NPS-111
EMMA CORCORAN
BIRTH DATE: UNKNOWN
INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 23, 1978
RUNNING TIME:
INTERVIEWER: HARVEY DIXON
RECORDING ENGINEER: UNKNOWN
INTERVIEW LOCATION: SYRACUSE, NY
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: C. KEYLOR, C. LEMONICK
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HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Mrs. Corcoran was an office employee at Ellis Island from 1904 to1916.

DIXON: Today is September 23, 1978. My name is Harvey Dixon and I am speaking with Mrs. Emma Corcoran who worked at Ellis Island from 1904 until 1916. Mrs. Corcoran, tell us about you first experiences at Ellis Island. What do you remember first?

CORCORAN: Well. The – the first thing I did there, of course, was in the Statistical Division. I was appointed to work there after trying a Civil Service examination and so forth. And they -- we typed index cards from the ships' manifest of all the arrivals and so forth. Well, I just did that for a couple of years and then I was transferred to the Chief's Office, the Chief of Statistical, and then several -- couple of years later I was transferred to the Executive Office, and there I was assigned to help the Assistant Commissioner. And, of course, from the very first I just loved it. It was a beautiful location, ideal place to work, and very interesting.

DIXON: In the Statistical Branch, what did you type the cards for?

CORCORAN: Oh, they in – in – to secure a – to become a citizen of the United States, an alien had to show hat he had been legally admitted to the United States. And they – they -- we called them Verifications of Landing and they were one of the big jobs there because every day we got dozens of applications from people all over the United States who wanted to carry their intention to become a citizen. And they had to have Verification of Landing. And the File Department would look them up and put the information and letter and the girls that worked there would-- would answer them at their leisure without dictation, just a routine answer showing the landing of the alien and the admission. And, of course, like there are now, people try -- there are always people trying to slip across the border and sailors deserting their ships and things like that. And they, of course, couldn't get a Verification of Landing and I don't know what they would do eventually. I guess they never became citizens, perhaps.

DIXON: These were mailed out to people.

CORCORAN: To the people who requested them.

DIXON: Had already come in.

CORCORAN: In fact, it was called the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization and I think -- I don't know whether it still is or not. Is it? It was. Oh, I remember those ships' manifests. They were so wide. About thirty questions, I think, on them. And I remember my eyes getting so terribly tired, turning from side to side, but I did—I didn't do that very long, just a couple of years.

DIXON: So you got a ships' manifest and you typed your card from that because someone sent a letter asking for that information?

CORCORAN: You see, what we put on the cards was sufficient information for the Verification of Landing. We put the name of the immigrant, his age, his occupation, his race, his nationality, the name of the ship on which he arrived, and the date of arrival. And that is what he needed to become a citizen. And so that – and then we had a -- looking back to when the records were all destroyed, of course, I miss new Ellis Island. We had a wonderful vault, a great big vault, and it was fireproof and all the cards were filed in there.

DIXON: Where was the vault located?

CORCORAN: It was right on the first floor. The Statistical Division was on the first floor and the vault was right adjacent to it, right next to it.

DIXON: And who was your supervisor when you worked there?

CORCORAN: At that time it was an Immigrant Inspector named William Junker J-U-N-K-E-R. He was in charge. And then I was put in his office and one of the things I never hear mentioned about it is they -- there was a head tax on immigrants. Do you know about that? Oh, don't you? Well, I'm – it's just –I'm just a little bit hazy about the amount, but I used to make out the head tax bills. As – as each day we sent the steamship companies bills for the immigrants who had arrived and it seems to me it was eight dollars a piece, but I am not sure. I wouldn't want to go say that. Unless you could verify somewhere. I don't know whether you could, but there was a head tax.

DIXON: So when an immigrant got off the boat and came to Ellis you billed the steamship company for bringing them over?

ORCORAN: Yes, and we billed -- well, and for his ca—his food and – and for, I don't – I don't know why it – why there was a tax. But I guess the -- I often wondered if Ellis Island was self-supporting, but I don't believe it was. They must have had an appropriation for it. I don't really know about that. I maybe I ought not to mention it, but I – I know that we -- every day that we had those bills for the steamship company. Of course, I was wondering if you know if anyone has ever told you about this. I was -- made a few notes about things you might be interested in and one of them was the procedure from quarantine. Would you like to hear that?

