at Fish Lake up on the mountain.

KATHLEEN: I thought it looked a little familiar. Now who is in this picture?

THOMAS: I don't know who they were. That's my mother and my sister and brother and myself.

KATHLEEN: In your fancy dress?

THOMAS: Yeah. We used to have to ever once in awhile, they'd get a scab in the sheep and my dad had dipping vat. And it's right along the trail everybody used going up to the mountain. And they would stop in and dip and go on just like they did in shearing time. And we were camped there at that old dipping vat. There's the old shearing coral. See the wool sacks.

KATHLEEN: Sure do.

THOMAS: The band of sheep in there.

KATHLEEN: In tents. Is that what the men usually lived in when out with the sheep?

THOMAS: Yeah. Oh yeah. This was before Dad rebuilt the shearing coral and put the tin roof on it. We have a picture of it someplace.

KATHLEEN: It looks like they're packing in for a while, doesn't it?

THOMAS: This Scotchman, he herded --- worked for us for 44 years. This is the house we lived in Boise when they --- moved to school. There's the gang again.

KATHLEEN: Who ran the ranch while you were all off in Boise?

THOMAS: Hired help.

KATHLEEN: That's a real cute picture.

THOMAS: See that's the dipping vat along there. They'd put them in --- they'd go up a ramp onto the platform there and then they'd shove them over into --- that vat there is V shaped about five feet deep and they had to swim the length of that about 100 feet long

and men would be standing with those poles and every so often they'd dunk their heads under so they'd get all wet.

KATHLEEN: Now was that also done routinely before they were shorn?

THOMAS: No. After.

KATHLEEN: Afterwards? And also when they showed particular signs?

THOMAS: Well, just the only two dozen times that I can remember that we had to dip. They had an outbreak of scab. And then everybody was required to dip.

KATHLEEN: What year was that?

THOMAS: I remember that last time in 19 --- when was the first war declared?

KATHLEEN: 1914.

THOMAS: They dipped. We were up at that dipping vat when the war was declared. I got goop all over my ---

KATHLEEN: Do you mean when the United States came into the war? Or when it was declared in Europe?

THOMAS: When it was declared. No. When we first went into it.

KATHLEEN: 1917 then.

THOMAS: Broken nose.

KATHLEEN: The square window was the cause of your broken nose? How did that happen?

THOMAS: Well, it was hinged down at the bottom and then on warm days they would tilt it out and then a teacher that we had she just used a little fine string to hold it when it tilt out. And a gush of wind come, one of these whirligigs, and it slammed the thing

closed and when it came back down it broke the string. And one of these panes come right down on my head.

KATHLEEN: Oh dear. And it broke your nose?

THOMAS: Yeah. The sash wood. And she got scared and ran outside and my brother finally got the window open and my head. But it was in the wintertime and fifty some odd miles to town so we didn't do anything about it.

KATHLEEN: Just bandaged you up?

THOMAS: Yeah. As my dad's ---

KATHLEEN: And this is a little Indian girl, isn't? He used to camp at the old place. Were there many Indians around?

THOMAS: Oh yeah. There was a lot of them around. They used to work a lot for Dad, especially after we got --- they worked at the shearing coral and then when we got Barton Lake why they would be working in haying and they worked at the old place a lot. (Squaws would work for your mother, wouldn't they?) Yeah. Some of the old squaws they're real good workers.

KATHLEEN: Doing the chores around the house?

THOMAS: Yeah.

KATHLEEN: Were they Paiutes?

THOMAS: Yes. And the men would do odd jobs for Dad and work in the garden and then in the fall why they always come by there because they knew they would --- Dad would give them all their potatoes and onions and so forth. It was things like that, that they wanted.

KATHLEEN: And this is in the schoolhouse?

THOMAS: Yeah.

KATHLEEN: The three of you studying hard.

THOMAS: Yeah. A good picture of a freight team.

KATHLEEN: Now this is how they got the wool from the farm or from where ever you did the shearing down to the railroads?

THOMAS: Yeah. Dad drives after they were loaded there at the shearing coral.

KATHLEEN: Now how far was it to the railroads?

THOMAS: About 200 miles.

KATHLEEN: My, that's quite a distance, isn't it?

