

EI-247

MARGARET PRITCHARD WILLIAMS  
BIRTHDATE: APRIL 15, 1901  
INTERVIEW DATE: 1/31/1993  
AGE AT INTERVIEW: 91  
RUNNING TIME: 44:30  
INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST  
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME  
INTERVIEW LOCATION: BRIDGEWATER, NY  
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: JOHN MURIELLO, 10/1995  
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: IRV SILBERG

WALES, 1920  
AGE 19

SHIP: "THE CARONIA"  
PORT: LIVERPOOL  
RESIDENCES:  
? WALES: ANGLESEY  
? US: PLAINFIELD; BRIDGEWATER, NY

Historian's Note: Mrs. Williams' niece, Evelyn van Nort, is present.

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Sunday, January 31st, 1993. It is approximately three o'clock in the afternoon on a very snowy day. I'm in Bridgewater in central New York state with Margaret Williams, who came from Wales in 1920 when she was nineteen years old. Good afternoon, Mrs. Williams.

WILLIAMS: Good afternoon.

SIGRIST: Can we begin by you telling me your birth date?

WILLIAMS: April the 15th, 1901.

SIGRIST: And what is your maiden name?

WILLIAMS: Pritchard.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

WILLIAMS: P-R-I-T-C-H-A-R-D.

SIGRIST: Where in Wales were you born?

WILLIAMS: Anglesey.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

WILLIAMS: A-N-G-L-E-S-E-Y.

SIGRIST: Where is that in Wales?

WILLIAMS: Well, it's in middle or north Wales.

SIGRIST: It's in north Wales?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Is that the town that you grew up in?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what the town was like for me?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I don't know. It's just like a country, you know. Lakes and the ocean right around it, just like, you know.

SIGRIST: Where there lots of buildings in the town?

WILLIAMS: No. Well, there was a lot of build--- towns there. There was, I don't know how many towns in Anglesey.

SIGRIST: Is Anglesey like a part of Wales, like a county...

WILLIAMS: It's just like an island.

SIGRIST: Oh, is it an island?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Anglesey, north Wales, yes.

SIGRIST: Oh, I see.

WILLIAMS: The ocean right around us.

SIGRIST: So you grew up on an island?

WILLIAMS: Yes. That's an island.

SIGRIST: And there were lots of towns...

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Well, which town did you live in?

WILLIAMS: Oh. That would be...

van Nort: Town of (unintelligible).

WILLIAMS: Anglesey.

van Nort: No. That's the town. He wants the town, the closest where your mail came in.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

van Nort: Llagefni, Anglesey.

WILLIAMS: Yes. Llagefni, in...

van Nort: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: ...Llanerchymedd.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

WILLIAMS: (she laughs) Which one will I put down, Llanerchymedd.

SIGRIST: Will a piece of paper and pencil help? You could just scratch it out if it...

WILLIAMS: L-L...

van Nort: She can spell it.

WILLIAMS: ...A-N-G-E-F-I. Llangefi. Yeah.

SIGRIST: And that was the town?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: I want to tell whoever is listening to this tape, the other voice that you hear is Evelyn van Ort?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Who...

van Nort: Nort. N-O-R-T.

SIGRIST: N-O-R-T. Who...

van Nort: I used to be a Roberts.

SIGRIST: Formerly a Roberts...

van Nort: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...who is Mrs. Williams' niece...

van Nort: Right.

SIGRIST: ...and who is present at this interview. Did -- was your father from this town?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: He grew, he was born in this town?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was his name?

WILLIAMS: David Pritchard.

SIGRIST: And what did he do for a living?

WILLIAMS: Well, was it stone, stone mason.

SIGRIST: What does that mean? What does a stone mason do?

WILLIAMS: Oh, build with a, build houses with stones and bricks, and everything, you know. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did, did he build some of the houses that were...

WILLIAMS: He build the house we lived in.

SIGRIST: Can you describe that house for me?

WILLIAMS: Oh, it was a, a big house where there's four bedrooms, and a living room, and a kitchen, like. That's all there was.

SIGRIST: The house was made of stone.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you know what kind of stone?

WILLIAMS: No, (laughs) I don't.

SIGRIST: Okay. What kind of a roof did it have on it?

WILLIAMS: Slate.

SIGRIST: How was the house heated?

WILLIAMS: With fireplaces.

SIGRIST: How many did you have in the house?

WILLIAMS: Three.

SIGRIST: And what did you burn in the fireplace?

WILLIAMS: Coal.

SIGRIST: And how did you get the coal?

WILLIAMS: Oh, a man, there was a -- delivered it in bags, from the, from the town.