DIXON: Yes.

CORCORAN: Well, you see, what -- at that time, the Immigrant Inspector and the Customs Inspector went down the Harbor in a government tug. They had -- the government had tugboats in New York Harbor and they went down the Harbor to quarantine which was on an island just outside of the Narrows there. I think, I've forgotten – I think it was called Cathlin Island [ph] and they boarded the ship by rope ladders because the ship didn't dock there. They just-- . And they – they went on board and they examined cabin passengers while the ship was in route to its pier. And they were th—they were then disposed of at the pier, they didn't have to go to Ellis Island. And, of course, some immigrants had enough money to come second cabin, you know, and they were really immigrants just the same.

Then the steerage passengers were kept on board ship until the Island was ready to take them, and as we have heard so much, and some days there were five or ten thousand people on board and they had -- it took a lot of managing, I imagine. Of course, I had nothing to do with that, but they brought them over on barges to the Island and then they marched in the – in the building and the picture that I have there, that's the entrance to the -- of the immigrants. Of course, there were several entrances to the building, but that was the main entrance the immigrants in that. And then they went up the stairway to the second floor, it was where the examination took place. And there were doctors – there were doctors who were looking for eye trouble and for physical defects, and illness --you know, lack of good health and things like that. And if they had any of that, they'd chalk mark the immigrants and they were put aside in a room to be examined later in more detail.

And then the immigrants were sent and --I know you know what the main floor was like. It had these aisles. Oh, didn't you? Well, it was divided into sort of aisles and they were benches along the side and at the end of each one of these was an Immigrant Inspector, an interpreter and so forth. Well, just having an Immigrant Inspector and interpreter. And they had the ships' manifest in from of them and they checked the answers. They asked the immigrant his name and his occupation and who paid his passage was the main question. And how much money he had, and he had to show what he had. And his race. Of course we -- race and nationality were kept very distinct, like there could be a German from Russia for instance and things like that, you know. And they kept statistics separately for that.

And then his destination, and – and if -- a loaded question, if he had a job waiting for him. And that wasn't good if he did, because the contract labor law was quite strict about that. And I think that generally all the information on the ships' manifest was checked by the Immigrant Inspector and then he decided —and what I want to say here, if there was -- the doctors, if they found a defect, issued a medical certificate, we used to call i. And if there was a medical certificate, it was pretty certain that the Inspector would hold the immigrant, you know, for further examination. So then there were three things that happened to the immigrant. He was either admitted, he was temporarily detained, or he was held for special inquiry. And the admitted ones, I

presume, went right on because I didn't actually see that inspection. I saw it sometimes from the gallery or something, but I mean that – that I know is what the procedure was.

Well, if they were going to New York or vicinity, they were usually temporarily detained because – they -- and then the telegram was sent to the relative. And most very frequently if the hell was -- they didn't have any money, they can't --. You wouldn't believe how many arrive without a bit of money, and depending on their relatives here, you know, to help them. Well, if they were temporarily detained, they were put in a certain room and if a rela—and then another thing there is the missionaries helped them an awful lot. The missionaries helped them to communicate with their relatives and see that they get together, you know -- that kind of thing.

And that was the temporary--well, if they were held for special inquiry. They had several boards that – that could -- of very special inquiry, consisted of three Inspectors, an Interpreter, and a secretary. And on various occasions, I acted as secretary. That is when the immigration was so terrifically heavy, they would have to make it new – as extra boards and on some occasions, I did -- acted as that. It was very interesting. And it was almost like a trial, you know. They – they could -- their relatives could appear. And the Inspectors asked them -- and, of course, they – they checked on the physical defect and things like that and how – how it affected the alien's ability to earn a living. And that was the criterion. Whether it was so serious, you know. And then, of course, the board either admitted them or ordered them deported. Either one or the other. So I think that about covers that.

