

EI-684

MARY VOGT

BIRTHDATE: APRIL 16, 1910

INTERVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 12, 1995

RUNNING TIME: 57:16

INTERVIEWER: PAUL SIGRIST

RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME

INTERVIEW LOCATION: ELLIS ISLAND

ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

GERMANY, 1930

AGE: 20

SHIP: "THE YORK"

PORT: BREMERHAVEN

RESIDENCES:

- **STETTEN, BAVARIA**
- **THE US: FREISENHEIM, WI**

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, October 12th 1995. I'm at the recording studio at Ellis Island with Mary Vogt. Mrs. Vogt came from Germany in 1930. She was held at Ellis Island overnight. She arrived on the second of October 1930. And she was twenty years old at that time, twenty and a half. Can we begin by you giving me your birth date, please?

VOGT: April the sixteenth, 1910.

SIGRIST: And where in Germany were you born?

VOGT: In Stetten.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

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VOGT: S-T-E-T-T-E-N.

SIGRIST: Where in the country is Stetten?

VOGT: In Bavaria.

SIGRIST: And can you tell me a little bit about what, what you remember as a child about that town?

VOGT: I remember yet when the First World War started. I was a child.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the First World War starting?

VOGT: Oh, we, when the soldiers had to go, they went with horses to[Landsford ph.] and from there they went. I just seen him go by. And the mother, you know, my mother and dad and grandpa and grandma was there. And, of course, my dad had to go to service, too, afterwards.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your father having to go into service during the First World War?

VOGT: In the First World War, it was in 1916 when he wasn't long, he was not healthy. And they let him come home and he passed away; then on a heart attack.

SIGRIST: And you remember that as a child?

VOGT: I remember that as a child.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about how your father's death affected your

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family?

VOGT: Oh, he was a harness maker on the--. You know, I was too young yet. But they tell me afterwards and then I came to a farm. My mother was alone.

SIGRIST: You came to the farm after your father died?

VOGT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Well what happened that you were sent to the farm? Why did you have to leave?

VOGT: Because I was illegal--. What you call that? My mother wasn't married to my father.

SIGRIST: I see. I see.

VOGT: And then when I was eleven years old I lived with my Grandpa and Grandma, my mother then. And then my dad died before. But then in 1921 my mother got married again. And then, they didn't like me so well, for my father's side, for my new father's, step dad. They didn't like me so well. And then I came to a farm, to relatives in 1921 and worked there for nine years before I came to America.

SIGRIST: Can we talk a little bit about when you lived with your mother and her parents on the farm? What do you remember about—

VOGT: Well, my grandparents—my mother's parents—they had--. He was a wagon maker. And they had soldiers there from the First World War.

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They made those wheels, wagon wheels, [unclear] and stuff. I remember that yet. And, then, of course, when my mother got married again, I had a step dad, I wasn't too welcomed there.

SIGRIST: Before that happened though I'd like to talk about life on the farm with your mother and your grandparents. What were some of the things that stick out in your mind about living on that—

VOGT: Well, I was grandpa's girl.

SIGRIST: Can you describe your grandfather for me, what he was like as a person?

VOGT: He was a wagon maker.

SIGRIST: What was, what was his personality like?

VOGT: Oh he was real nice, my grandpa.

SIGRIST: What did he look like? Describe him in words to me.

VOGT: He was a wagon maker. And he made--. I had to go to an uncle of mine to have those wagon wheels made. And then I had to go to the blacksmith. And they put the iron rings, the iron, the finish, the wheels to make the wagons.

SIGRIST: What did your grandfather look like? Describe his face and his body to me.

VOGT: My grandfather? He had a little whiskers and he liked to smoke a cigar. I had to go--. We had a little farm [unclear]. And [unclear]. And I had to

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lead the cows. When [unclear] my mouth get so dry I had [unclear]

SIGRIST: Do you want a glass of water?

VOGT: Pardon

SIGRIST: Do you want a glass of water? Would that help?

VOGT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: All right, Peter, could we just pause here for a moment?

[Recorder is turned off and then back on.]

SIGRIST: Okay. We're now resuming. We were talking about your grandfather. And you were going to describe what he looked like to me. Whiskers, you said—

VOGT: Yes, he had the whiskers. And, of course, I was grandpa's girl.

SIGRIST: Is there a story that you like to tell about your grandfather?

VOGT: Well, he was wagon maker, there was Russian soldiers. He was in prison, you know, during the war.