SIGRIST: Did the, was the coal produced in Wales?

WILLIAMS: In south Wales.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

WILLIAMS: Margaret.

SIGRIST: What was her maiden name?

WILLIAMS: Roberts.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

WILLIAMS: R-O-B-E-R-T-S.

SIGRIST: And was she also from this town?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me what your mother looked like, describe it in words?

WILLIAMS: Oh, something like me. (she laughs) Oh, she was a thin faced woman. She used to be a big woman, but, yeah.

SIGRIST: When you say, was she heavy? You said she...

WILLIAMS: Yes, she was. But she got thinner after while.

SIGRIST: What was her personality like?

WILLIAMS: Very good natured woman. Yeah. To put up with fourteen kids.

SIGRIST: Ah. So you had fourteen kids in that family.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you name them all for me.

WILLIAMS: Oh. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: Or some of them?

WILLIAMS: Evelyn, you've got to help me.

van Nort: Start with Mom.

WILLIAMS: Jane, Bob, Dick, Jack, Tom, Dick, Uwan [PH],...

van Nort: Evan.

WILLIAMS: Evan, Edward, Llewelyn, Arsydd, Kitty, me.

SIGRIST: You were the youngest?

WILLIAMS: No, next to the youngest.

SIGRIST: You were the next to the youngest.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How much of...

WILLIAMS: No. Second to the youngest.

SIGRIST: How much of a span was there between the oldest and the youngest?

WILLIAMS: Oh, glory. I don't know. How many, Evelyn?

van Nort: Well, she would, Mom came to America, she was four years old. So, gosh.

SIGRIST: Was your mother the oldest?

van Nort: Yes. My mother.

SIGRIST: Your mother was the oldest. Well, so there's a, fourteen kids, I mean, there's a span of years there, is there not?

WILLIAMS: There's about two years between them all.

SIGRIST: I see. Can you tell me a little bit about what it was like as a child growing up in a house like that, with all those kids?

WILLIAMS: Well, a lot of them had gone to work, you know. Left home and gone to work. There wasn't too many. Only about, maybe eight of us home. The others would be out working.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of the jobs that they had?

WILLIAMS: Of the what?

SIGRIST: Of the jobs, where they were working.

WILLIAMS: Oh, on the farms. Yeah. Different farms around there.

SIGRIST: Was this a big farming area?

WILLIAMS: Yes, it was.

SIGRIST: Did you live on a farm?

WILLIAMS: I used to work on a farm.

SIGRIST: When you were a little older?

WILLIAMS: Yeah. When I was thirteen I worked on a farm.

SIGRIST: Did, did your mother ever work for money?

WILLIAMS: No, indeed. She had enough home.

SIGRIST: Tell me about some of the things your mother had to do in the house.

WILLIAMS: Oh, she had to do everything. The baking bread, and wash and all of that, so.

SIGRIST: How did your mother do the wash, do you remember?

WILLIAMS: With a scrubber. With a board. By hand. All day long.

SIGRIST: Was there one day a week set aside for that?

WILLIAMS: She used to wash on a Monday, iron on a Tuesday, mend on a Wednesday, start baking Thursday and Friday.

SIGRIST: Did, did the children ever help out with any of the household chores?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. When we were little we used to help her.

SIGRIST: What was your chore when you were a kid in the house?

WILLIAMS: Oh, wash the dishes, mop the floors, and do everything like that. Make the beds, and--.

SIGRIST: Did you have running water in the house?

WILLIAMS: No. We used to carry all the water.

SIGRIST: Where did the water come from?

WILLIAMS: Different wells around.

SIGRIST: Did you have electricity in the house?

WILLIAMS: No, not then.

SIGRIST: How did you light the house?

WILLIAMS: With lamps. Kerosene. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have, tell me some of the food that your mother cooked. What do you remember as a child, some of the things that she prepared?

WILLIAMS: Bread and butter, and her puddings, and everything like that. She used to make them.

SIGRIST: What kind of a pudding?

WILLIAMS: Oh, rice pudding, and bread puddings, and.

SIGRIST: How would she make a bread pudding?

WILLIAMS: (indicating Mrs. van Nort) Ask her. She just made it. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Describe for me in your words how, how your mother...

WILLIAMS: With eggs. Whip them up, bread and raisins, milk, sugar, and bakin' till it's nice and done.

SIGRIST: Did she have, did she have an oven in the house, or a cook stove?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: She did.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have, did you keep animals at all?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Used to have two cows, for the milk. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did they have names?

WILLIAMS: Yes. One was Glen and the other one was just a calf, you know.

