

KECK-117

FLORENCE E. NORRIS  
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INTERVIEWER: NANCY DALLETT  
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ENGLAND, 1915  
AGE 21  
PASSAGE ON "THE ORDUNA"

DALLETT: This is Nancy Dallett and I'm speaking with Florence Norris on Monday, February 3rd, 1986. We are beginning this interview at 3:30 and we are about to interview Mrs. Norris about her immigration experience from England in 1915. This is Interview Number 117, side one. Let's start back at the beginning of your story and could you tell me when and where you were born?

NORRIS: Yes, I was born in Manchester, England.

DALLETT: And when was that?

NORRIS: Newton Heath. Newton Heath.

DALLETT: Newton Heath. And what year was that?

NORRIS: 18-, when was about 1893.

DALLETT: 1893. And do you remember what life was like as a young

girl in Manchester.

NORRIS: Oh, no. I don't even remember my mother. No, she died when I was four years old. My dad, his sisters separated us, there was just five of us left. And, uh, different ones to, you know, different children. And I was raised with one aunt but, uh, I came here to see America. That was the reason I came.

DALLETT: Did your aunt live, live in Manchester or did you leave Manchester?

NORRIS: Oh no, I didn't leave, uh, to come to America until I was married. I was twenty-one then.

DALLETT: And what did your father do in Manchester?

NORRIS: Well, he was, uh, he had his own cottage out in the country and he did a lot of, you know, hay making. Your husband would know all about that. More than a countryman, you know. He was, uh, used to drive the carts for furniture and that. At first, until after mother died and he just went to pieces.

DALLETT: Did you have older brothers and sisters?

NORRIS: No, my mother died with the only boy. There were four sisters, three sisters and one, I was four.

DALLETT: And where did you go to school? Where did you first--

NORRIS: manchester, Newton Heath. And I was married in the St. Ann's Church in Newton. Sunday morning, because, uh, we wasn't allowed to be married any other

time because my aunt had just died. And we weren't allowed to, your husband would know all about that. Three months after they died, you're not allowed to marry, only on a Sunday. Sunday morning. So I had to be married on Sunday morning.

DALLETT: And what year would that have been?

NORRIS: Well, I was married in 1914.

DALLETT: 1914.

NORRIS: July 29th.

DALLETT: And, uh, were there people from Manchester that you know who had come to America when you were, were young?

NORRIS: In my aunt that raised me. Because she didn't raise me all the time. But she raised me most of the time when I got a little older and she had three children that I was very fond of and that's who I wanted to see when I came here, my cousins.

DALLETT: How old were you when your aunt had, had left for America?

NORRIS: I must have been about seventeen, sixteen, no maybe about sixteen. Fifteen, sixteen.

DALLETT: Do you remember that, when she, when she left for America?

NORRIS: Oh yes. Oh yes. Because it upset me, I had to go and live with another aunt that I wasn't fond of. Because she never had no children of her own and she didn't know how to handle them. So she was very, very wicked with us. I mean strict. Very strict. So I was raised right after she got a hold of us, I mean, nothing went wrong when she was around. But then, I started, we weren't allowed to even make dates, or anything like that until I was about eighteen, maybe almost nineteen. And I got going with one young fellow, I went with him for about a year until I met my husband and he was on a blind date. My girlfriend had made a blind date for me. And I met him, so I gave up the one I had been going with for a year and went with the other one and married him. I knew right away when I saw him that he was it, you know. And, uh, we went together about, well, about two and half years, maybe, three years. I was married when I was twenty-one.

DALLETT: Do you have any memories of your school years?

NORRIS: Yes, I took a test and, uh, I was eleven and a half years old, so I came out of school and went into the spinning mills in Manchester. And I got sick and they took me out of the spinning mills and put me in the weaving sheds, if you know what they are.

DALLETT: Was your sickness related to the spinning mills?

NORRIS: Spinning cotton, and all that kind of stuff. Well, in the weaving sheds it was doing like towels, and all that kind of stuff. I was only eleven and a half.

DALLETT: What would you do there? What was your job? How did you work?

NORRIS: I was, four looms. You know what a loom is, don't you? I had four

looms to take care of. And I was only a child. So then I took a paralysis and I was in bed for about, oh it must have been close to eight or nine months at my aunt's which I came here to see. That wasn't here, that was in England. But, uh, I got over that and then, uh, they came to America. My aunt and uncle and three children. Kind of missed them.

DALLETT: Why was it that they came to America?

NORRIS: Well, he had a brother that was, uh, pretty wealthy, and he came to America first and then he sent for them to come over. They said they would like it and they did like it. So they used to write to me letters and tell me how they liked it. When I had been married six months I felt, "Well, I'm going to go to America and I'm going to see what it's like." Not 'til my husband he come home one night from, uh, he worked on the Manchester Evening Chronicle as a copy boy. And he came in the house and I said, uh, "I'm going to America." And he looked at me and his father was standing there, and his mother, and, "You're going to America?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Okay, I'll get the money for you, and I'll let you go." But he said, "I'll follow you as soon as I can." We had a little shop. You know we would sell little bits of this and that and the other. So he had to sell that before he could come. So I came by myself.