SIGRIST: Well, what do you remember about the soldiers on your grandfather's farm? What sticks out in your mind about there being soldiers around the farm?

VOGT: There was prisoners. And [unclear] how to make wagon wheels and stuff. And I had to carry it to get to my uncle with a little wagon. I had to

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take this about an hour [unclear] when I was eight, nine years old to get the [unclear] out because he had a machine already. We had made those, what do you call, those wagon wheels. And I know when he had to bore them out we had the spokes and everything went in. And that was fun for me because I could take the chisel and--. Not the chisel. What do you call it? Ready, there I'm hooked now (laughs)

SIGRIST: The tool that you used.

VOGT: Yeah. And let it sort of get the wagon together. And I had to--. My uncle had a machine already then. And I took the whole piece of wood there. My uncle had to drill them out so everything fell, so to make the wagon wheel. And then it has to come to my grandpa who had to make it. And he had some soldiers there what was captured. Some was German what immigrated first to Russia and they came back. He was in--. Had, was captured, you know, as prisoners. And, of course, they could talk German yet. And that what interest me, too.

SIGRIST: Were you allowed to talk to the soldiers?

VOGT: Oh yeah.

SIGRIST: Did the soldiers ever try to teach you anything?

VOGT: No, no. They was real nice.

SIGRIST: Did they live in the house?

VOGT: No. They had to go back to a safer place where the prisoners was kept. And in the daytime they came. There was a little village and they'd come wherever, to farmers. Some of them worked on the farm. Some

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of them worked on -- like my grandpa was a wagon maker, wheels for the canons and stuff. And there he had a help.

SIGRIST: That's very interesting that the prisoners of war were actually put to work..

VOGT: Yes. Yeah. And, then, you know, was, Germany was against Russia, you know. And then it said [(in German) Russkie kaput (ph).] And it couldn't say that. We got punished in school. When we walked to school if you said something like that, it was punished in school.

SIGRIST: Tell me about--. What else do you remember about going to school when you were a little girl? Where was the school when you were growing up?

VOGT: Over a half an hours to walk.

SIGRIST: And you had to walk to school.

VOGT: Yeah, in snow banks in the wintertime. They had bushes set out where the walking was when everything was snowed tight, you know. And then we walked over the snow banks.

SIGRIST: What kinds of subjects did you learn in school? What did they teach you in school?

VOGT: Well, we all--. I should know more now but I can't tell(laughs). I'm here sixty-five years—

SIGRIST: It's a long time ago, I realize.

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VOGT: Yeah. It's a long time ago.

SIGRIST: Could your parents read and write?

VOGT: Oh yes.

SIGRIST: Yes. And your grandfather I'm sure probably could.

VOGT: Oh yes. Yeah. He had a real good writing. Only it was with the long S. You know we make it [unclear] like this, see. And now we go just like the Americans. That changed all during the war.

SIGRIST: That was all during World War I that all changed.

VOGT: Yeah. That was all.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

VOGT: Soeoel.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

VOGT: S-O-E-O-E-L.

SIGRIST: Is--? That was her first name or her last, her maiden name, her last name?

VOGT: Yeah, her maiden name.

SIGRIST: What was her first name?

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VOGT: Mary.

SIGRIST: Mary. And tell me a little bit about your mother and what her personality was like.

VOGT: Well, my mother, too, she had me—illeg---

SIGRIST: Illegitimately.

VOGT: Yeah, legitimate. And then, of course, she was home. They had dowry out there in Germany [unclear]. They all got so much money from home, and furniture and a cow.

SIGRIST: The cow was part of the dowry.

VOGT: Yeah. And some money, too. And she married. Because my dad didn't have so much money that the grandpa wouldn't give him the dowry. He wasn't. . . He didn't want my mother to marry my dad. [Laughs] So that was at that time the style.

SIGRIST: Because he didn't want that, the grandfather didn't want that to happen, he didn't give the dowry.

VOGT: Yeah. Because the mother, my mother had to work on the farm because there was eight children.

SIGRIST: Eight children?

VOGT: Yeah. And she had to work on the farm. And, then of course, they had to bring the money home. And that got saved for them. Then my

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mother, when she got married then she got furniture, and so much money and a cow.

SIGRIST: So when she remarried, that's when she got her dowry.

VOGT: Yeah. Yeah. When she remarried she got that.

SIGRIST: Did your mother ever tell you a story about when you were born? Did she ever tell you a story about like the circumstances or—

VOGT: Yeah. The circumstances was that, you know, she lost my father. My grandfather wouldn't give her the dowry and—

SIGRIST: Right. Like you just--. Yeah. Like you just told me.