SIGRIST: So Glen was the name of the cow.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And did you have any household pets? Dogs, cats...

WILLIAMS: Dog, yes. Name was Bob.

SIGRIST: Do you, can you describe the kitchen in the house for me?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I don't know. Just part of the living room and the dairy, like, you know. We had, just had a fireplace and tables and where we eat.

SIGRIST: Which room did most of the family spent their time in?

WILLIAMS: The living room.

SIGRIST: Was there a formal room in the house also?

WILLIAMS: No. It's just, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have a garden?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. Big garden.

SIGRIST: What did you grow in the garden?

WILLIAMS: Potatoes and carrots and onions and rhubarb. Everything.

SIGRIST: Was there a flower garden?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. She made a flower garden, too.

SIGRIST: Who did the gardening in the family?

WILLIAMS: Oh, Mother and us kids.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what your mother's favorite flower was?

WILLIAMS: She used to have peonies a lot.

SIGRIST: A lot of peonies?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about how, how big the yard was? Did it, did it have a big front yard, or...

WILLIAMS: No. Just a little, by the door, like, you know.

SIGRIST: Do you have a barn in the back.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: That's where Glen was.

WILLIAMS: That's where the cow was. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did your father, you said your father worked in a, at a farm...

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. He worked out, built different places, you know, farms and...

SIGRIST: So he did, he built barns and houses and...

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did he ever, when he went to work, if he, if he was building somewhere, if he were building a house, would he ever go away for any long period of time while that house...

WILLIAMS: Oh, he'd be home every night. Yeah.

SIGRIST: As a child, when you were a little girl, what do you remember most about your father? What, did he do something with you that sticks out in your mind?

WILLIAMS: He was a warm, wonderful guy. He made us go to church, and I tell you, we wouldn't go out playing on Sunday. We'd be home studying our bible.

SIGRIST: Was church very important?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: What church did you go to?

WILLIAMS: Methodist church.

SIGRIST: And can you tell me a little about how, how often you went?

WILLIAMS: Three times a week -- a day, Sunday. And Friday night we had Band of Hope, we used to call it, for the kids, for different kids, you know. Used to be full.

SIGRIST: Was the church nearby your house?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the church?

WILLIAMS: Caersalem.

SIGRIST: Cars... (they laugh) We'll see if I can spell it. C-A-R, Cars, Evelyn, what?

van Nort: C-E-A-R-S...

WILLIAMS: C-A-E-R-S-A-L-E-M.

SIGRIST: I see.

van Nort: Caersalem.

WILLIAMS: Caersalem.

SIGRIST: And what does that mean in Welsh? What is that name mean?

WILLIAMS: Gosh, I don't know.

SIGRIST: Is that the name of a saint, or something?

WILLIAMS: Yeah, Caersalem.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the church building for me a little bit?

WILLIAMS: Oh, just a regular church [not understood], and.

van Nort: Made out of stone?

SIGRIST: How did you, how did you practice your religion in the house?

WILLIAMS: We'd be all sitting down, and listen to our father and do what he tell us.

SIGRIST: Was your mother as religious as your father?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. Yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: Were your parents musical?

WILLIAMS: No. Not too much?

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about school. Did you go to school in Wales?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: How old were you when you started school?

WILLIAMS: Seven.

SIGRIST: And did you like school?

WILLIAMS: Yes, it went all right?

SIGRIST: What was your favorite subject?

WILLIAMS: Oh, gee, I don't remember now. History, I guess.

SIGRIST: Were you taught English in school?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: Was that...

WILLIAMS: Some. Some.

SIGRIST: But you spoke Welsh at home?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. And in school, too.

SIGRIST: When you think about going to school as a little girl in Wales, what sticks out in your mind?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I don't know. Liked to stay home. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: You were not a big school goer? Do you remember any of your teachers?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: What, what is it about this teacher that you remember?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I don't know. They were all good. I had a Swanson, Miss. [not understood] .

SIGRIST: Were they strict?

WILLIAMS: And Miss Rolands. Mr. Rolands.

SIGRIST: Were they strict teachers?

WILLIAMS: Oh, not too bad. They were all right.

SIGRIST: Was the school near your house?

WILLIAMS: Oh, no. It was quite a ways there, and we walked it, too.

SIGRIST: Would you bring food with you?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What would be a typical lunch that you would bring to school with you?

WILLIAMS: Oh, a sandwiches and we used to take tea. And then there was a fire in school, and we used to heat up the water and we'd have a cup of tea in school. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do the Welsh drink tea a lot?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. That's...

SIGRIST: More so than coffee?

WILLIAMS: That's favorite dish, drink.

SIGRIST: As a little girl, what games did you play?