DALLETT: What had your, what had your cousins and your aunt told you about what they, uh--

NORRIS: They liked, uh, I would like, uh, America because they liked it and, uh, they had a nice house, nice home. And they didn't like it at first. It was hard to get used to, you know, used to, but they did. They settled here. Of course my uncle got a job and got along very good.

DALLETT: Which part of the country were they in?

NORRIS: Pittsburgh. Turtle Creek, Pittsburgh. And they liked Pittsburgh so well that, uh, they kept writing to me and telling me, "Oh, you'd like America," you know, and I got into my head, "Oh, I was going." (She laughs.) But I didn't realize how long I'd been married at the time.

DALLETT; Did you think that you would just come and see what it was like?

NORRIS: Go back. Yes. It was going to be a visit, but it turned out to be, turned to ne, there all together. So, anyhow, I left and my sister was with my husband and they went to the pier in Liverpool.

DALLETT; Did you have to get, go through any kind of, uh, procedure to get papers, or--

NORRIS: Not coming, no. We didn't have to have no visas or anything. No, we all just got our tickets and get on the boat and come.

DALLETT: And where was, where was the boat?

NORRIS: So, that was in Liverpool. We had to go to Liverpool to get on. And, uh, the Orduna coming out, and, uh, I got on the Orduna. And didn't have to pay nothing, only my fare, you know, and I--

DALLETT: Do you remember how much the fare was?

NORRIS: Oh, no, I don't remember that but I do remember how much I had to have with me. I had to have twenty-seven pounds. Not dollars, pounds, with me. So,

anyhow, I got up on the deck and I, I was looking down to see my husband and my sister waving and I started to cry and I said, "Oh, what have I done? I left him." You know, and well, the sad thing about it was the next day, you know, England had started war on August 4th in 1914. And, uh, the next day after I sailed, the, the Germans declared war on the British ships, and I, we were only a day out. It upset my husband, it upset my family. But anyhow, we got half way and we were stopped by the German submarine. And nobody knew on deck. It was all in darkness. And, uh, we didn't know until we got to Ellis Island that we'd been stopped.

DALLETT: It was in the night time?

NORRIS: In the night time. And the captain of the ship, the Orduna, raised the American flag instead of the English flag. And he saved plenty of American lives because there were mostly American people and Canadian people coming back from Europe. There's very, very few English people on the boat and, uh, we got into Ellis Island and on account of us being stopped in the ocean, the Italian ship passed us. They got into Ellis Island ahead of us. And, of course, they found somebody with malaria on the Italian boat, 'cause then we all had to go to Ellis Island and everybody on the, whether they were Americans, Canadians, or what they were, we all had to be inoculated. So that was our first meeting on Ellis Island. We had to have an inoculation. So, I think I must have been on Ellis Island about eight hours.

DALLETT: Did you know anything about Ellis Island?

NORRIS: Nothing. Not a thing. Didn't even know that we were going to go there.

DALLETT: Had you seen the Statue of Liberty?

NORRIS: Yes we did. Yes, oh yes. We were all on the deck, and even when the whales were out on the ocean, with the, blowing all the stuff out, they called us on the boat, on the top. Then we'd all have to go back down. They wouldn't let us out on top after the Germans was after us. But, anyhow, we got there safe. Got to Ellis Island safe. So, it was so crowded with Italian people and children and crying and , oh. So, anyhow, this, I got in, on the boat with a Canadian lady, by the name of Mrs., uh, Taylor, and we'd been friends all along on the boat. She took care of me, and I was pretty sick.

DALLETT: You were sick from the boat?

NORRIS: Yeah, seasick, very bad. And, uh, she took great care of me. Well, we got separated on Ellis Island and I never saw her again. And I was really upset about it because I just loved her just as much as a mother, you know, she was so good to me.

DALLETT: Did you have a cabin on the boat?

NORRIS: Yeah, we were all two in a cabin. There wasn't a lot of cabins as such, we had to have two in a cabin or three if you, because there was so many people and we, coming from Europe, you know, from England.

DALLETT; Was this the first time you had been on a boat of that size?