THOMAS: And they had another --- they had these two wagons loaded with wool and then a small wagon on behind there that carried the camp outfit and bedding.

KATHLEEN: How long would it take to make that trip?

THOMAS: It all depended on the weather. If the weather was decent why you could figure from a month to six weeks to make a trip.

KATHLEEN: Round trip?

THOMAS: Yeah.

KATHLEEN: That was taking it to where on the railroad?

THOMAS: Well, probably West Fall. You see there wasn't any – the reason why they had to go to West Falls, there wasn't any road down the Malheur River from Juntura to Harper. So they had to cut across the hills and they were closer to go into West Fall than it was to go back down and go to Ontario. After they got to the road to --- so they could get from Juntura down to Harper why then they went first Ontario and later Vale and then after that the railroad kept coming on up till it got up here.

KATHLEEN: You have some really good pictures here. The average shearing per day was 2,000 sheep?

THOMAS: Yes.

KATHLEEN: How many men would it take to do that?

THOMAS: We had a twenty-man plant. It shows the plant there. There's a row of machines on each side.

KATHLEEN: Oh, its machine shearing, is it?

THOMAS: Yeah. As the first machine plant in this part of Oregon. (What year did he put the machines in, Hon?) Oh gosh, I don't remember.

KATHLEEN: The year on the picture is 1910. So you had the machine plant by then.

THOMAS: Yeah.

KATHLEEN: You must have had a really big operation.

THOMAS: That showed they were loading wool with a derrick. They had a horse out here on the end of the cable that went to that derrick and it would lift the wool up and then they would set it down on the wagon.

KATHLEEN: Was it kind of like an assembly line where each man had his one specific job to do and just kept funneling the sheep through?

THOMAS: In the plant you mean?

KATHLEEN: Yes.

THOMAS: No. It like --- well, it was all pens on each side, all the space in between is open, and back behind each shearer was a pen and there was a man that would put the un-sheared sheep in. And the shearer had sacks so they wouldn't run out. So he'd reach in there and grab a sheep and pull him out. And these machines were up above, had

hangers, and they were flexible and he'd sheared the sheep and turned him back in the pen. And when the pen was empty the guy back behind would turn them out and count them and put in another bunch and put the number of sheared ones upon his tag. And then the shearer would just --- the fleece. When he would get all through with the sheep he would just kick it out in front. And then they had young boys sort of tie --- well, they would fold the wool all up and then they'd paper string and they would tie it. And then at the end of the, at the little thing at the end, the sack was hanging down below that and they'd have a sewer there and he'd tromp it in the sack. And then when he gets the sack full, then he'd sew it up.

KATHLEEN: Well, then when the machinery came in it was an electric clipper, is that what it amounts to?

THOMAS: No. It was mechanical.

KATHLEEN: A mechanical?

THOMAS: It was driven by gas engine.

KATHLEEN: Oh, I see.

THOMAS: It had a long, up overhead was a long shaft there and every pen had a --- well, a gear and attachment with a handle on it and then each shearer had his own hand machine that fit right in that housing and the shaft in the housing turned, you know, and ran the machine. The clippers just like hair clipper things only bigger. My brother and I. Well, fellow went to the country there had those burrows, those burrows were little fellows and he gave them to us. He stayed there for several – oh for quite awhile. And those little fellows are too small to travel so he gave them to my brother and I.

(End of Tape)

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THOMAS JENKINS: My father, John R. Jenkins, the son of Richard Jenkins and Margaret Hughes was born on January 28, 1864, near Talybont in South Wales. He died at Burns, Oregon on July 20, 1945. He was one of six children, and he came to America when he was 17 years old, in 1881.

In 1898 he returned to Wales and married Margaret Mary Jones, daughter of Johnathan Jones and Mary Rowlands, on May 10, 1898. He brought his bride to America on June 15, 1898, to his sheep ranch at the base of Riddle Mountain, which we call “The Old Place”. Four children resulted in this union, Mary, Dick, Tommy, and David. David died in infancy and brother Dick died in 1970. My mother died in ---

Thomas E. Jenkins, or “Uncle Tom”, came to America in 1886, and was a partner of my father until 1901 or 1902. The first partnership of “Jenkins Brothers” was the sheep operation at Riddle Mountain. In later years, I and Dick Jenkins, operated with our father as “J. R. Jenkins and Sons” at the Barton Lake and Diamond ranches with both sheep and cattle. After our father’s death in 1945, we were again “Jenkins Brothers” until I sold to Dick in 1966. Dick’s son, Dick, now operates the same outfit as “Jenkins Ranches Inc.” in cattle and farming at both Barton Lake and Diamond.