WILLIAMS: Oh, oh, ring around the roses, and skip, and plays porch. We play porch.

SIGRIST: Play porch?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: P-O-R-C-H?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What is that? Can you describe that for me?

WILLIAMS: A big square. Make a big square with a chalk. And then, fifteen squares. And you would have a stone, and kick that stone to

different numbers, and try to get even numbers, and that. Oh, it used to be a lot of fun.

SIGRIST: What other forms of entertainment were there in this town? For instance what did your parents do if they wanted to have fun?

WILLIAMS: They didn't do anything. Only just work, raise kids.

SIGRIST: That was their fun.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: Was it a hard life for them?

WILLIAMS: No, I don't think so.

SIGRIST: Your father made a good living?

WILLIAMS: Yes, he did.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me what you might remember about the First World War?

WILLIAMS: Oh, gosh, yes. I remember the time, all right. Oh.

SIGRIST: What's...

WILLIAMS: We were, the boys were called, and my brother's you know, they were called. And my husband was called, too.

SIGRIST: But that was before you were married to him?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, do you remember how the war might have touched your town somehow? Do you remember, for instance, any kind of rationing, or...

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. They used to drop bombs there not far from our home. Yeah. And we used to watch for the planes. We had to have dark shades on the windows, and couldn't be outdoors at night. No, any light outdoors, on account of the Germans coming, you know.

SIGRIST: Was this a scary time?

WILLIAMS: Yes, it was. And our school was right on the seashore. And they used to be watching for submarines, you know, there. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, do you remember any kind of money collections that were taken, or anything like that? Or was clothing collected to send?

WILLIAMS: Well, we used to knit in school for helmets and socks and mittens. All the kids. And ship them to soldiers, you know.

SIGRIST: Did your father have to fight?

WILLIAMS: Did my father what?

SIGRIST: Did he have to, did he have to fight, you father?

WILLIAMS: No, no. No. He was too old.

SIGRIST: But you said your brothers did.

WILLIAMS: Brothers.

SIGRIST: Which, which brothers fought?

WILLIAMS: Evan. Just Evan then.

SIGRIST: Did he, was he okay? Did he...

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any stories he might have told about, about his tour of duty?

WILLIAMS: No. He wouldn't say too much. No.

SIGRIST: I see. Tell me about, what's the first job you ever got in Wales when you were a girl?

WILLIAMS: A nurse girl.

SIGRIST: You were a nurse?

WILLIAMS: Girl. I was only thirteen. Just take care of two little kids.

SIGRIST: Like a nanny, sort of.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: What, do you remember how much you got paid.

WILLIAMS: Gosh, no. You wouldn't get much.

SIGRIST: Did you live with that family, or...

WILLIAMS: Yes. Yeah, I stayed right there with them.

SIGRIST: Were they nearby where your parents were?

WILLIAMS: Yeah. I could see our home from.

SIGRIST: Did you like living away from home?

WILLIAMS: Not too much then. I was, used to be awful homesick.

SIGRIST: How often were you allowed to go visit your parents?

WILLIAMS: Go twice a week.

SIGRIST: Did you have to give your parents any of the money that you earned?

WILLIAMS: No. We had to buy our own clothes with them.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, do you remember some article of clothing that you bought?

WILLIAMS: Oh, a hat maybe. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Do you remember...

WILLIAMS: Shoes.

SIGRIST: Yeah? When you were a little girl do you remember a favorite dress perhaps?

WILLIAMS: No. No. Oh, they were about all the same.

SIGRIST: So how long did you stay working as a nanny?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I would say two years.

SIGRIST: Then what happened?

WILLIAMS: Then I went to another farm place, worked there.

SIGRIST: Doing the same kind of thing?

WILLIAMS: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Is this common in, in Welsh families to send the young ladies out...

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...to work?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What were some of the jobs that your brothers and sisters had?

WILLIAMS: On the farms. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Doing farm work?

WILLIAMS: Like a hired man, you know.

SIGRIST: When you were growing up in Wales, what did you know about America?

WILLIAMS: Well, we used to know a lot. Of course, our brothers were here.

SIGRIST: When...

WILLIAMS: And, and her mother. (indicates Mrs. van Nort)

SIGRIST: When, when did they come?

WILLIAMS: When did your mother, she was the first one to come, wasn't she?

van Nort: My mother came in 1910.

WILLIAMS: 1910.

SIGRIST: 1910. Your, that would be your oldest sister?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Your oldest sister came in 1910.

WILLIAMS: Hm-hmm.

SIGRIST: What did she do when she got here?

WILLIAMS: She got married, didn't she?

van Nort: No. She was a cook in Utica.