VOGT: That was the style at that time.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's personality like? What was she like as a person?

VOGT: Oh, she liked her. She was a hard worker.

SIGRIST: What were some of the things that your mother taught you as a child?

VOGT: I was mostly with my, with my grandparents when my mother was home. And then she sent, you know, they sent me to school, to first grade. We had a seventh, up to seventh grade school. And we had a long school.

SIGRIST: But was there anything that your grandparents or your mother taught you at home to do?

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VOGT: Oh embroidery, knitting, and cleaning and all of that.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me how you spun, the spinning process? What did that entail?

VOGT: There we had--. When you spin we had the flax. And that was grown out in a field. And we had to cut that and we had to bleach that in the river, on the little river when it was hot. Put it in and then they had a something--. We had—

SIGRIST: Another tool.

VOGT: Yeah, another tool. We had some kind of tool. We had to put it, sprinkle water over, put the hemp in the water and sprinkle water over it, and then turn then and then pound them with some machine to make the flax to spin them. And then we made, during the First World War, we made , after the war, in the twenties. And there, there was everything, they made flax out of it. And they made the skirts and britches and pillows with the [unclear] and [unclear], all, all that.

SIGRIST: Did you enjoy doing that sort of thing?

VOGT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. What was your favorite thing as a child to do around the house?

VOGT: It wasn't so much for the house. We had to go out and bake cookies for the soldiers. And I remember yet, you know, the soldiers was in a war. We had to make cookies and send it to them or different, knit socks and stuff. I know up to eighteen, in 1918, 14 –18, war, you know, First World War.

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SIGRIST: That was your patriotic duty to make socks and bake cookies for the soldiers.

VOGT: Yeah. And for the soldiers--. And I had to take it to the train station where they get the packages. And that was about a half an hour to walk.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about when your mother--. How old were you when your mother got remarried?

VOGT: I was eleven years old.

SIGRIST: And—

VOGT: And I got away. There was, the trouble was, she got a bigger, more bigger farm. And then the parents, my step dad's parents lived in the same house. And it wasn't very clean. And my mother, you know, they had [unclear] go into the house. At that time we had the manure pile in front of the house. And in front of thing was like a walk, you know. And there was a red, kind of red plaster like this color here. And my step dad he would throw the manure on the thing where my mother washed it off. And then they didn't like me. They made something out of potatoes and I liked that so much. And then she said, the mother of my step dad's, she came and she said, well, you eat so much of that. I give you some more. And she opened my mouth and pushed it down. And, of course, I cried. You know, I felt bad. And then I went back to grandpa. And, of course, grandpa he gave the farm and the wagon shop--. He had the wagon shop and the farm. He give over to my aunt, and he worked it. And then they lived in the same house. Then there was no room for me anymore. Then I came to my grandma's sister.

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SIGRIST: How did your--? How did your grandparents feel about your mother's remarriage?

VOGT: It was all right.

SIGRIST: They were happy about that.

VOGT: They were happy about it. But, you know, how it is when the daughter-in-law comes in. You don't always find daughters-in-law like I have. I'm very happy with mine. And, but that didn't work too good so, so I had to go to some relatives, to my grandma's sister. I was eleven years old.

SIGRIST: Did she live in the same town?

VOGT: No.

SIGRIST: Where did she live?

VOGT: Oh, about an hour and a half walking distance at that time.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about being sent there? How did it make you feel inside?

VOGT: Well, it didn't feel so good but I had to go to school. And I liked the teacher. They liked me. And I was--. I don't like to brag about myself but I, wasn't hard for me to learn.

SIGRIST: What was your favorite subject?

VOGT: Oh, arithmetic, reading, writing—

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SIGRIST: Did you ever have to memorize any poems in German?

VOGT: Oh yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of those poems now?

VOGT: Not now anymore. I know some of the parts. But I've been here for so long with the grandchildren and great grandchildren (laughs), I don't have so much anymore.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any songs or nursery rhymes that you learned in German, in Germany?

VOGT: Oh, nursery rhyme.

SIGRIST: Like something that you could say for us in German on the tape.

VOGT: [She recites several lines in German] I'm already going on eighty-six.

SIGRIST: What are you talking about? Wolt is woods, right? What is the--? What is the story that—

VOGT: From the, from the Bohemian Woods. It's that where they [German]. That's, that's a place. The [German] is that Bohemian Woods. That is [recites again in German]. That's all I remember yet.