NORRIS: No, I had been to Ireland many a time on a boat, on a big Fleetwood when I used to go over there for the holidays to the Isle of Man, which is in Ireland and England. Oh, yes we went there every summer practically. So I was used to the boats, but what scared me was when we got to Ellis Island, it was the noise and, uh, you know, the people, throngs, you know, a lot of people. So one

man got hold of me and took me in a small, we called it a cage. We didn't know what they were. They were like wire around and everything. And it was very, very rough. I will never forget it if I live to be a hundred. First thing, he stood up and he looked at me and he says, "Are you pregnant?" I said, "No sir." "Are you sure?" I said, "Yes sir." So Mrs. Taylor was standing outside my cage I was in and she said, "Yes, I'll vouch for her, she isn't." He says, "Well, if she is she goes right back on the next boat!" Well that scared me a little bit, you know? My God, oh, and I didn't know yet, you know? So he says, uh, "Well what else can you tell me? Why are you coming to America?" I says, "Well I'm coming to my aunt and the children I want to see." "Well, what are you going to do, you going to stay?" I said, "Well I expect to stay." Because I knew after the Germans had got us, the boat, there was no use trying to go back. So. "Well, where's your husband?" I said, "Well he's going to follow me later." Told him I, we had a little shop and it had to be sold. So, he asked me a lot of questions about where I was born, like you did, and whether I liked England and why I was leaving England. I told him that my mother was gone and I was with different relations and I would like to come back with my relations that raised me. But he asked me a lot of silly questions, you know what I mean, uh, about America, as if I knew all about America. Well I didn't know anything about America just only what my aunts had been telling me.

DALLETT: Like what kind of things? Can you remember anything he asked you about--

NORRIS: Well he asked me about, uh, I was coming, why was I coming to

America and what had, uh, you know, I guess set me off to come here. So, but I didn't tell him I was on vacation, that I expected to go back. That was the worst thing I could have done was to have told him because he was in a bad mood. So, we got off the Ellis Island in about eight hours we were on that, pushed around then having to stew around, you know.

DALLETT: Did you have a, a medical examination on Ellis Island?

NORRIS: Only that inoculation they examined and they, it's a good job they didn't because I was pregnant and didn't know it. (She laughs.) And that was what caused me to be so sick. So, we got to New York, they took us in, uh, something like life boats. It took about, act, there must have been about twenty of us on the boat. From the Ellis Island we go to New York. And I got to New York and the people in New York were wonderful. They took us to the station, railway station and put us on the train that was to go to Pittsburgh. And the Wilmerding Depot, uh, Pittsburgh I would have to get off. And they took care of us, all the way coming on the train.

DALLETT; Now who were the people that took care of you? Were they--

NORRIS: We don't know, was the railroad people. Very, very nice.

Very good. They gave us a square box of food each. Must have been lunch and, uh, a big grapefruit and I had never seen a grapefruit. We didn't have them in England, we had oranges but not grapefruit. And I asked one of the people on the train, I said, "What is this? It's not an orange." She said, "It's a grapefruit." Well I started to peel it and eat it and you know how bitter it is, I'm like just, oh. So anyway I threw it away, I didn't keep it, they took it off me and threw it out. But, uh, the train ride I didn't get to my aunt's until the next day. Because it's a far distance from New York to Pittsburgh.

DALLETT: Before we go on to Pittsburgh, did, did, uh, you have any food at Ellis Island? Were you there long enough for them to feed you?

NORRIS: No. Nothing to eat. No. We couldn't even get a drink. So never mind the food, any food, we couldn't get a drink. We was pushed around it was, you know Ellis island wasn't a great big place, it was, uh, just in between, I'd say. It was just now I've seen a picture of it. It's far different now than it was then. And everybody was pushing me around it, and oh, the Italians and the children crying and, oh, it was really nerve wracking. It was. It was nice getting away from it. I'll never forget it.

DALLETT: How about, did they ask you how much money you were traveling with or--

NORRIS: Oh, I forgot to tell you about that, so while I was talking to him in this here cage, we called it, he says, "By the way," he says, "How much money have you got on you?" And I had a little cross that my mother in-law made me and it was a, you know, little tiny cross that you'd put on. And I, she put a pocket down in-between and put snaps on it. So she put, they had to put twenty-seven pounds in there for me to land with. So he says, "Another thing I want to ask you, where is your money?" Well I didn't know what to say because I knew it was, and I knew I had to get down to it, he says, "Where is it?" I said, "It's down here in my corset." "Open it up, bring it up, let me see it." So I had to get my twenty-seven pounds out of my chest, you know, and bring it up and let him count it. So then I put it back after he'd finished with it. Well, he says, "That's okay." He says, "It's correct. Twenty-seven," he said. "You got any money beside?" So I opened up my purse and showed him what I had to land with, you know. If I needed any money because I wasn't going to keep that twenty-seven pounds, I was going to send it back to my

husband to come. Because it was too much money for the two of us. But anyhow, he was satisfied. He had seen the twenty-seven pounds. But I, the trouble was getting it back again in the little pocket. I'm telling you, talk about excitement, you know, you just have to think about these things.

DALLETT: But you, did you feel that, uh, he, it was easier for you to tell him that you were coming to live here rather than coming for a visit?