WILLIAMS: Oh, yeah.

van Nort: For a doctor.

SIGRIST: Actually, Evelyn, if I could ask you to speak in full voice, when you speak. It's okay. But just do it because it may not pick it up. She, she got a job as a cook in Utica when she came in 1910.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And what about your brothers? Which brothers came?

WILLIAMS: Oh, they were farming. All of them.

SIGRIST: In this country?

WILLIAMS: In, yeah. Plainfield?

SIGRIST: So they had all come ahead of you.

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Were you corresponding with them?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What were they telling you about this country?

WILLIAMS: Oh, they used to tell us that there's growing money on the gooseberry trees here. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Money on the gooseberry trees. (he laughs) Did you really want to come to America?

WILLIAMS: Yes, we did. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about how you went about coming to America. Do you remember getting your papers or anything like that?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: What did you have to do?

WILLIAMS: Oh, you had to go the immigration office, the immigration office, and sign your name and all of, the ship, and everything like that, you know.

SIGRIST: Did your parents want you to leave?

WILLIAMS: No, they didn't.

SIGRIST: Why didn't they want you to go?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I don't know. They didn't have, and they hate to see us go, I guess. Yeah.

SIGRIST: How many brother, you had one sister here, how many brothers did you have over here?

WILLIAMS: Four. Five.

SIGRIST: Five?

WILLIAMS: Hm-hmm.

SIGRIST: Were they...

WILLIAMS: One, one came with me.

SIGRIST: Were the brothers that were here already, did they all come up to this part of central New York state?

WILLIAMS: Yeah. They were all.

SIGRIST: This was a large Welsh area.

WILLIAMS: Yeah. Yeah. Yes, it was.

SIGRIST: Which brother came with you?

WILLIAMS: Llewelyn.

SIGRIST: And he was a little bit older than you?

WILLIAMS: A year older.

SIGRIST: He was one year older.

WILLIAMS: Hm-hmm.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you took with you when you came? What, what baggage or...

WILLIAMS: You couldn't bring much, you know. Just your clothing and your shoes and suits and coats and everything.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, did anyone give you a, a little good-bye party or a little good-bye dinner, or anything like that?

WILLIAMS: No. They didn't have anything like that there.

SIGRIST: Do you remember saying good-bye to your mother and father?

WILLIAMS: Yes, to Mother. My father died when I was there.

SIGRIST: Oh, he died while you were still living in Wales.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What did he die of?

WILLIAMS: Stroke.

SIGRIST: How old of a man was he at that time?

WILLIAMS: Seventy-five, I think.

SIGRIST: So, let's see. How old were you at that time?

WILLIAMS: Gosh, I don't remember how old.

SIGRIST: Were you, were you working at that point?

WILLIAMS: Yes. I was about sixteen when he was, when he died.

SIGRIST: Was that hard on your mother?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Of course. She was all alone and lonely [not understood]

SIGRIST: How did she support herself?

WILLIAMS: I don't know. She, she did. Yeah.

SIGRIST: All right. So, what do you remember about saying good-bye to your mother?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I don't know. My brother and I got up, and get ready, and well, then there was a car coming to pick us up. So we just kissed and said good-bye, and tried to go as sly as we could. So.

SIGRIST: Where did the boat leave from?

WILLIAMS: Liverpool.

SIGRIST: And how did you get from where you were to Liverpool?

WILLIAMS: By train.

SIGRIST: Is that a long ride?

WILLIAMS: Oh, too, not too bad, but it was probably long.

SIGRIST: What boat did you come on?

WILLIAMS: Caronia.

SIGRIST: That's C-A-R-O-...

WILLIAMS: N...

SIGRIST: N-I-A?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

(Bell sounds)

SIGRIST: We're going to pause just for a moment. (pause in tape) Now resuming the interview with Margaret Williams. So you took the Caronia from Liverpool. Can you describe for me your accommodations on the boat?

WILLIAMS: Oh, they were good. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What did it look like?

WILLIAMS: I don't know. I was too sick. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Oh. Tell me about that then. So you were seasick on the boat.

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. I was pretty good for about three days maybe. But after that we got in the big ocean and we all started to get sick.

SIGRIST: Did your brother get sick.

WILLIAMS: Oh, he wasn't very good, or the other girls, either.

SIGRIST: Were there other people who were traveling with you from your town?

WILLIAMS: There was five of us.

SIGRIST: Oh, there were five of you.

WILLIAMS: Hm-hmm.

SIGRIST: Counting your brother?

WILLIAMS: My brother and my cousin and the other two, they were just friends, you know.