SIGRIST: (Laughs) That's something that you learned as a child to say? Thank you

VOGT: Yeah. Yeah.

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SIGRIST: Oh, well thank you for saying that.

VOGT: So and from there—

SIGRIST: How long did you live with your aunt, with your grandmother's sister, your great aunt?

VOGT: Huh?

SIGRIST: How long did you live with your grandmother's sister?

VOGT: Nine years.

SIGRIST: Nine years.

VOGT: And then I came over here.

SIGRIST: What did you know about American when you lived in Germany/

VOGT: Oh different ones went to America. I had a cousin here in Wisconsin. And then a girlfriend of mine came over here.

SIGRIST: And, and, and how did you think about America? I mean what did American represent to you when you lived in Germany?

VOGT: Well, when I got older different ones went, friends of mine, which some of them are gone already. Well I'm here sixty-five years. And some was relatives.

SIGRIST: Did you have--? Before you came to this country did you have expectations about what you were going to find when you got here? And what did you hope to find when you came to America?

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VOGT: Well, a friend of mine went to a farm. And I was-- Well, she came to the same farm where I was with my grandma's sister. And she was from Munich. And she came out. The time was so poor in Germany. There wasn't much to eat, you know, during the war and after the war. And she was my age. And then the people came, you know, for fruit, for meat, for eggs, different stuff they came on the farm to my grandma's sister. And they brought stuff. Bought chicken and eggs and different stuff, [unclear] and whatever was around. And then that girl came to America. Her dad was in Munich and her mother. And the dad went over her first and then the rest of the family went afterwards. And she used to write me from there. You know she likes it over here and so and so. And she, she was a relative, a niece to the farmers what's here in America's wife. Well my husband what I married afterwards was a relative of my husband.

SIGRIST: I see.

VOGT: My future husband.

SIGRIST: Did you know your, your husband-to-be in Germany?

VOGT: No. But I was there, you know, his parents wrote me. And then the priest from us wrote to the parish in my home, husband's home, well the family of this. And he inquired about me. And I came then to those people out in Friesenheim.

SIGRIST: Friesenheim, is that in Wisconsin?

VOGT: No. Friesenheim in Germany.

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SIGRIST: Oh, in Germany. Sorry. Right.

VOGT: And, of course, we was writing. For two years almost we writing letters and inquired, you know, about each other. And then where my husband was related, you know, is to his wife was [unclear] to the girlfriend of mine what came with the same place in Clinton, Wisconsin. And my husband was there, my future husband was there too. We wrote for two years almost together.

SIGRIST: What was, what was he telling you? I mean what, what was he telling you about himself in his letters?

VOGT: Well, what he was telling me that he heard from Rosie was her name. She--. I'd like to come over here, too. And she wrote that Rosie was related to the uncle from mein husband were here. And then a lot of them came over here, too. He was working for them and through that all ---

SIGRIST: Was it exciting to get a letter from America?

VOGT: Oh yes. And then five dollars was twenty marks in Germany when we had the inflation and all the money was gone.

SIGRIST: That's a terrible inflation that hit Germany in the 1920s.

VOGT: We had to sold a cow. And I took the cow to the market and we got--. Two weeks later couldn't get enough for two pair of shoes. And just at once everything went--. My dad paid for me, you know, with money for me in bank.

SIGRIST: This is your stepfather.

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VOGT: No, my dad.

SIGRIST: Your dad.

VOGT: My dad. Because see I wasn't living with my dad then. That's why, you know, I believe that Rosie and then my husband's folks, they invited me to come out. And was with my friends' folks. And they liked me very well and I liked them very well. And we phone back lots of times since I'm here. And they still come. My husband passed away already in '80, '88.

SIGRIST: Well we're going to pause just for a second so that Peter can flip the tapes over and then we'll get you to America.

VOGT: Okay.

SIGRIST: So hang on just for a moment.

END OF SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

SIGRIST: Okay. We're now beginning side two with Mary Vogt. Can you tell me what you packed to bring with you to America? What did you pack to take to America?

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VOGT: I took part--. Where my husband worked on the farm, his wife was from Munich, too. And she wrote me, no, I came over here and she wrote me, you know. And already she was [unclear], she learn cooking. And I know that, where the [unclear] is. And so I went and go to America.

SIGRIST: What did you take with you to America?

VOGT: With me?

SIGRIST: Yes. What did you actually take with you from Germany?

VOGT: Farming.