My father first landed on the East coast and worked in coalmines in Pennsylvania. He came west by train to Portland, worked his way across Eastern Oregon as a surveyor, and at first with his brother Tom, had a small sheep operation at Sage Hen, near Burns. They moved to Riddle Mountain to the Stancliff place (The Old Place), which they

greatly developed to accommodate better living and be headquarters for an extensive sheep operation. Their range reached from here to the top of the mountain. They built a shearing corral and plant on the lower range, and at times 100,000 sheep would be shorn here --- theirs and other peoples. The plant had a canvas top at first, but a wooden building was later constructed which burned in a range fire in the 1940's. Supplies for the sheep camps were taken from the headquarters by packs on mules. My father had his own freight wagons and teams to haul wool to market some 200 miles away. The wagons would bring supplies for the sheep operation on the return trip from the railroad. Sheep sold were trailed.

During the operation of large numbers of sheep, several Welshmen were able to come to America. Most were sponsored by my father, to work for him. Among them were Bill, Matt and Lou Davies, Jack, Lou and Will Griffith, my cousin, Tom Jenkins, who was always called by us, "Cousin Tom", Louie Hughes, Jack Jones, Dick Evans, Dave Jenkins, Dick Jones, Dave Owens. In order for immigrants to come they had to have promise of a job when they arrived. All were skilled in work with sheep as that was a major field in Wales.

My father hired teachers to live at the "Old Place" so we could go to school. There was a small separate building for the school. We lived here all year around until 1916, at which time my father bought a home in Boise so we could finish school there. We lived there in the winter and back to the ranch in the summer, until 1925, at which time we bought and moved to the Diamond Ranch for headquarters there. We had bought the Barton Lake Ranch in 1916, and in 1928 we bought the Round Barn Ranch. Part of this ranch was used to construct a reservoir for irrigating Barton Lake Ranch. The

Swift Company owned these ranches and the Diamond Ranch at one time which were all part of the Peter French domain.

We took part of the old ranch house at the Round Barn and moved it to Barton Lake as a bunkhouse. The shop at Barton Lake was constructed from material from the barn at the “Old Place”. During World War II no new materials were available for ranch building improvements. The cookhouse at Barton Lake was moved from Crane, Oregon in 1941. Many buildings from the “Old Place” were moved and used elsewhere.

My brother, Dick, married Helen Bezdechik, a teacher from Minnesota, and they have three children, Mary Margaret, Dick, Barbara Anne. Their home was on the Diamond Ranch and Helen still lives there. (Dick died in 1970.)

We built the home on the Barton Lake Ranch in 1941-42. Sam Benson, a Norwegian carpenter, with ranch labor help did the work. His wages were \$150 per month with board and room. My wife, Eleanor Welcome Jenkins and our two daughters, Frances Mary and Jane, lived at Barton Lake until 1966 at which time Jenkins Brothers dissolved partnership and we made our home in Burns.

We ran from 6 to 10,000 head of sheep for many years. During World War II time we changed to cattle, as we couldn't get enough help to run the sheep.

For many years I lived a completely rural life. For 19 years I was a Harney County Commissioner and during my tenure we built the Court House and the Hospital, and we met about 2 days each month. I was a director on the Northwest Livestock Production Association Board for 15 years and we met quarterly in Portland.

My mother and father made a visit to Wales in 1933 and stayed a year. Cousin Tom Jenkins and his bride Dorothy Paul Jenkins accompanied my parents on the trip

over. My mother brought her Welsh furniture, dishes and many keepsakes from her Welsh home when she returned to America.

In 1972, my wife, our daughters and I, with Cousin Tom, his wife and two of his daughters flew to Wales for a five-week visit. There we visited our parents birthplaces, and were guests at the homes of Cousin Tom's five brothers and families who nearly all lived near Talybont.