SIGRIST: These were all people who were coming from this town with you?

WILLIAMS: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you all share a cabin, or were you in one big room? How did that...

WILLIAMS: Oh, what do you call them, cabins, like. Bunk beds, you know, in there, the girls. And the men, they were on their own.

SIGRIST: So your brother didn't stay with you in the boat.

WILLIAMS: No, no. Only in the day time we would get together on the deck, you know. (she coughs)

SIGRIST: What, if you were sick you probably don't remember much about the food on the boat.

WILLIAMS: Yeah. Some of it was good, and some not so good.

SIGRIST: Was there a dining room on the boat?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. Nice. Yes. Very nice.

SIGRIST: Did they had activities for you on the boat?

WILLIAMS: Yes. They had everything. Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember being up on top on the deck of the boat?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. Used to be there everyday, you know. They always go up on the deck to get some fresh air.

SIGRIST: Did that make you feel better?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: Was there any medicine that you were given to take for your...

WILLIAMS: No. There wasn't.

SIGRIST: Just had to suffer through it.

WILLIAMS: Suffer. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: How long did the boat ride take?

WILLIAMS: I don't know. We started from Wales fourth of September and we got to New York the fourteenth.

SIGRIST: Oh, ten days.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Was it, was, basically kind of a rough ride, or was it a smooth ride?

WILLIAMS: Yes, we had a rough one.

SIGRIST: Do you remember a storm?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the storm?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I don't know. You could see the waves coming, and I think we had to go right them, you know. We used to be scared.

SIGRIST: Were there a lot of people on the boat?

WILLIAMS: Gosh, yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what, what class you were traveling? Were you...

WILLIAMS: I imagine it was the third class. The second or third.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when you came into New York harbor?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that?

WILLIAMS: Oh, just to see it, you know. We'd, they'd all holler, you know, and yell, so.

SIGRIST: Did you know what it was?

WILLIAMS: No. Tickled to death to see the land, you know.

END OF SIDE ONE                      BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SIGRIST: You told me earlier that you remembered Ellis Island. What do you remember about Ellis Island?

WILLIAMS: That's a -- we went through it, march before in the row, you know. And we had to march after you got there inside the building. And these doctors were around, right around us. And we had to pass each doctors, and they had a, like a search light shining right on you. If there was anything wrong with you they'd pull you out and ship you back. We seen some kids ship back. Then they kept on going until -- then they'd give you a box, a little box, like a shoe box. And inside, well, I was telling her, like a -- a shoe box, and a loaf of bread in it, and bologna and a little mug of coffee. And we never see anything like that, you know. There was no butter to put on that bread. It was just like a submarine, these submarines, you know. No butter to put on it. And bologna. We never seen bologna. And coffee. We never had coffee. So we didn't eat much.

SIGRIST: This was a big surprise to you.

WILLIAMS: Oh, big surprise. But they, were treat -- they treat us all right, and.

SIGRIST: Can you remember at all what it looked like on the inside of Ellis Island, do you remember?

WILLIAMS: Oh, only this big building where they examined us, and all, everything.

SIGRIST: Were there a lot of people there?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did anyone from your little group get sent back, or was there anything wrong with anyone?

WILLIAMS: No, no. No. Seen a lot of others going back.

SIGRIST: Did you, how long were you at Ellis Island?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I don't know. We land in New York early in the morning. And we went, stayed to Ellis Island. And we must have got out of there in the afternoon, when they took us to the pier in [not understood]. They took us in the boat after we got through in Ellis Island to the, the

pier. Then we got on the, I think it was a, was a depot or somewhere. Then they put us on the train from there. We had a good meal in the, in the depot there. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Better than what Ellis Island gave you. (she laughs)

WILLIAMS: We had a good meal there. Then they put us on the train. And we got to Utica on the train to Union Station. And there was my brothers, the four of them, and her mother. There was five of them there waiting for us. And we walked from there up to a street in Utica. (a telephone rings) Friends, friends...

SIGRIST: We'll be pausing just for a second. (pause in tape) We're now resuming again with Margaret Williams. You were telling you just got to Utica. And you saw your brother and your older sister. What was it like seeing them?

WILLIAMS: Oh, thrilled to death. Glad to see them, and get our feet on the ground.

SIGRIST: What were your impressions of New York City when you saw it?

WILLIAMS: We didn't see much of New York City, you know. Just, just to put us on the train and ship us to Utica.

SIGRIST: Was that a long train ride?

WILLIAMS: I don't know just how long it is from New York to Utica. You know, Evelyn? Any idea?

van Nort: Two hundred and fifty miles.

WILLIAMS: Huh?

van Nort: Two hundred and fifty.