SIGRIST: But what objects? What, what did you put in your suitcase to take to America?

VOGT: Oh clothes.

SIGRIST: What clothes? Do you remember specifically?

VOGT: (She laughs.) Oh, all kinds, what was style out there. And I couldn't wear it over here.

SIGRIST: Why not?

VOGT: Because it was out of the, you know--. I wouldn't go with a great big rimmed hat to church or nowheres (she's laughing). So we had to buy right away go to the store in Clinton and buy a hat to wear (still laughing).

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SIGRIST: So your clothes were all out of style when you got to America?

VOGT: It was all out of style. But we had to start then, and then we worked--. There was two houses on my, on the relatives of my husband. And we moved in the second house, got married—

SIGRIST: That's in America though when you got here.

VOGT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Well let's get you here first. You packed clothes to take. When you were in Germany you packed clothes to take with you to America.

VOGT: Yeah. And I couldn't wear that over here.

SIGRIST: Did you take any objects? Did you take anything other than clothes with you, any things?

VOGT: No.

SIGRIST: Did you take—

VOGT: Just, just my clothes.

SIGRIST: Just your clothes.

VOGT: And I left others because I thought maybe I'd go back again see.

SIGRIST: So you were thinking that maybe you'll return.

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VOGT: Yeah. And I left the money out there, too. I had some money on the bank when my dad paid.

SIGRIST: And where did you go to get on the ship?

VOGT: In Bremen.

SIGRIST: And how long did it take you to get from your town to Bremen? How long did it take?

VOGT: Oh, it took to Bremen, oh, I think about a day, not quite, because we had to wait, you know. We had to walk so far already to the depot. And then from there I went to Munich and then we had in Munich we had to wait for so long to get a plane to go to Bremen.

SIGRIST: To take the train to Bremen.

VOGT: The train from Bremen, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. So you went to--. From your town you went to Munich.

VOGT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And from Munich you went to Bremen.

VOGT: Yeah. With the York.

SIGRIST: You came on the—

VOGT: York.

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SIGRIST: The York, the ship. Do you remember saying goodbye to your mother?

VOGT: Oh yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe that a little bit and how you felt when you said goodbye to her?

VOGT: It was kind of hard. And I hoped and prayed that I have the right, did the right thing.

SIGRIST: Did your mother give you any advice before you left for America?

VOGT: She gave me her blessing, because she had three children from this marriage then.

SIGRIST: From, from your stepfather's.

VOGT: Yeah, from my stepfather. And she had to work hard.

SIGRIST: How do you think she felt about you going to America?

VOGT: Well, it was hard for her too to take it. But I was twenty and a half so (laughs) she didn't say much anymore. She cried. And then she had already the other three children so—

SIGRIST: You were an adult.

VOGT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You know you were all grown up when you left.

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VOGT: Yeah. It was then already too because see I was nine years old already, over nine years after I came away from her.

SIGRIST: Right, right. How long did you stay in Bremen before you got on the ship?

VOGT: Just the one night.

SIGRIST: Did, did, did they--? What happened to you that one night before you got on the ship?

VOGT: Well, we took a ride first for luxury. [Laughs] And then we found a girlfriend, a friend how we are, you know. And we got friends together. She came from Cshchien and went to America, too, by Chicago.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the town she came from, Schlezwick?

VOGT: No, Cshchien.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

VOGT: C-S-C-H-I-E-N., Cshchien, West Fallen

SIGRIST: Did you have to undergo any kind of examinations in Bremen?

VOGT: Yes.

SIGRIST: What did they do?

VOGT: Well, they examined and they said we had lice. And I says, that can't (laughs) be pos—but I didn't have it.

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SIGRIST: How did they--?

VOGT: And it was so embarrassing.

SIGRIST: How did they--? How did they examine you for lice?

VOGT: I don't know. We had to go to a bathroom and that's about it.

SIGRIST: And did they do anything to you when they thought you had lice?

VOGT: No.

SIGRIST: They didn't offer any kind of medicine or anything?

VOGT: No, no. No. They just went in and went out of there. And then we went on.

SIGRIST: And you were embarrassed by that (he laughs).

VOGT: I sure was. And then, of course, the next day in the afternoon at four o'clock our boats left Bremen and we went on the boat.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about getting on a ship?

VOGT: It was kind of hard. But I felt I have to take it. I started it, I have to finish and go.

SIGRIST: Had you ever been on a ship before?

VOGT: No. But they told me, don't stay, don't stay down in the cabin. Go up the deck because, you know, so many got seasick. And I was one night.