NORRIS; It would have been, but I didn't think at the time, I said, "I'm just going to see my aunt and my cousins."

DALLETT: You did, so you did say you were coming for a visit? But it was unusual that someone who was visiting would come through Ellis Island.

NORRIS: But then, I did happen, if I remember right, I did tell him that the boat had been stopped by the, uh, German submarine in the middle of the night after we'd been out in mid-ocean. And he said, yes, they, he had heard about it. But we didn't know about that until we got to New York. See, we didn't know about it until Ellis Island. And the first headlines we saw in the paper was "Orduna Almost Sank by German Submarine." Well, you know, that was enough to scare anybody right there because I knew my husband was on the other side and I was coming, uh, to America and he was there in England. I didn't know when he would be coming back. To see, when he would be coming to see me. So, I got to my aunt's and, of course, she called, she wrote to him right away to tell him that I'd landed safe that they had heard about the German submarines and they were scared. But I was all right, got there fine, and stayed with the children. I stayed with her until my husband came. Well he was lucky too. Because he left April the 12th.

DALLETT: Of which year?

NORRIS: Of 1914, the same year. And he came on the Lusitania.  
Do you remember what happened to the Lusitania?

DALLETT: Didn't make it back, did it?

NORRIS: Didn't make it back this side of the island. It was sank. And he was lucky that he got here. So we were both lucky that we really reached America. So he came and, uh, he came prepared to stay. Brought the seven, twenty-seven pounds back with him, which helped us along to get going. But it wasn't easy.

DALLETT: Did he have to come through Ellis Island too?

NORRIS: No. He came through Ellis Island but he never said anything about it, he just, you know, I guess he was so glad to get off the Lusitania.

DALLETT: Do you remember that period when you had, uh, uh, recently arrived in Pittsburgh and you were writing home to tell him what, what it was like?

NORRIS: That would have been around the 16th of January. Because, I, I got on the boat on the fourth and I think we were almost two weeks. That was a long time to be on a boat. And then, you know, being so sick, as I was, then I found out that I was pregnant and I did get there and that, that finished it. I had to write and tell my husband, of course, then he was more anxious to come, you know. But he was very lucky.

DALLETT: What were your first impressions, do you remember? Of Pittsburgh, when you landed with your aunt.

NORRIS: I didn't like it. I didn't like the station. I had two big blankets with me. I had them strapped, that his mother had sent to my aunt. You know blankets, they were pretty scarce, uh, expensive, I guess. So she had wrapped these blankets in straps and I carried them with me and my suitcase. Well it was funny. I got off at the Wilmerding Station and she was at East Pittsburgh Station. That was two different places. So, I didn't know what to do. I got out of the train and one of the men came to me and he said, "Are you a stranger here?" I said, "Yes I am, I don't know where I'm at." He says, "Well where do you want to go?" And I said, "I want to see my aunt in Turtle Creek and I don't, she's not here." Of course, she was at another station. He says, "Well, I don't know what to do." He says, "Would you like to send a telegram to Turtle Creek and tell her you're in the station and we'll keep you here?" And I said, "That would be very kind of you." And then he says, "Wait a minute, I've got another thought. What do you say, if you give me the money it would cost me for the telegram and I'll send a boy to Turtle Creek with you." So he takes the blankets, and carries the blankets out of the telegraph, he showed me where the telegraph office was and so the man said, "Yes, that would be a very good idea." So the boy gets me and outs me on a streetcar and rode me to Turtle Creek and we had to walk, oh I don't know how many miles up a hill to get to Oak Hill where they lived. And it was about eight above zero. It was cold because I had a winter coat on. You know, and gloves and everything. So, I got home, and there was nobody home. My aunt was down at the other station waiting for me. So my oldest child came out, he was, and I asked different questions, and all they could say was "mm-mm." So, "Where have I come?" I didn't understand a word they were talking about. "Eh0eh, mm-mm, ah-ah." So we went into the kitchen and into the living room and we, waited until my aunt came home, of course, she was about an hour and a half coming back, or two hours, maybe. So, she said, "We got lost, didn't we?" And I said, "Yes we did." I said, "I went to Wilmerding and you went to East Pittsburgh." And I didn't know the different places, you know. But it was very, very exciting. So, when I got here and my husband got here, he couldn't get a job. The first thing we was in the Western Guide was, "No jobs." So we didn't know what we were going to do. We had this little bit of money. We knew it would

keep us for a while, with my aunt. So--

DALLETT: Were you living with your aunt?