WILLIAMS: Two hundred and fifty.

SIGRIST: Do you remember anything about the train ride going up to Utica?

WILLIAMS: Oh...

SIGRIST: Anything that maybe you, stuck out in your mind as being different than you had ever seen in Wales, anything like that?

WILLIAMS: Oh, they were different, of course. Oh, I don't know.

SIGRIST: When you met your brothers and your sister, where did they take you?

WILLIAMS: To our friends in Utica. On Louisa Street.

SIGRIST: Louisa Street. And tell me about your first night in America. Tell me about what you did that very first night.

WILLIAMS: Well, I was so sick, I was in bed in there, home, here, a week. After I come here I was, still had the seasickness. Still had the doc, had the doctor, too. But I got over it. Yeah. Oh, I got up. (indicating Mrs. van Nort) And she was just four years old. We went on the porch to see the, get some fresh air, you know. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me about the Welsh community in Utica and how big it was.

WILLIAMS: I don't know much about Utica.

SIGRIST: You didn't stay there very long?

WILLIAMS: Because they had a Welsh church in Plainfield.

SIGRIST: Did you go, did your brothers bring you to Plainfield?

WILLIAMS: Hm-hmm.

SIGRIST: Oh. So you didn't even, they just picked you up in Utica.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You didn't stay there.

WILLIAMS: No, no.

SIGRIST: I see. Tell me about what they were doing in Plainfield. What, why were your brothers in Plainfield?

WILLIAMS: Oh, they were all farming or working there on the farms. And my sister was starting here on the main road, and they were on a big farm.

SIGRIST: Had she married?

WILLIAMS: Yes. She had, was it three, three kids when I come here?

SIGRIST: Three kids?

WILLIAMS: Margaret and John Dee...

van Nort: (unintelligible)

SIGRIST: You can talk, you don't have to...(he laughs)

WILLIAMS: Margaret and John Dee and you.

van Nort: Right.

WILLIAMS: Three. She had three.

SIGRIST: Three kids. Did she marry an American?

WILLIAMS: No, a Welshman.

SIGRIST: So, did she come over here when she was married, or did she meet this gentleman from Wales when she was here?

WILLIAMS: She was, she come here, and she come afterwards.

SIGRIST: I see.

WILLIAMS: Because she was going with him in Wales.

SIGRIST: But they weren't married in Wales.

WILLIAMS: No.

SIGRIST: I see. So he came first, and then he sent for her later and they married here. Well, tell me, what did you do when you got here. After you got better, your seasickness was gone, did you get a job?

WILLIAMS: Yes. I went to keep house for my brothers on the farm.

SIGRIST: Did they all live together?

WILLIAMS: The two of them did.

SIGRIST: Which two?

WILLIAMS: Jack and Bob.

SIGRIST: And they're the brothers that you went to.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things did you have to do?

WILLIAMS: Do all the housework. Didn't know much about that, you know, from different (unintelligible).

SIGRIST: How did, how did you cope to this situation? I mean, this is a big responsibility. Was this difficult for you?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Yeah, well, we pick up.

SIGRIST: Tell me how you learned to speak English well?

WILLIAMS: Oh, just pick it up from others, you know. They, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you, did, did anyone try to help you learn English? Did anyone try to...

WILLIAMS: No. No.

SIGRIST: Did your brothers speak English?

WILLIAMS: No. We were all Welsh up there.

SIGRIST: And this was a Welsh community?

WILLIAMS: Yes, it was then.

SIGRIST: So everyone spoke Welsh.

WILLIAMS: Yes. Church.

SIGRIST: Was there, there was a Welsh church up there?

WILLIAMS: Yes, there was.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about the church?

WILLIAMS: I don't know. It's just a regular Welsh church. It was just like others, you know. We used to go every morning, every Sunday morning.

SIGRIST: Did you go three times a day, like you had in Wales?

WILLIAMS: Not, not like in Wales, no. No.

SIGRIST: Were you homesick for Wales when you came here?

WILLIAMS: I was. Yes. But I got over it.

SIGRIST: Were you writing back and forth to your parents?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was the hardest thing about being in this country?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I don't know. Being so far from Wales, I guess.

SIGRIST: What, actually your life of course, I mean, you went sort of from one kind of farming area, sort of, to another. I mean, it wasn't that different, was it, being here than it had been in Wales?

WILLIAMS: Oh, the work is different there than it is over here. A lot different.

SIGRIST: Well, what is different about it?

WILLIAMS: Well, you didn't see the women on their knees mopping the floors over here. That's how we had to do in Wales. Wash the floors on their knees. But here you have the mops.

