

EI-834

HELEN HANSE

BIRTHDATE: NOVEMBER 16, 1892

INTERVIEW DATE: DECEMBER 14, 1996

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE

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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: IRV SILBERG

IRELAND, 1914

23

SHIP:

PORT:

RESIDENCES:

- **NORTHERN IRELAND: VARIED RESIDENCES [itinerant]**
- **US: PATERSON, NJ**

NOTE: Interviewee's voice is frail and weak, she is hard of hearing, and there is some sort of medical equipment beeping in the background during interview.

LEVINE: Okay. Today is December 14th, 1996. I'm here in Paterson, New Jersey with Helen Kevin Hanse, who came from Northern Ireland, when you were hold old? How old were you when you came to America?

HANSE: You see, I had --- I was married on the 8th of October and we sailed for America in -- in December. I -- I was twenty-two.

LEVINE: You were twenty-two.

HANSE: Yes.

LEVINE: And what's your birth date?

HANSE: November 16th.

LEVINE: 18—

HANSE: '92.

LEVINE: Okay, and your mother's name?

HANSE: Was Annie Carr.

LEVINE: Okay, and your father's name?

HANSE: Henry Kevin.

LEVINE: Okay, and did you have brothers and sisters when you were in Ireland?

HANSE: I had three brothers and one of whom died when I was twelve. And he was twelve. And the others, they stayed in Ireland. They ---they ---he became a Canon in the Episcopal Church and the other one became a medical doctor. So they were well educated.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. What town were you from in Ireland?

HANSE: I was born in Castle Blaney, County Mulligan, but being an itinerant, you see, we just stayed there only a short time after I was born.

LEVINE: Oh, where did you go?

HANSE: We went to Cookstown, County Tyrone.

LEVINE: And that's where you grew up, in Cookstown?

HANSE: No, I --- I grew up as an itinerant minister ----- minister's daughter.

LEVINE: I see.

HANSE: And I lived in Tipperary. I lived in Cork. I lived all over Ireland.

LEVINE: What was it like for you, being a minister's daughter and traveling to all these places in Ireland?

HANSE: I doted on my father. I doted on my father.

LEVINE: What was he like? What kind of a father was he when you were growing up?

HANSE: He was interested in music, and he taught me to play the piano, and then I --- I learned violin. I could play a violin when I was four. I can play it yet. I can—I have my fiddle and I tuned it up and I can—I can play. Oh, Joy to the world, the Lord has come, let earth receive her king. Joy, to the world, the Lord has come, and that's what Christmas is all about.

LEVINE: What was it about music that so interested you from the time you were a little child?

HANSE: My father. My father took an interest in music.

LEVINE: And did your father play an instrument, as well?

HANSE: Well, yes, he – he --- he played the li – li –li little harmonium. Harmonium. Little, an American organ, we called them American organ. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Now, did you want to come to this country when you were very young?

HANSE: No, I never dreamed of a time. I had uncles here in Philadelphia and I never—I – I --- I never dreamed of coming, but my --- my husband and --- and --- and I were— caa -- came together. We came together.

LEVINE: How did you meet your husband?

HANSE: Prayer meeting. Prayer meeting. That's a good place to meet. He always came to our Methodist prayer meeting. There's --- there was no Presbyterian prayer meeting and— mid nights -- midweek, and so he used to come into our house after prayer meeting and have a cup of tea. So a cup of tea and a prayer meeting did the trick.

LEVINE: What had you expected to do, had you stayed in Ireland? What kind of a life did you have in mind?

HANSE: I had no kind of a life beyond teaching music.

LEVINE: You were already teaching music?

HANSE: Yes.

LEVINE: And so you were married and then you were married a few months and then you came here?

HANSE: He came—my husband came to America first and then he came back. I sa—I remember meeting him at – at the pier. My brother and I met him and then my brother thoughtfully disappeared. [Laughs]

LEVINE: So—

HANSE: I --- I had already become engaged to be married.

LEVINE: I see. What was your husband doing? Did he work when he came here before you came?

HANSE: Yes. He stayed at Hawthorne, at 789 Lafayette Avenue and I addressed all my mail to that 789 Lafayette Avenue. But we write – we wrote and we were engaged to be married.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you expected of this country? What you knew about it before you actually came here?

HANSE: I cannot remember what I expected. I expected—[Laughs] I just—I left my mother and my brothers and I just gave up everything for my husband and I just still love him, and he's in heaven.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything you packed up to take with you, when you were leaving everything in Ireland?

HANSE: My violin. [Laughs] Okay.

LEVINE: And—

HANSE: And my piano.

LEVINE: You brought your piano with you?

HANSE: Yes, you see, I smashed my two jaws in an accident, motorseten and --- and --- **motorcycle**. And my brother had persuaded me to buy a motorcycle. And I— I th-- my teacher, my pupils gave me a concert and my s—my singing teacher and my – my violin teacher and my piano teacher united to give me a concert, a benefit concert, and that benefit concert is now in my parlor. You can see it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

HANSE: You can see it and play it.