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And that's the only meal I missed, the first night. That's the second night. And it was twelve days on the water.

SIGRIST: Where did you sleep on the ship?

VOGT: In, in the boat. You know, underneath, you know. It was first and second class. And then we all went to eat in two shifts.

SIGRIST: How did you know when it was time to go and eat?

VOGT: Oh they called it out. Yeah.

SIGRIST: And do you remember the food that you ate on the ship?

VOGT: Oh yeah. I like herring. And they had good food, too. And then, of course, we came to Halifax and from Halifax to New York., down here. And then we was---. I had to go out from out. And I don't remember anymore, you know. We had to go in a long room, long building, from one room to other. And the others all went. And I had to go to a separate place where they said, you know, they say there's so much employment here. And if I have to be sure that my husband has a job. And then I didn't know anymore what to do. So of course I came. And then they said we have to get married. And the agent out in Germany told us we don't have to get married, from the immigration. And here, and if we don't get married we have to go sent back,] got to go back on the same, without going to Wisconsin. But so, anyway, he signed and we had to sign papers and send them in to immigration that we get married in two weeks.

SIGRIST: And that all happened here at Ellis Island.

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VOGT: That all happened here. And then we started farming.

SIGRIST: Wait, before you started farming, when you came across on the ship—

VOGT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Were you traveling alone? Whose--? Is anyone with you when you're coming over on the ship? You're all by yourself.

VOGT: Yeah. [Unclear] there was a lady in the train.

SIGRIST: No, but before you got to America when you're on the ship, are you traveling alone?

VOGT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You're all by yourself. Did your, your husband to be come here to pick you up?

VOGT: No. No.

SIGRIST: Well, where, where did you--? I'm a little unclear as to where you signed the papers.

VOGT: I signed here I marry him in two weeks.

SIGRIST: Oh, so when, when was the first time you met the man that you were going to marry?

VOGT: Before.

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SIGRIST: In Germany?

VOGT: No, no. We just wrote letters across, and my husband's folks for three months.

SIGRIST: So where did you actually see him for the first time?

VOGT: In Clinton.

SIGRIST: In Clinton. All right. So, so, you don't actually even see this man until you get to Wisconsin.

VOGT: No.

SIGRIST: Ahh. That's interesting.

VOGT: And then we had to get married in Clinton. And then we worked for his relative. There was two houses on it and he had a big farm and my husband worked there.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember about being here at Ellis Island. You said that they, they, they took you aside.

VOGT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Everyone was going in one way and they made you go a different way. What, what happened to you during that, that one night that you slept here?

VOGT: That one night? I had to stay overnight. And then the next morning, you know, in the depot. But I don't remember the depot anymore.

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SIGRIST: Do you remember any details about where you slept? Do you remember anything about like the room where you slept?

VOGT: No.

SIGRIST: No.

VOGT: No. Then I went the next day to Wisconsin but the train went as far as Chicago then I had to stay overnight in Chicago. And that I remembered it more because I went asleep oh, on a bench like and it was pillows filled with saw, sawdust on the bottom and newspaper and a sheet to cover (she laughs). I never forget that. Here when I slept here, there I had a bed, you know, just like a single bed.

SIGRIST: Here at Ellis Island where you slept. Yeah.

VOGT: Yeah. But when I got to Chicago then I had the train, you know, it took so long at that time to come up. And I, we got a second and I got a third to Chicago. And there was no more train going out for so long. And then—

SIGRIST: Is that why you had to sleep in Chicago because you missed the last train?

VOGT: Yeah. And there I saw some colored people.

SIGRIST: Had you ever seen a black person before?

VOGT: I'd never seen one.

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SIGRIST: What did you think when you saw a—

VOGT: I thought oh, they keep me on the train, you know, they was working, when they gave me something to eat and I thought I'd get black hands.
[Laughs]

SIGRIST: Well, you'd never seen a black person before.

VOGT: I'd never seen.

SIGRIST: Were there any other things that you found here when you got to America that you had never seen before in Germany?

VOGT: Well we had nice depots. And here you went out of the train and there was no gate or nothing out there. You know it was all closed in. You had to have the gate to be opened when you went into the depot and to the train. And when you went out, too, you had to show your ticket in here. And then when I got to a train and those colored people, I couldn't sleep. I was so scared. And at four o'clock in the morning—then - - -

SIGRIST: What are you thinking? When, when you got to America, and you get going on this train trip to Chicago, and you're seeing black people, you've never seen them before. You were held over here overnight. What's going through your head at this point? What are you thinking?