DIXON: The boards, were the men, the Inspectors, doctors on the board?

CORCORAN: No, they were Immigrant Inspectors. That was a – I don't -- It was a regular Civil Service position. It wasn't a – it wasn't technical. I mean I don't know what the requirements were to become the Inspector, but they just tried as a regular Civil Service. Almost like a higher class clerk. You know, something of that kind. I don't really know that -- they graded it as First Grade Civil Service. At that time I think the immigrant inspectors got about eighteen hundred a year which was considered awfully good pay in 1904. Is there anything else you would like to ask me?

DIXON: Right, the medical inspectors, they were doctors?

CORCORAN: They were doctors.

DIXON: Did you know any of the doctors or remember any of the doctors or remember any of the names?

CORCORAN: Yes. Doctor Stoner, Doctor George W. Stoner I think his name was, was the Chief Medical Officer at that time. And, oh dear, I knew – I knew some number of the other doctors at different times. Dr. Thornton was one, Dr. Largwin. I can't -- those are the only two names I can think of for the moment. I presume that they have passed away though. I

know Dr. Thornton has and I know Dr. Largwin has, right? -- And Dr. Stoner was an older man so he must have passed away along time ago. Well.

DIXON: And you worked on the special inquiry boards but you were still permanently assigned to the Statistical Branch?

CORCORAN: No. Oh, no. I – I had been tr– I was transferred from the Statistical Division to the Executive Offices. I think it was – I'm not sure, but I think it was about 1909 when I started to work for Mr. Ewell. And Mr. Ewell was the assistant, Byron H. Ewell was the Assistant Commissioner then and he later (after I left Ellis Island) I think he became Commissioner for a number of years. He was a very nice man, fine man, wonderful to work for. Well, I worked for him and I also was supposed to help out if the Commissioner needed. I had a buzzer on my desk from the Commissioner's office and a bell from Mr. Ewell's and I -- either one.

Of course, we --there was a lot of--they were a great many people there. You know, there were about 500 employees then. And Mr. Ewell, that was one of his two-- jobs. He was head of the Personnel and I had to keep Personnel records and they tried to rate them, you know, the employees their [not understood]. Well, then, of course, if the immigrants were excluded. Unless it was a mandatory thing, they had the right of appeal to Washington and the appeals were all heard by Mr. Ewell. That was his regular job. And the immigrants were brought up with an interpreter. Each day there was a group of immigrants outside Mr. Ewell's office and they were brought in and he interviewed them. And I sat there and listened to all this so I heard -- I saw a lot of immigrants that way. And there were some very -- there were very sad cases, of course, and there were -- one of the saddest things was a family would arrive and maybe one child would be feeble-minded and they -- that was a mandatory exclusion.

DIXON: For the whole family.

CORCORAN: Well, they – the family wouldn't want to--unless once in a while they would have a relative maybe or someone on the other side that the child would go back, but generally the whole family went back. Of course, I believe that the steamship companies made an effort not to bring people like that. I think they did examine them on the other side. At least we thought they did. But they – they probably took chances, you know, that the person would get through. And, of course, there were other mandatory things like a contagious disease, dangerous contagious disease or a loathsome contagious disease or insanity, feeble-mindedness. Well, those were the, I think the principal mandatory exclusions.

The – the other – the other things they could appeal, like another class excluded was anyone convicted of committing a crime involving moral turpitude. Well, of course, that was open to discussion, you know. In-- incidentally, I noted down here three appeal cases you might--that I thought might be a little bit interesting. For one thing, President Taft was there for one and I was -- happened to be lucky enough to be selected to take the dictation, so I was in the office with him, how he had these

cases brought in. And at that time William Williams was the Commissioner. He was the Commissioner when I first went there. He was a very high-type man. You know about him. Heavens, you know about him. He was a -- an attorney and they said he had--one of his ancestors had signed the Declaration of Independence, and he had acted as Counsel for the United States at treaties and things like that, you know. He was a very unusual man, and he really kept -- he was very particular about everything, very strict. Well, he was – he was the Commissioner.