NORRIS: Oh yes, she had a big house. She had three bedrooms and two, one bathroom. Big living room, dining room, kitchen, big house. So, he couldn't get a job, but friends of my uncle's found a job for him in the Westinghouse. Twenty cents an hour. Which was supposed to be good money, I guess at that time. And he had only been working, it was about six weeks. He took rheumatic fever. And he was in bed for two and a half months. In fact he was in bed when my baby was born. I was downstairs and he was upstairs. And he couldn't move, we had to pull the sheets on him, he couldn't move a muscle. He couldn't move a finger. So we belonged, we had joined, what they called a British Lodge, English Lodge in the town. And the doctor came to me on Sunday morning, I'll never forget it, and he put his shoul, hand on my shoulder when the doctor was tending to my son, to my husband. He says, "Lassie, I'm sorry, but you're going to lose you husband. He's absolutely out of control." So, of course, you know, what that did to me, I was very quiet, in those days, I had been raised that way. And I didn't know what to do. So my uncle, he got the members of the Lodge to come to see me. And they changed doctors. They brought another doctor and you never saw such a fright on all your life. He had big shoes on and all the streets in Turtle Creek weren't paved, it's all mud, you know? I looked at him and I thought, "Oh, my word." So he goes with these muddy shoes on and everything, my aunt's house was spotless. And, uh, he says, shook his head and says, "Maybe I can do something." He says, "Do you think your uncle could go to Braddock?" Oh, Braddock was about three towns from where we lived and there was no car. There was no buses, only streetcars. So he got on a streetcar and he went to Braddock and he gave him a note to give to the doctors and there was a little, uh, case and in that case there were six little tiny vials of medicine and he injected them around his heart and, uh, in about a week after, he started to move his fingers. We knew then that he was, out of, you know, getting. So, when the baby was born, I was downstairs. So he was a little boy, and, uh, I

had the doctors that told me I was going to lose my husband for him, see, so he takes the baby upstairs after they cleaned him and washed him and let him see the baby. Because he told him he was sorry that he had, you know, told me about the death. So, we said, "Well that was all right, he was our, my doctor and, you know. we was quite satisfied with what had been done to him." And he was up about two, three weeks after that he got up and he could walk. And then he started to move around the yard, was in the garden. He finally got to, well then after that, Britain, uh, gave America the deals for making shells. And my husband was chosen as an inspector of shells, which gave him a lot of money. So from then on we started to get along. We got another house, got by ourselves and, then my second boy was born. So--

DALLETT: Was there a large, uh, English community in Pittsburgh?

NORRIS; No. I never, only the club we belonged to was mostly Englishmen, you know, and their wives and children. But not, there was not many English people, mostly the American people. But they were all nice people, they were all very, very good to me when I first came.

DALLETT: And did you start picking up the American customs easily or did you find it very strange?

NORRIS: Well, yes, I couldn't get used to the money. That money used to bother me. My aunt gave me a bill to go down and pay the gas bill and I came home with a lot of change. And I didn't know what it was and I held it out to her and she says, "He gave you too much money." I said, "Aunt Clary, I didn't know." You know, what he was giving me and I came home with all this change. (They laugh.) But it was funny getting used to it was, uh, many times I might as well say, when he was in bed with Rheumatic fever wished to go home. We were wishing we were back in England. But we soon got over that when the shells started coming, we were making shells, and he was working on that and I, everything changed. Then my third boy that we lost on the war, in the Second World War we

lost him, he was twenty-three, he was born and then everything, everything seemed to change then. We got along in a nice house, rented a nice house and then my sister came and her husband after the war was finished, they came to stay with me, so, they did a lot better than I had heard. But, uh, we got along good then. Then, of course, she was my baby, she was born. She was the worst, the youngest of six. Four boys, two girls. I had one girl and, oh we were so excited about her when she was born, we wouldn't let nobody go near her. Wouldn't let them breathe on her. We was scared that, and the lady next door she was very, very funny. She came over one day and they wouldn't let her in because, uh, I was still in bed, I took yellow jaundice, I was still in bed with the baby. And she got sore at me, she never spoke to me again because I wouldn't let her see the baby. I was so afraid of anybody going near her for fear it would, 'cause it was a girl, I'd had the boys, you know, and-- So then she came along. She was the worst of my six. I almost lost my life over her. In fact I almost lost her.

DALLETT: This is the end of side one of Interview Number 117 with Florence Norris.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DALLETT: This is the beginning of side two of Interview Number 117 with Florence Norris. When you first settled here in Pittsburgh, how long did it take you to get used to some of the differences between English and American--

NORRIS: Well, quite a while because my aunt helped. She'd take me and get me groceries and, you know, tended to the baby. Then the second one was born, of course, I was getting more used to it then. I could go and do my own shopping and, but that was in

season when it was cold, eight below.

DALLETT: So it was a difference in weather then, it's not so raw,  
rough and--

NORRIS: Oh it was different. We didn't have cold like that in England. It  
was never got, you know, about maybe thirty, forty. That was cold. But we got it below  
zero in Turtle Creek. Then we lived on the hill and we had to climb up the hill. So, no I  
got used to it, my aunt used to take me shopping and I got used to it. My husband would go  
with me and on evenings we would do the shopping together.

DALLETT: And was Pittsburgh in any way like Manchester? Manchester  
was mostly cotton mills at that time, right?

NORRIS: I know, I worked in them. (She laughs.)

DALLETT: And Pittsburgh was no kind of--

NORRIS: Pittsburgh was more of a, what would you say? More of a trade  
place, shops and stores and that. Because we called them shops over there, you know, we  
called the stores shops. But, uh--

DALLETT: Did you have, were there a lot of American expressions that it  
took you awhile to pick up? The language?

NORRIS: It's a long, long while before we could get, they couldn't  
understand me, that was the funny part about it, you know? Very hard to understand, I  
couldn't understand them, especially that, "uh-huh, mm-mm." That got me. I couldn't, I  
said to my aunt, "What do they mean?" You know, they went yes and no and. (She laughs.)

It's very strange coming from another country to tell you the truth, very strange. It takes you just a long while to get used to the ways and, uh, the day I landed, my uncle was late coming home because he had to go to Homestead, and that was quite a way from Pittsburgh. And, uh, he came in and he grabbed a hold of me, you know, and hugged me and said, "You really made it, didn't you?" And he said, "Did you hear about the Germans?" And I said, "yes I heard about it when I got to New York." We didn't know about it before then. Because we were safe on the boat. If we'd have known, we would have all gone crazy, you know.

DALLETT: Sure.

NORRIS: Because that was a terrible thing to happen. The day after we had sailed. We didn't know about it. Of course the boat was in blackness all the time, mostly. No lights. Because they couldn't. Not after the notice had been given that they were going to sink the ships. Couldn't put no lights on.

DALLETT: But when you set sail, you had no idea that--

NORRIS: Oh no, it was the day after they issued the, the warning on England that they were going to sink them all. Well we were out on the ocean then. Took us almost two weeks to come here. That's a long while. Now you can go in four days. Four days on the Queen Mary.

DALLETT: When you left Manchester, did you know other people? Was it a common thing for Manchester, to be coming to live in America?

NORRIS: No. Only my aunt and uncle and children and then his brother was pretty wealthy and he had come here and made his home. He had a beautiful home. In Duquense, it's near Pittsburgh.

DALLETT: But it wasn't common at that time for people to immigrate?

NORRIS: No. No. People didn't seem to, uh, to come, think about coming. But after I came and my sister came and my brother and she got married in England and came here and then he came after her just the same. But then, of course, everything was safe on the ocean when she came. The war was ended.

DALLETT: And when you first settled here you said you had all these expectations of how nice America was going to be because you got letters from your cousins and your aunt saying how pleasant it was.

NORRIS: But it wasn't what I thought it was going to be, you know. Because it was up on a hill and it was pretty hard to get around. We had no cars, there was no cars those days. You used streetcars, the streets were muddy and I said to myself, "Is this America?" You know, but I soon got used to it. The people were nice, we had nice people, nice neighbors. That helped. So--

DALLETT: Have you ever thought about what it would be like, uh, how your life might have been different if you had stayed in, and lived out your life in England?

NORRIS: Well I seen what my life would have been, when I went to visit, to visit for three times, four times. And I know what my life would have been like, it was a nice bunch of people. But they don't have nothing like we've got.

DALLETT: How is it different? What do we have?

NORRIS: The houses, the homes, the buildings. Their homes are very plain,

there's no, you know, fancy work about their homes, uh, kitchen, you know, living room, and bedrooms, two bedrooms maybe, bathroom. And they had the old fashioned, uh, tubs yet they had when I was there. And that was about how long ago. About four years, five years.

DALLETT: Would life for your children have been very different?

NORRIS: Very different. Very different.

DALLETT: How so?

NORRIS: See all my children got to go to, to college to, Billy and, uh, Lloyd went o college and made good for themselves. I think it would have been a bit harder in England for the children to have gone to college. I really do. Because look at me, I was eleven and a half and I was put in a spinning mill. So that gives you a slight idea that how young, well then it got to be, uh, the law was passed that they had to be sixteen before they could go into any factory at all. But, uh, it was hard work. Spinning mills was, I had to wear a little white gown with just bloomers underneath because the heat in there was 108 degrees. In the spinning mills.

DALLETT: Did you work a long day? Many hours?

NORRIS: Yes. Went six on the morning and came home at five in the afternoon. And we had to be there. So then I went to, work later in what they call (?). You know, these things you see in the ceilings and stores that, uh, helps fire, when there's a fire. I helped to make those. And every time I go in any of the stores here I look at those things that we used to make.

DALLETT: Were you paid for your work as a little girl?

NORRIS: Oh yes, I had to give my envelope over to my aunt all the time. I was never allowed to open my envelope. No. Never, never, never. She would give me maybe shilling, and, uh sixpence. That would be your spending money for the week if you went out. We didn't go out very much. Oh, I had a bicycle. I used to go out on my bicycle.

DALLETT: No schools though, for an eleven year old girl?

NORRIS: No. Should have never let children come out that early. I was only in the sixth grade when I passed the examination. So I tell my boy this, uh, Judd, "You get married, you got brains." (She laughs.) 'Cause when I passed the examination, I made it, you know, first class, and was allowed to leave. I shouldn't have passed it and then I wouldn't have had to go out of school. I could have stayed 'til I was twelve or thirteen . But I was eleven and a half when I left school. But I'm none the worst for it. My children have all been good to me and, uh, I helped out and, because, that's what helps you. And you have a nice family, and you get along. And none of my children were allowed to swear or curse or anything like that. No, they were raised, raised right.

DALLETT: And when did you become a citizen?

NORRIS: Oh, my citizenship papers are in there. Bring them Willie, please.

DALLETT: What year was that, that you, uh--

NORRIS: I would be 19-, that I think is 1920.

DALLETT: And what kind of process did you have to go through to become a citizen?

NORRIS: I, I didn't. I was in bed with my boy that was killed. That was 1920. Because the night he was born was October the 13th. And my husband had gone down to see about the papers, and we got them in February. They gave them to us in February. So that was from October to February we had to wait for the papers coming through. And my name was on there but this was the funny part about it. I go on to England, on the boat, Queen Mary, and my husband was with me, so they asked if we were citizens and we showed them the papers, yes, we were citizens, you always had to carry them with you when you go to England. They're very strict on that kind of stuff. So they looked at me and they said, "You're not an American citizen." And I got a little bit huffed about it and said, "sure am, it's right on the papers here." That doesn't make any difference, your a British subject." "In fact," he said, "You can get the pension, you can get anything that the British have, can have, you can have." I said, "No I can't, I'm still an American." And I insist, insisted, you know. So, they didn't put no, they put a label on my husband. Everywhere he went, he had to let them know that he was in that town. They don't do that anymore, but they did then. So, he had his name and I didn't have to have any, he kind of got mad about it. "Not fair," he said, "You don't have to stop every time we go anywhere." But they still think I'm an American citizen, uh, English subject when I go over there.

DALLETT; Did that make a difference to you, uh, becoming a citizen?

NORRIS: Yes it does because I tell them every time they do it, you know, say, I'll say, "I'm not, I'm American." "Oh no you're not, you're a British subject." So it, the papers that I had didn't mean anything. You know why? They passed a law in

America, that every wife had to have their own citizenship. And I came under that, mine was twenty, 1920. And it didn't come out until 1932, I think or thirty. That the wives had to have their own citizenship papers. Before you could travel off, and that what makes it that I'm still a British subject because mine's on my American, that's a strange thing.

DALLETT: Do you have an original papers, any ship tickets, uh, uh, you said you had citizenship papers?

NORRIS: I have my citizenship papers.

DALLETT: Any photos from that time period or visas, anything like that? Anything you might have brought with you, when you first came, or when your husband--

NORRIS: No, but I brought plenty back with me. (She laughs.) Vases and things I got for all the children, you know, different things, and, oh, I will say--

DALLETT: Nothing, nothing that you originally brought?

NORRIS: I will say that England has got the nice, you know, cups and saucers and silverware, and I will give them credit for that. I went to Harrod's in London. I never saw such a store, it's beautiful. Dot has a couple of pieces here that, uh, uh, come from England. My little purple one, that's in there, it's, uh, I went to the warehouse and saw that made, you know what I mean, what's it called?

DALLETT: Wedgewood?

NORRIS: Wedgewood. I've got one small piece in the cupboard, there.

DALLETT: But nothing that you would have brought over with you when you first

came? Anything that you would have brought from home on that trip? Anything like that?

NORRIS: Huh?

DALLETT: You can say.

BACKGROUND VOICE: She has, uh, cards that came from England. She also has a picture of her at eighteen, yeah.

DALLETT: Ah, photographs. Good.

NORRIS: Oh, when I was eighteen. It's on the table in there.

DALLETT: Cards, playing cards?

NORRIS: Oh, my cards, that my husband sent me. Oh you'd love to see them. Get them, Dot.

DALLETT: Postcards.

NORRIS: Dot, they're on the table in there. Bring them, will you.

DALLETT: Okay, I think I've asked you everything I need to.

NORRIS: He sent me a birthday card that you'll have to read. And my, uh, another card he sent me. Sent me three while I was gone from April to February.

DALLETT: Oh, you have those. Oh, that's nice, wonderful.

Wonderful.

NORRIS: Oh I have them. Just like new and they're seventy-one years old.

DALLETT: Wonderful.

NORRIS: I've got a lot of pictures that are really old. I got my picture when I'm eighteen in England.

DALLETT: Ah, terrific. I'd like to see those.

NORRIS: The clothes I wore. It shows you the nice clothes I wore. Oh, I had nice clothes.

DALLETT: How were the clothes? Tell me about the style. Of the clothes then.

NORRIS: About the same.

DALLETT: About the same?

NORRIS: About the same. Would you say Abbey and Tom had about the same clothes that we had? (Addressing her daughter.)

DALLETT: I mean the ones you had when you were first coming over as a young girl. Did you have high shoes?

NORRIS: Yeah, my clothes were very, very beautiful. I had a beautiful, I

had a purple hat, it was like a velvet hat. And it had little rabbit tails. Three ways on the hat. And my aunt, coming from East Pittsburgh going up to Wilmerding to see if she could find me saw that hat in the streetcar and thought it was something strange, you know. It was a beautiful hat. Then I had a beautiful, what do you call those coats? Like a wool, they use them here.

DALLETT: A Chesterfield?

NORRIS: Chesterfield. And it was real good material and that kept me nice and warm and I had nice clothes.

DALLETT: What kind of shoes would you have been wearing?

NORRIS: Just lace.

DALLETT: Laceups?

NORRIS: Laceups. No, mine were button up. Up to about here (she points above ankles and laughs). Buttons, you know, we had to have button hooks to fasten them. And I had a pair of them when I landed so I guess they thought that was funny.

DALLETT: So when you first landed here, did you find that the fashions were the same or--

NORRIS: Well, no the shoes were different. I couldn't get over it at first. People wearing such low shoes, you know. Because I had been used to theses high button ups, you know. And a lot of things puzzled me first, when I first came. It took me a while to get used to the ways. They didn't wear hats much here like we did at home. Every

time we went out we had a hat on, you know. And, uh, I found out that the clothes were a little different than what we were used to wearing. Because we had good clothes over there. That's one thing England does have.

DALLETT: Did you want to discard your clothes so you wouldn't look different or were you happy to just--

NORRIS: No. I wore them all because they were all very, very beautiful. I liked them.

DALLETT: So you didn't feel you had to fit in, or anything like that.

NORRIS: No. You don't have to buy anything. I didn't have any money then. We sent the money back to England for him to come. So I had to do with what I had and be satisfied because she had three children to keep, four children.

DALLETT: Some people talked about how they, they felt funny about wearing clothes that were so different than what they were wearing here.

NORRIS: Well they were different, I'll grant you that. Dresses were different and, uh, aprons, we used to wear aprons all the time, fastened in the back. If we were doing anything at home. But, uh, everything like that was changed when I got here, but I got used to it. It doesn't take you long. But I still would like to go back, I mean to visit, to see these, my husband's people. Because mine are all gone now. I've got not one person over there. My only relative died last summer, was it in the summer he must have died? He was up, and, uh, retired, he was in the army, and he was retired. And he had got up this morning and wanted a cup of tea so his wife

got up and I've got a picture of him with his big dog. And, uh, he wanted a cup of tea, so, he got out of his chair to get the tea from his wife when she brought it in from the kitchen, fell in her arms and died. Heart attack. That was my only relative. I was very heart sick about that. And we had stayed with him when we were there. We stayed for about three weeks with them. They lived in Blackpool on the beach. That was a nice place.

DALLETT: Do you visit your sons now, you have sons in California, did you mention?

NORRIS: I haven't been there now, it's, it's almost two years now. San Diego. I went to Lloyd's, I went to Bill's and Laverne. Laverne lives in, uh, near Hot Springs, near Palm Springs. Her home is in Hot Springs right next to Palm Springs. And she does nothing but hardly plays golf all the time and does a bit of real estate in between. But she plays golf and he plays golf and her husband's the golfer. She's just got golf ball, they got clubs for their birthday last January, so now she's going to start. Oh, and then I have my oldest boy in Belaire, Baltimore. I talked to him yesterday. They call me. They get on the phone. But I don't want to fly again, the, uh, my son Bill asked me just the other week, he said, "Mother I'm thinking about something." I said, "Not me, I'm not going to fly no more. Bill, just forget everything." And I think he wants to go and see, we had my granddaughter here. When was Barbara here? About three weeks ago? She lives near Denver, Colorado. And it's all ice and snow there. Well it seems, uh, they must have got their heads together and they were thinking about me going out and seeing her. Not me. I will not fly again, no.

DALLETT: Okay, I think I've asked you everything I need to. Unless there is anything you want to add?

NORRIS: Nothing, that's about all.

DALLETT: And I want to thank you very much.

NORRIS: It, uh, it was very surprising when I got this write up from my son, you know, from Baltimore. Me getting in the papers the AARP. I belonged to that for years. I got nice kids.

DALLETT: That's the end of side two. And the end of Interview Number 117 with Florence Norris and it's 4:30.