VOGT: Well, I don't know. I was kind of nervous, this I know. And I couldn't hardly wait. There was a lady on the train and it was like a tank. She was supposed to watch so I get out at the right place. When I got there there was my friend with a ticket in his thing and a flower. And [unclear]. And then we got to Clinton.

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SIGRIST: What did you think when you finally met the man that you were going to marry? What did you think?

VOGT: Well, we wrote quite a bit. We wrote a year and a half. Of course the mail took at that time two and three weeks before it got across.

SIGRIST: And when you actually saw him what, what--? Were you, were you happy? Were you disappointed?

VOGT: No, I wasn't. I'd like to see, did like to see him. Well I know his parents. I did know his brother and a sister. And we went home back since I'm here when my husband died in '88.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you were wearing when you met him?

VOGT: What?

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you were wearing when you met him?

VOGT: Oh, I probably had to buy a new hat because we had no relatives. We had no wedding, much. And the priest was Catholic. He thought I should go to a German wedding, have a German wedding. When we changed for Wisconsin there was a German church and that first married us.

SIGRIST: Were you Catholic in Germany?

VOGT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. What was, what was your husband's name?

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VOGT: Paul.

SIGRIST: Paul Vogt?

VOGT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And what was your maiden name before you were –

VOGT: Soell.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

VOGT: S-O-E-L-L.

SIGRIST: That was your mother's name. Right. I remember you spelling that for us. You said your husband had a flower for you when you met him. Tell me--. Tell me how you felt during the ceremony. When you actually were married how did it make you feel?

VOGT: Well, we wrote each other already, from love and stuff, you know, before I came. And I had sent him a picture and he sent me pictures. And I was by his folks and by his brothers and his sister.

SIGRIST: So you knew what he looked like. You even had a photograph.

VOGT: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me about the German wedding. What is a German wedding like?

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VOGT: It's in a church. And there's big weddings, music with dance and eats. And here he had some relatives, more relatives. See my husband came in '27 over here. And—

SIGRIST: And he had been born and brought up in Germany.

VOGT: Yeah, in Germany, too. And then, of course, they had, he had relatives, too, here more relatives from his dad's side that he know, you know, that I know. So—

SIGRIST: Was there a big German community in Wisconsin? Were there lots of Germans where you were?

VOGT: Yeah, all German.

SIGRIST: It was all Germans.

VOGT: Yeah, all German. [Unclear] my husband's home, too.

SIGRIST: Tell me about did you miss Germany once you got here.

VOGT: No, I didn't because I had to work hard out there on the farm. I had to go out at three o'clock in the morning sometimes. And we made hay and sow it with a scythe, and get two loads of hay moved for the next day or two, to bring it in and load it up, and milk cows and [unclear] calves and pigs. And I done the same thing over here. We was on a farm. We started a farm. And that was hard. We had four children. And we try to go back because it was so bad in the thirties. We had milk strikes. And then we rented a farm. And we had no water for the cows to drink hardly. We couldn't cool the milk. And then there's no way income and he had to work. And that was hard.

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SIGRIST: And that's during the Depression.

VOGT: That was during the Depression in from '32 on until, I think, '34. The folks wanted us to come home and help us build a house. Give my husband so much land, you know, where you can build your house. And he would have a job right away. Then we got right away a writing from the Hitler. It was going at that time. We ought to come home to help the fatherland. But we had the two boys here with me already. And he said, no, we're not going to go home. We're not going to do that. What we do, we do, we stay here. Then a friend of ours went out to Germany in '39. And then--. Yeah, in '39. And he was already stuck. He couldn't go. He was friends from Chicago. And so, no, we're not going to take it. And then we stayed. And then, of course, my husband's side was so close to French. You know right over the Rhine River was [unclear] the war, you know. And when he wrote us we ought to come back.. And we said in '34, no, we're not going to come now. And they had land. And there was prohibition in America at that time. And we had a hired man. We had a race [unclear] and we had low land, and it was the dry air in '34. And then in '36 it was so dry, too. You know cool the milk and we couldn't cool the milk. We rented a farm.

SIGRIST: So in the 1930s things get very difficult for you. Just day to day life becomes more complicated.

VOGT: Yeah, it was, it was bad.

SIGRIST: It's, it's interesting that, of course, your life in America is not all that different from what your life had been in Germany.

VOGT: No.

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SIGRIST: Doing all these farm things.