LEVINE: Wow.

HANSE: And the tuner, the American tuner said it's worth six hundred dollars, and it was ----- cost two hundred eighty years ago.

LEVINE: Do you remember the actual leaving? Do you remember leaving on the ship?

HANSE: I don't remember. I do remember my husband came down and sat alongside me [Laughs] because he – he ---was --- he was in the upper berth and he lifted down his mattress and we slept along side one another. Oh, dear. And I just look forward to uniting with him in heaven.

LEVINE: Do you remember the name of the ship you came on?

HANSE: That I can't remember.

LEVINE: Do you remember when the ship came into the New York harbor?

HANSE: Oh, I --- I ---I don't remember. I remember the Sta--- the Statue of Liberty and all that, just as – as a vague memory.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. When you first got here, do you remember some of your first impressions about this country? Either the first few days or weeks that you were here?

HANSE: I remember going to Smith Street, United Presbyterian Church, which was across the road from St. Paul's and it's a – it's --- the place is there yet, as parki-- parking lot.

LEVINE: What city or town was that?

HANSE: That was in Paterson.

LEVINE: Paterson, uh-huh.

HANSE: Paterson, New Jersey.

LEVINE: When you arrived in this country, do you remember if someone met you or

HANSE: Yes.

LEVINE: is that what happened?

HANSE: Yes. My husband's eldest sister, whom I had never seen, was waiting on the pier for us.

LEVINE: And you went directly to Paterson?

HANSE: And I went directly to Jersey City and then direct Paterson.

LEVINE: And then did you teach music right away here?

HANSE: I don't remember. I can't remember, but I just do remember in beginning to take the lead, really in beginning to teach music. I -- I sang in the choir. I had already won a gold medal at the Derry Faiche [ph] Londonderry and I was a gold medalist. [Laughs] I was -- I had forgotten all—

LEVINE: Do you remember that event, when you won the gold medal?

HANSE: Yeah.

LEVINE: Can you tell about that event, when you won the gold medal?

HANSE: Yes. I remember sending a telegram to my mother. My father was dead; I just said I'd won the gold medal. [Laughs] And I just loved --- love music, love music.

LEVINE: Can you think of any values or any attitudes that your mother and father had that you tried to pass on to your children?

HANSE: Oh, the love of God, as royal in the measure of man's mind and heart of the eternal is most wonderfully kind. That's—my -- my children are here in this room. Oh, one is a lawyer and one is a minister, and I [not understood]

LEVINE: What was your husband's name?

HANSE: Samuel.

LEVINE: Samuel, and your children's names?

HANSE: Henry and Kevin. Henry was drowned. Kevin died of cancer and Billie and Barb, and Lillian and John are still alive. John is a pastor, a reform church pastor and Billie is a lawyer and you've got it all. I thank God. In everything, give thanks.

LEVINE: What makes you feel very satisfied, that you've done in your lifetime?

HANSE: I feel satisfied, thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift, and that's seek ye first the kingdom. I seek the kingdom of God as being my aim and life and object. Seek ye

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first his kingdom and his righteousness and all his saints shall be held unto you.

LEVINE: When you think about the fact that you came here as a young bride and lived out a very long life here in this country, how do you think about your Irish heritage and your American, adopted country?

HANSE: I think that I still have a warm place in my heart for Ireland. I -- I love Ireland because I -- it's the land of my birth, but I -- I never cried for it. [Laughs] And I've been back different times. I've been back different times and I just get—ah, ah, [pause]. Oh – oh --- oh – a – a – a -- Oh, a bit of passion. Oh, yes. [Not understood] Carr [Laughs] in Northern Ireland, County Darren. I - I --I just feel, I -- I write to them and I continue to write.

LEVINE: I see, and you've probably seen a lot of changes in Paterson, New Jersey since you have been here over these years. Can you say something about the changes you've seen over this long time?

HANSE: I -- I think – I think the main – the main thing has been my – my son's—my – my son's growing up – then as a lawyer. I called him William Carr, after his maternal grandfa-- great grandfather is William Carr Hanse, otherwise Bill.

LEVINE: And what kinds of satisfactions do you have now in your old age? Now that you're children are grown and you are a definite senior citizen, how is this phase of your life?

HANSE: Lead me gently home, Father. Lead me gently home, when life's toils are ended and parting days have come. Keep my feet from wandering. Ne'er from thee I'll roam. If thou'll only lead me, Father, lead me gently home.

LEVINE: I think that's a perfect place to end. I want to thank you so much.

HANSE: I just—

LEVINE: I've been talking with Helen Hanse here in Paterson, New Jersey in her home on December 14th, 1996. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service signing off.

END OF INTERVIEW

Side two of tape --- Helen Hanse plays her piano.