SIGRIST: So did you stay in Plainfield for a long time?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Forty-three years.

SIGRIST: That's a long time.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you meet your husband in Plainfield?

WILLIAMS: No. I met him in Wales.

SIGRIST: Oh, well tell me...

WILLIAMS: And he followed us, followed me.

SIGRIST: So you knew him before you left Wales.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Oh. All right. Well, what was your husband's name?

WILLIAMS: Bo-Bob Williams.

SIGRIST: And tell me how you met your husband in Wales.

WILLIAMS: Well, I used to go to school with him. He was a neighbor. Yeah.

SIGRIST: And he just asked you out one day, or?

WILLIAMS: Yeah. Well, I used to go out to school with him every day, you know.

SIGRIST: So you'd known him a long time.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: So you came in 1920. When did he come?

WILLIAMS: He came three, mo-- I came in September and he came in December right after me.

SIGRIST: And then did you get married here?

WILLIAMS: Yes. 1923.

SIGRIST: And did you get married in the Welsh church.

WILLIAMS: No, in the parsonage.

SIGRIST: What was it, describe what it was like to get married in Plainfield in 1923.

WILLIAMS: Well, I was, my, I didn't went (???) in the parsonage church there. Yeah. Just the four of us.

SIGRIST: The, you, your husband...

WILLIAMS: The bridesmaid and the best man.

SIGRIST: Who was your bridesmaid?

WILLIAMS: The minister's wife. The minister stood up for us.

SIGRIST: Who, do you remember the name of the minister?

WILLIAMS: Daniel Hughes.

SIGRIST: H-U-G-H-E-S.

WILLIAMS: Yeah. And his wife.

SIGRIST: And then did you have a honeymoon?

WILLIAMS: No.

SIGRIST: Back to the farm?

WILLIAMS: Get to work. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: And can you name your children for me?

WILLIAMS: Oh, Bobby, Robert John. And Owen Richard.

SIGRIST: Who was the last one?

WILLIAMS: Owen.

SIGRIST: Owen.

WILLIAMS: Richard.

SIGRIST: Owen Richard. So Robert John is one, and Owen Richard is another. You had two boys.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: I see. Let me just ask you a couple final questions. One is...

WILLIAMS: Oh, good.

SIGRIST: Yeah, we're almost done. (he laughs) I've got to drive back to Albany in the blizzard, so. (she laughs) Let me ask you, what, what aspect of you, what part of you is truly Welsh? What part of Wales have you kept in you your whole life?

WILLIAMS: Oh, all of Wales.

SIGRIST: But is there something that you do, or something that you enjoy that, that really hearkens back to your Welsh ancestry?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I don't know. Just to be with them, and...

SIGRIST: You like to be around Welsh people.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How do you think your life would have been different if you'd stayed in Wales?

WILLIAMS: Oh, it'd be a lot different. The work would be a lot different, than what they are over here.

SIGRIST: It'd be a harder life for you.

WILLIAMS: Yes. They are fifty years behind over there with the work.

SIGRIST: Have you ever gone back to visit?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Twice.

SIGRIST: When was the first time?

WILLIAMS: Oh, Evelyn, you were with me. (she laughs) Do you remember the first time?

SIGRIST: Evelyn, when was the first time you went back to Wales? (they laugh)

WILLIAMS: Get your brains to work. (she laughs)

van Nort: It must have been in '53.

WILLIAMS: '63?

van Nort: '53.

SIGRIST: '53?

WILLIAMS: '53.

SIGRIST: 1953.

van Nort: And then I think we went again in '56, didn't we?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What, when you went back the first time, what, what struck you as being different? What stood out in your mind as being different than America?

WILLIAMS: Oh, gosh, I don't know. What was it, Evelyn?

SIGRIST: It has to be what you were thinking. I mean, what struck you as being very different?

WILLIAMS: Gosh, everything was different.

SIGRIST: You hadn't been back in thirty-three years. What had changed?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I don't know. Everything. The places looked different, and the people looked different, you know. You wouldn't know them, and, yeah.

SIGRIST: Was it different than how you'd remembered it?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. A lot different.

SIGRIST: Are you glad that you came to this country?

WILLIAMS: Yes. I am.

SIGRIST: Because they have mops, I guess. (they laugh)

WILLIAMS: Well, they have mops here.

SIGRIST: Well, Mrs. Williams, I want to thank you very much for...

WILLIAMS: Well, you're welcome.

SIGRIST: ...letting me trudge through the snow and come over here and interview you. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Margaret Williams in Bridgewater, New York, on January 31st, 1993.

EI-247/MARGARET WILLIAMS