VOGT: Yeah. It had a hard start.

SIGRIST: Tell me. You said you had four children.

VOGT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Name your children for me.

VOGT: Paul Ernst, Thomas John, Marie Theresa, and Frank Theodore.

SIGRIST: And is that in order of, of age?

VOGT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What year was the first child born?

VOGT: In '32.

SIGRIST: Nineteen thirty-two.

VOGT: In '33 the second one, in '35 the girl and in '37 the youngest one.

SIGRIST: Is there a story that you have about the birth of one of the children? Is, is, is there a story about the circumstances about the birth of one of your children that stick out in your mind?

VOGT: Well, it was a birth--. Of course I couldn't talk any English. And I was going with the first baby to the hospital. And then we had to pay the

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hospital. And when I got home I had to have help when I got home with no money. So it was hard. But he worked for his uncle and he got so much wages. So we could pay for it. And then a couple of years, we was there three years then we started for ourselves. There is where [Unclear] came in. There was the Depression so we bought the cattle, and the machinery and all that. And we had to work that big farm.

SIGRIST: So you not only have to be a mother to your children but you have to be a farmhand, too.

VOGT: Yeah. I was out milking, helping. I took the children along in the barn milking. And two big ones, the one was with me, they're the oldest.

SIGRIST: How did you learn English? Tell me how you learned English.

VOGT: By myself through the newspapers and through the funny papers. We talked German all the time on the farm. And the relatives talked German, too. So—

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the first words that you learned in English?

VOGT: Yeah. What I learned. What bothered me they always talked about a neighbor's lady, she was from, Norwegian. And that relative she came from Bavaria where I come from. The husband from over here, the farm people, their name was William.

SIGRIST: What was her name?

VOGT: Wilmena. You know, they call [unclear]. And she was [unclear]. And through her niece I came over here.

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SIGRIST: And what were some of the first words that you learned in English?

VOGT: They was talking about Germany, it was German, and those German or something, you know, the neighbors. And one day I was talking about German (laughs). And then she explained it to me what that means. And then, of course, through the newspapers. And then the children went to school and they couldn't talk any English in school because we talked German all the time.

SIGRIST: Was that difficult for your children then?

VOGT: Yeah. And there was a girl in school she told the oldest one and, of course, then anything took them long to learn it.

SIGRIST: Did your children help you to learn any English?

VOGT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: The children helped.

VOGT: Helped me, and the newspaper and the funny papers.

SIGRIST: What about your husband, did he speak English?

VOGT: Yeah. He speak, he spoke some English because he was here three years before.

SIGRIST: Right. Did you ever want to--? Did you ever want to go back to Germany to visit?

VOGT: Oh, yes, we went back.

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SIGRIST: What was the first time you went back, what year?

VOGT: In '52.

SIGRIST: And what did it--? What did it look like to you? How did it make you feel to be back there?

VOGT: That was--. Everything was bad at that time. But for our dollar we got four mark and twenty pennies.

SIGRIST: Was your mother living at that time?

VOGT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was it like to see your mother for the first time?

VOGT: Oh, she was happy, too. Of course she had then three children afterwards.

SIGRIST: Did she look different to you?

VOGT: She looked older (laughs) but she was happy. And my husband's folks was happy. And we've been going back home back different times. We went out there last year with the family.

SIGRIST: How do you think your life would have been different if you had stayed in Germany?

VOGT: I don't think so.

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SIGRIST: Do you think your life would have been different if you had stayed in Germany?

VOGT: I doubt it because the children are so good to me.

SIGRIST: Do, do you think of yourself as being German or American?

VOGT: Well, that's all the same we have to follow. In Germany we had to follow what was out there and here we have to follow (she laughs) what comes here, you know. (Mr. Sigrist laughs.) That is--. They never brought me any shame, the children.

SIGRIST: You have good children.

VOGT: Four.

SIGRIST: And you're happy--. You have good children.

VOGT: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: As you said before.

VOGT: I've got a daughter-in-law here, too; what's here. Oh, she couldn't be sweeter girl than she is; so I'm happy.

SIGRIST: Mrs. Vogt, Vogt, Vogt, right?

VOGT: Yeah.

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SIGRIST: I want to thank you very much for letting me ask you questions. I think this is a good place for us to end the interview. And I just want to thank you very much.

VOGT: You're welcome.

SIGRIST: (Mr. Sigrist laughs.) This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Mary Vogt on Thursday, October 12th, 1995 here at Ellis Island. Thanks.

VOGT: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW