

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #451 – Sides A

Subject: Catherine Fine

Place: Camper Corral - Frenchglen, Oregon

Date: June 27, 1979

Interviewer: Kathleen Hudson

(Interview with Catherine Fine in Frenchglen, Oregon on June 27, 1979. Interviewed by Kathleen Hudson for the Horner Museum.)

KATHLEEN HUDSON: Who was the first of your family to come from Wales?

CATHERINE FINE: The first of my family was my grandfather.

KATHLEEN: Would that be your paternal grandfather?

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

KATHLEEN: So he was already married when he came over?

CATHERINE: Yes. And he sent for his wife and three children. They came over. And they came over by boat to New York. Then from New York they got on the train and came to Crane, Oregon, 'cause that was the end of the railroad there. And then they went to Jenkins. And then they went on over to Cord which there is nothing there at Cord

anymore. It's between Crane and Folly Farm. I don't think there is even a ghost town there anymore. But that's where they went to school. The kids went to school there. Then my grandparents divorced. And then my grandmother re-married 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 did not come directly here. A lot of them --- that is as far as they went.

KATHLEEN: But actually Dave Owens did come?

CATHERINE: Yes. He came straight over.

KATHLEEN: Was that because he knew about Jenkins?

CATHERINE: Yes. And, because I don't know just how. That is just the chain of events I guess, because a lot of them came over.

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

CATHERINE: Yes.

KATHLEEN: Is that the case?

CATHERINE: I know some of them did.

KATHLEEN: I just thought perhaps that your grandfather lived in the same town as Tommy Jenkins' dad.

CATHERINE: I don't know that. I don't know anything about Tom Jenkins' dad. But I know a few of them came over here and that may have gone to school with my grandmother, so they all had to be pretty well --- they knew about it. That is kind of like the Basque, you know. One friend finds out and they write back, and they send somebody over.

KATHLEEN: Yes, it is very similar. So Dave Owens --- what was his wife's name, your grandmother?

CATHERINE: Annie

KATHLEEN: Annie. Do you know her maiden name?

CATHERINE: Williams.

KATHLEEN: Williams. She obviously then was also a Welshwoman?

CATHERINE: Yes. They ran a store in London. They lived above the store.

KATHLEEN: In London?

CATHERINE: Yes.

KATHLEEN: And who were the three children then?

CATHERINE: I've got them here.

KATHERINE: Garfield, Jennie, and Trevor? Now which one of these --- Jennie was your mother, is that it?

CATHERINE: Yes.

KATHLEEN: Who did she marry?

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

KATHLEEN: Was Welsh ever --- was there ever any Welsh on the other side? Let me ask that first. It was all Scots on the Joe McDonald side?

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

KATHLEEN: Was there any continuing contact with Wales, interest in what was happening in Wales in the political scene or family over there?

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

KATHLEEN: I see.

CATHERINE: Yes, they were always, you know, following that direction. I don't think they'd ever want to go back. But now my grandmother, see she was from a family of twelve, and she was the oldest child and so she helped raise most of her brothers and sisters, and she did bring her youngest brother over, Dave Williams. If you have 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 about the Welshman, Dave Williams, and it is his cabin.

KATHLEEN: Is he still living?

CATHERINE: No.

KATHLEEN: Was there any sort of Welsh community as such, people getting together for social events, and inviting other Welsh people?

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

KATHEEN: What about different holidays? Do you have any customs that you happen to know are distinctly Welsh? Say at Christmas time or anything?

CATHERINE: No, I don't. It kind of petered out when it got down to me, I guess.

KATHLEEN: Uh huh, it does that doesn't it?

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

KATHLEEN: Did she bring anything with her?

CATHERINE: Yes. She brought a lot of things. In fact I have a couple of vases over there that she carried with her. She didn't pack them on the boats, but she carried them with her always. I'm scared something's going to happen to them. But, she brought all her china, all her dishes, and everything.

KATHLEEN: The your maternal grandfather was Dave Owens? And he came to herd sheep for Jenkins? Right?

CATHERINE: Yes.

KATHLEEN: And then, I'm sure I don't have the spelling right, but Jake Hughes was your?

CATHERINE: Yes.

KATHLEEN: Was he also in herding?

CATHERINE: Yes. That is what he first did. And then, he had sheep of his own, and then from there he went to cattle.

KATHLEEN: Would that have been in the 1930's after the Taylor Grazing Act?

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

KATHLEEN: Do you know if they ever hired any hands who were Welsh?

CATHERINE: No, not that I know of, 'cause there's just so few people that are really Welsh.

KATHLEEN: Do you know of any others around the community besides your uncle and Tommy Jenkins?

CATHERINE: Uh, there is some people over at Princeton by the name of; have you been contacted to them?

KATHLEEN: No.

CATHERINE: There was two brothers came out, Matt Davies and Bill Davies. They're both dead, but they're, uh, Bill Davies' boys are still around Crane, and maybe Princeton. I think maybe that's it.

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

CATHERINE: Yeah. One is Tommy, one's Jack.

KATHLEEN: Tom and Jack.

CATHERINE: And then there's two more. There's Morris too. There was four of those boys, Morris 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.

KATHLEEN: Oh really?

CATHERINE: Yes. So, I don't know much about their family.

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

CATHERINE: No, I really don't.

KATHLEEN: What about your parents, your mom in particular?

CATHERINE: Well my mother, she was thirteen when she came over, and they started them to school when they were five. I remember that, and she was a really little person and they were so afraid she'd get lost in the pea-soup fog over there, you know, going back and forth to school. Anyway she had to learn English and Welsh right along, you know, from the first grade right on up. Then when she came over here 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 milliner business. That's where she met my dad. He was in the Navy. 'Cause he went to Nova Scotia and then settled in Boston, so ---

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

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

KATHLEEN: How long did they have that?

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

KATHLEEN: About what year was, would this have been?

CATHERINE: Oh, it had to have been --- it was in the '20's. Well fact of the matter is we came here to the hotel. My folks came, found the Princeton Hotel, and that is how I got over here. See, we came here the fall of '29. So we came from Crane.

KATHLEEN: You came from Crane to run the Princeton Hotel?

CATHERINE: Uh huh.

KATHLEEN: Oh.

CATHERINE: See my father-in-law, well he wasn't my father-in-law then, lived in Crane. He ran the Swift and Company. It used to be Warm Springs Ranch. Well, it was

the P Ranch then, and everybody was living or eating at the P Ranch, and that's how the town site of Frenchglen came about because about five years or so earlier, about 1924, 1923 or 1924, they built the store and the hotel.

KATHLEEN: Who do you mean by they?

ATHERINE: Swift and Company. They had it built because everybody was living at the P Ranch and they already had lots of hands, at least thirty hands. They all 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 they built the hotel. And they had five rooms in it then just a little old hotel. So anyway, Joe Fine was the manager and he came to my mother 'cause my mother was a real good cook, and asked them if they wouldn't run the hotel. Then she ran it for twenty years.

KATHLEEN: Wow. So is that kind of where you grew up?

CATHERINE: Uh huh.

KATHLEEN: Right there in Frenchglen?

ATHERINE: I was born between Crane and Burns.

KATHLEEN: You mean on route?

CATHERINE: Yeah, on route. I think they got Burns as my name. And then, well, I came here. Well I was 6 ½, and lived ---

KATHLEEN: And you're one of how many children?

CATHERINE: Just two.

KATHLEEN: Who's the other one?

CATHERINE: Well, I've got a mean brother, Finly McDonald.

KATHLEEN: Finly McDonald.



CATHERINE: He lives in Portland.

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

CATHERINE: No. Didn't really like it out here.

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

CATHERINE: No. Not so much that. But I know we used to have some Welsh, probably should say habits. We always had tea in the mornings, about 10:30 in the morning. And then in the afternoon, probably around 4:00, everybody would just stop, and sat down and you had tea.

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

CATHERINE: Well, it seems to me there might have been 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 we had that old strong tea with cream and sugar. I hadn't had that till I was over in England. I had forgotten all about it.

KATHLEEN: What about singing? Did your mother sing Welsh lullabies to you, anything like that?

CATHERINE: No, my grandmother did. Of course the Welsh were quite noted for singing. Lots of times when everybody all get together, they'd all do a lot of singing.

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

CATHERINE: Oh yeah. My grandmother would always sing. She'd sing all the time. I remember when we'd stay down there on weekends, like on Sunday, she never have to

work at all. Everything was done on Saturday. You didn't even cook. So you just too time to read the Bible and sing, and just do the least you could.

KATHLEEN: Did you kind of do the same thing in the home when you were growing up?

CATHERINE: Well no, not so much 'cause we lived here at the hotel and it just wasn't very feasible.

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

CATHERINE: No. At least I don't remember anything like that.

KATHLEEN: We were talking about Swift and Company owning the P Ranch?

CATHERINE: See they sold it to the Refuge.

KATHLEEN: I see. So they owned it. Do you have any ideas what years, from when until when they might have owned it?

CATHERINE: No. I'm not much on dates.

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

CATHERINE: Oh yes.

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

CATHERINE: Well yes. They needed some place for, that's why the town site of Frenchglen was built; I mean the reason it was built. 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 was really the hotel and the store actually. And, of course Swift and Company didn't want it either. They're way back there in

Chicago and what would they want with a couple of houses out here? So finally the government gave in and they took it too.

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

CATHERINE: Early '20's.

KATHLEEN: Early 1920's. Okay. Was Joe Fine the first manager then?

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

KATHLEEN: Ran what?

CATHERINE: The cattle ranch, which was Swift and Company. Then later it became Allied, or whatever it is now. Then they moved. You see when they sold the P Ranch they moved their headquarters up to Warm Springs.

KATHLEEN: Are they still there?

CATHERINE: Yes. Only it isn't Swift and Company now. It is something else.

(End of Tape)

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