Well, the ca—the case that was brought before Mr. Taft was that of a – of a family, a Welsh family -- of a man and wife and ten children and they were pretty fine looking people too. They are fine people, of course. And I remember Mr. Taft, oh, he was a huge man, and he sat there laughing and nodding his head and the other thing I noticed that he said was he asked them if they sang. Because, you know, Welsh people are supposed to be singers. But I don't recall that they said. I think they were too petrified to say anything. They we—that's the way the immigrants were usually. Well anyway, the only vacation I received was I recommended admission of this fine appearing Welsh family and they went to Washington with that notation and they were admitted, I know. And then we had one of those English Suffragettes there.

Do you remember when they--well, you don't remember, it would be long before your time. But they – they locked themselves to the fence at Downing Street, I think, in England, and oh they were very militant over there at that time, as you know. And one of them arrived and she was detained, but I think she was – I don't re-- I couldn't say positively, but I am pretty sure she was admitted because you could hardly call that moral turpitude. I wouldn't at least. And then, let's see who --.

And there was a South American dictator that came. His name was Cyprian C-I-P-R-I-A-N-O Castro, and he had -- became from this -- one of the smaller South American countries. I think it was Venezuela, as I remember it. And he -- with a lot of funds and things that didn't belong to him. And I suppose he had gone to Europe. But anyway, he was arriving in New York and wanted to be admitted to the United States and he was held for special inquiry. And I regret that I don't remember whether he was admitted or returned or deported, but anyway it was interesting case.

Well then I – I never here told this, say to anybody. My friend, he says, "Why don't you mention that?" -- Mr. Fiorello La Guardia was a fellow employee of mine. He worked at Ellis Island for several years and I knew him quite well. He was an interpreter. He spoke several languages and then subsequently he was promoted to an Immigrant Inspector because interpreters didn't get quite so much pay. As I remember they got about fourteen hundred a year at that time. And he was a – he became a – he was very dynamic, interesting person. A ve—sma—little, slight and just bubbling with energy and animation. And then another thing that happened (and this was, of course, before planes were very common). Curtiss flew from Albany to the Statue of Liberty and we were all agog and watching for him, and that was one of the epic early flights. A non-stop flight from Albany to the Statue of Liberty.

DIXON: Who was the gentleman who did it?

CORCORAN: Glenn Curtiss. And he afterward became a famous aviator. But you see these things all happened before the First World War and planes weren't too much in those days, you know, it was quite a thing to do that. Let me see. Well, of course, I really had because I meet more of those lovely peop-- well you don't have because there aren't any more of those awfully big ships coming in. They were beautiful. I loved those ships. And we got so we knew, goodness, when they came up the Harbor we knew what line they belonged to and the name of the ship because you get so familiar with them. And one thing -- interesting thing I did one time. I had guests from out of town they always wanted to go on board a ship.

And one friend – one dear friend came down and I took her on board the Lusitania and she and I saw the Lusitania from top to bottom. We got a sailor and he took us even down to the engine room, showed us the beautiful suites. Oh, gorgeous ship, it was. So that -- and I – I was -- was on quite a few other ships, different times, of course, and I loved it and I think it's just a pity that we don't have those, but I guess planes are simpler, aren't they. Personally, I always wanted to go to Europe on a ship but I never did. I am sorry. And, let's see, I told you about the missionaries.

They did a lot of good. They helped a lot. The Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society was one of the principal ones. That was their official name. And there was a Catholic organization. They had a home facing Bowling Green, one of those old-fashioned houses there and they had a chapel there and they took care of theirs. And there were other churches represented there. There were quite a few missionaries. And then we used to look forward to this. Do you ever have experience with Sicogs [ph] nowadays? We used to go down there and that was one of the things. We'd do it -- the tide would be so heavy that our little Ellis Island boat wouldn't go out so we would wander up to Nassau Street, to Francis Tavern and so forth, or else we would go to the Aquarium over there. And I have just learned now that that is still there, isn't it. I had someone told me a number of years ago that that had been torn down. Oh, that was so historic because at Castle Garden, they called it, in there --and Jenny Lind sang there and that was when I worked at Ellis Island. That was lovely. It was a wonderful Aquarium.

DIXON: Right. It's no longer an Aquarium.

CORCORAN: Oh, and we used to go there and there was a big, big tank right in the center with porpoises in it. Oh, we used to love to look at them. That was what we did when we missed the boat because if we missed the boat we had to wait a whole hour for another one. The boat left nine or ten – nine, ten and so forth. We took the nine o'clock boat usually. Well, once and more occasions, the [not understood] wouldn't last and so at noon they let us go home. So that was one of the experiences there. And I used to love the sunsets. At this time of year, in October, you see, we would be going across just when the sun is setting and it was really beautiful and I really – I loved that. We didn't see them at any other time of year but – and because everything would be too late, you

know. But when we went across, we took the 4:40 boat and it would just be as the sun was setting. It was a very lovely view. I really loved Ellis Island.

DIXON: The gentleman in the photograph you mentioned.

CORCORAN: [not understood] Mr. Sherman was our Chief Clerk and his office was just outside the Commissioner's office and I think he handled probably routine details for the Commissioner because it was right next to it. And his sec-- -- the girl who worked for him who is one of my dear friends also did the Commissioner's work. She worked for Mr. Sherman and Mr. Williams I remember in particular. And he was a very – a man who was very interested in a great many things including photography and whenever there were unusu-- unusually attractive or different immigrants, they called on Mr. Sherman to take their pictures and he did. He did some very fine work I think. I remember him very well.

DIXON: His secretary's name, do you remember her?

CORCORAN: Her name was Katherine Clark and she is dead. She died. She and I were very dear friends and we were married on the same day and she died in childbirth about four years after her—after -- we both left Ellis Island the same, we both retired. And she had – she died – she died in 1921 and she was one of my very dear friends. She is in one of those pictures, in a couple of them. And, anyhow. Would you like to know the names of any other? I knew the names of a lot of people. The only thing I -- one I can't remember in that group picture was the Superintendent. There was a Superintendent and do you suppose I can remember his name. He is the only one I can't remember. I never worked for him or anything, but his office was among the executive offices and he was the Superintendent. I suppose the mait-- more the maintenance kind. Well, I don't know if I can tell you anything else.

DIXON: When you weren't working on Ellis, what did you do? I mean you mentioned you went to lunch places. Where did you--

CORCORAN: Oh, well -- we had great time with our lunch business. We -- In the summer they fixed – they had table and chairs on the roof and we used to go up there and eat and then in the winter – and then there was this -- there was a restaurant, you know, an employees restaurant. And that was one of their dishes. And it was -- the name was Hedgens and Duma [ph] and I think they were a well-known firm at that time. Cater-- restaurant people, I don’t know that they were caterers. But they had the contract for doing – for feeding the immigrants and they had a very nice restaurant. It was very nice. Well, then they --at one time I was at -- they wanted to know why several of us in the Executive Office – Executive Office didn't go to the dining room anymore.

So they called me in to ask me and they never got over teasing me about it. I said, "We have things we like better." And they wanted to know what they were, and “Oh,” I said, "Peanut butter and marmalade." Mr. Brown, his name was, he was an assistant to Mr.Ewell, and he got such a kick out of that. Great taste in lunches, peanut butter and marmalade. But we used to make tea and we had quite a nice system. Each girl would

put in a dollar and then each girl would take a week and bring the food each day and when the dollar was gone we each put in another, and when the money was gone we would out in another dollar. And we really loved what we had, and when I look back and think, the most delicious boiled ham we used to get at a delicatessen. I can still remember how much it was, thirty-five cents a pound.

Those were the days. But, of course, people didn't have money in those days. In those days, any working man -- well, they felt when I got--up here, my friends -- up here -- thought when I got the job at nine hundred a year at Ellis Island, I was practically a millionaire, you know. Because in fact I had been earning seven dollars a week here and nine hundred a year figured out about seventeen dollars a week, and of course, I had some (?). But then things were fantastically cheap -- like rooms in boarding houses and things like that. I lived with a private family in the beginning and it was – it was really--I don't know how they did it because I – I -- . Since I have been married and having bought food myself and so forth, I never knew anytime when I could afford such meals at the price they did. The food must have been much cheaper then.

Of course, I loved New York. If you care to bother reading my autobiogra– my –agriphy there, you will find what I thought about it. And that – I -- about twenty-five years ago, when I first came back to Syracuse, I took a course--I started a course at Syracuse University in magazine writing? And the first thing we had to do was write a biographical sketch, and to my surprise the next time the class met the teacher said, "You never know where you find gold." and he was so pleased with my -- because of course, it was unusual that I had had all that experience and I was older than anybody else. They were all post-graduate students, you know, and young people, and in fact after a while I became embarrassed by my age and then I was only seventy and I dropped out. And it was too difficult for me to get back and forth to classes. I didn't have a car and in Syracuse if you don't have a car, you are just lost. You can't get around here.

DIXON: The food the immigrants were served, you said it was their native dishes?

CORCORAN: Yes. They had things that we would – like even for breakfast they had sausages and, you know, things like they did eat. And then you – oh, It was – it was really pathetic to see them arriving with all their – their early -- earthly goods in a big bundle, a round bundle in the cloth, you know. You'd see a frying pan handle maybe. It was probably all they had in the world. And then, of course, I didn't tell you about the railroad room. Oh, that was a bedlam there. I know someone asked me once if it was awfully noisy at Ellis Island and I didn't think it was because the examination floor was not noisy because the people were all petrified. They were waiting to go through this awful ordeal and they weren't talking.

But after they were admitted, if they were going beyond New York City if they're going away, they were taken to the railroad room and down there was a telegraph office, there was money exchange, ticket offices for every railroad in the United States and everything there, and that

room would be just seething with people with big bundles and then they would do all their business. They would get their money exchanged and their tickets and everything and they would have a label pinned on them where they were going and then they were put on board the barges again and taken up to the Jersey side because most of the trains that they went on left from Jersey, you know, that side of the Hudson River. And they went up there and they were shipped west and I guess they all got there finally. They seemed to. But I don't think -- I don't ever remember hearing about an immigrant that got lost en-route.

DIXON: Right, we were talking about the explosion at Black Tom's wharf in 1916, I think occurred.

CORCORAN: Was that in 1916? Well, I -- I lived on a -- two blocks from the Narrows. I was married then, I was no longer at Ellis Island, but I -- we heard the explosion. Of course, we were startled and wondered what it could be and so forth, but it didn't affect us in any way. I lived in Brooklyn at that time and I lived on Bay Ridge Avenue. It was about two blocks from the Narrows and, in fact, most of my Brooklyn life I lived right adjacent to the Narrows. We could see the Statue of Liberty from the foot of our street. I lived on – I – we -- my husband and I owned a house on 86th Street between Fourth and the river – or -- the bay and it was a lovely place to live. I loved it there, very nice.

DIXON: When you worked at Ellis, the glass and steel canopy was up over the front of the main building? The entrance there was a glass and steel metal canopy?

CORCORAN: I don't remember it. Isn't that funny? I wouldn't be sure. Look at the pictures. That small picture. Oh, you mean like a roof. Oh, yes, that was there.

DIXON: It was there the whole time you were there?

CORCORAN: Oh, yes. This is an absolutely authentic picture, and this is -- my office is right up here. In – in that book you can see it very plainly. But this is where the immigrants went in, right here. But the offices, the executive offices, were around that corner on the second floor. Of course, that was always there.

DIXON: The immigrants, when they came in, was there ever more than you could do in a day?

CORCORAN: Oh yes, oh yes. They piled up there. I remember. In 1907, I think, it was really hectic. I think they piled up as high as 15,000 in port at one time. They couldn't take them all in one day. I think about all they took--I don't know whether they could always complete 5,000 in a day or not, but frequently they had 5,000 a day. I think more or less they did. Of course, they had wonderful organization and lots of employees and they had messengers and watchmen who piloted the immigrants around and saw that they got where they belonged, you know, like missin'. If they were detained or if they were held for the boards or anything like that.

DIXON: Do you remember, how were the immigrants? Did they seem happy? You said they were frightened. I mean were they treated well?

CORCORAN: Well, yes, I think--I don't think they were ever abused or any--. Sometimes the guard would yell at them because they were the guards had a --. Of course, most of the guards had a -- learned a few set phrases so that they could talk to them. But I – oh, I don't – I don't think they were ever abused. I -- not in my time at least, not while I was there. I believe that I have read somewhere that one time they did, but when William Williams took over, he sort of put the place on a different basis and I think that they were always pretty nice to the immigrants.

Of course, they were-- what was that first thing you asked me about? If -- whether they were unhappy. They were worried, awfully worried until they were eith — until they were admitted and, of course, if they were held, they were unhappy. Yes, they would – they'd cry and, you know, feel very bad. Especially if they had a child that couldn't be admitted and things like that. They would be unhappy then. There was a lot of unhappiness in that way and, of course, those that were sent back were very sad.

DIXON: How were they actually sent back? I mean what did they do?

CORCORAN: They say -- were excluded by the law.

DIXON: Right, but I mean what was the process they were sent on?

CORCORAN: Oh, they were taken over to the ship that they came on or at least a ship of the company they came on and put aboard the ship and they were re-tu-- taken to Europe and they – they were --- had to be returned to the village whence they came, and some of them came way inland, you know, little villages. There were many tragedies when you think of it. And think of what courage it must have taken. Can you imagine starting out with ten children and no money or maybe twenty-five dollars or something like that, and arriving in a place where you couldn't speak the language, you couldn't understand the word that was said and just in the hands of the enemy (laughs), so to speak. And I guess I think it must have taken a lot of courage and it was very sad when they had to go back, very sad. Everybody felt sorry when they had to. You know, people there did too because -- but the law was the law. And they had to --.

DIXON: Well, you mentioned that you ate lunch on the roof. Was there a children's playground for the immigrant children on the roof?

CORCORAN: Not in my time there wasn't a children's playground. Not in my time. There was -- they used to sit in the wai-- they had waiting rooms they called them and they s-- the parents sat in the waiting rooms and the children just played around on the floor like they would anywhere, you know. I never recall -- I don't recall any real playroom there in my time. Of course, in that time the immigration was so heavy, I don't think they could have had anything like that. Of course, I believe I read – I read on a couple of books on immigration, that one

Strangers of the Gate and so forth. They said that, I think, some of the later people—(bell rings) [long pause].

DIXON: Do you remember any special construction that went on at Ellis Island while you were there? To the building or--

CORCORAN: Oh, yes. That railroad room was added while I was there. That was on the back of the building, sort of, you know, where the entrance is, where the immigrants went in, it was back of that and back of the entrance of the Statistical Division too. That was built there. Oh, then they built hospitals. In fact, they made two new islands, I think, because I think there were three hospital islands, aren't they, three? Two or thee, I don't know which. You see, the main island and then there was one island, a hospital island, and then they built, there was another.

I'm – I'm not sure whether there are two or three hospital islands because they kept different ca-- cases. For instance, I remember one time when the Holland America ship came in with about a hundred cases of measles on it and they – they put those children, they had a hospital for that kind of thing. And then the people that had trachoma, (by the way, that's spelled T-R-A-C-H-O-M-A) they had a special hospital for those people, that had that kind of disease, you know. And then they had, I think for regular hospital care, because they were all taken care of when they -- If they were sick they were taken care of.

DIXON: Is there anything else you want to add? I mean any memory of people, of special immigrants or special people you met.

CORCORAN: Well, I don't ---

DIXON: Well, we appreciate very much talking with you. We enjoyed.

CORCORAN: What?

DIXON: It was nice talking to you.

CORCORAN: Well. did I give you any information that you didn't have?

DIXON: Right, you gave us a lot of very useful information.

CORCORAN: I was afraid you might, you know, I didn't want your trip to be in vain.

DIXON: It was very useful, very nice.

CORCORAN: And I was hoping that I could be, you know.

DIXON: Thank you very much.