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Interview with Mrs. Frances Vahey, Irish immigrant, at her home in Greenville, Delaware, April 27, 1972, by Michael Fahey.

Q I'm interviewing Mrs. Frances Vahey on April 27, 1972 in her home. Tell me, Mrs. Vahey, where were you born in Ireland and what was your maiden name?

A My maiden name was Frances Haggarty and I was born in County Donegal.

Q O.K. Who were your parents and what did they do? Was everyone in your family from Donegal?

A Right. And they were farmers. I was born and raised on a farm, and I came to the United States on October 6, 1929.

Q Were you in a large family?

A Yes, there was nine of us.

Q And where you in that group--oldest, youngest?

A I was the third oldest.

Q Did the others come?

A My sister was here ahead of me, the oldest of the family was here four years ahead of me.

Q All right. Tell me, did you go to school in Ireland?

A Yes. I went to the eighth grade, finished the eighth grade and that was it. I came here when I was 17 years old.

Q Right after school.

A Right after school.

Q O.K. Do you know how you came--of course--how did you come, that's how I want to put it. How did you come over?

A I came over by boat, a boat called the Transylvania, which was sunk during the war, during World War II. And I came to New York and then I came from New York to Wilmington and I've been in Wilmington ever since.

Q Why did you leave right after school?

A Well, I just took a look around and seen that there wasn't anything over there for me to do, so I thought in order to make a living, well, this is where I wanted to go.

Q Were you in the city of Donegal, or what city?

A No, it was in a little town, a little village.

Q It was all farming?

A It was all farming.

Q And that didn't appeal to you--or it just wasn't enough of it.

A No. There just wasn't any industries or anyplace where I could get the kind of work that I would want to do, that would be worthwhile doing, that is.

Q When did your sister come over?

A My sister came here in 1926.

Q And what was she doing?

A Well, she did domestic work.

Q All right. What had she written to you? I mean, was she one of the reasons why you came?

A She was, yes. I did work in Dublin for about a year before I came over here. But it wasn't what I wanted to do.

Q Do you remember what she was telling you it would be like in America? Did it sound better?

A Yes. She made it sound very attractive and there were a lot of young people leaving Ireland at the time, and coming over here. In fact most all the young people in Ireland at that time were immigrating from Ireland to some part of the world.

Q Do you know how much you saved to come over?

A Well, my sister sent for me. She sent the money that brought me over here, and I think when I arrived in New York I had about five dollars, and it was about five dollars of my own money, and just the clothes I was wearing.

Q And was your sister in New York City or down here?

A She was in Wilmington, and she met me in New York and I came to Wilmington and I went to work in Wilmington.

Q All right. Do you remember where you started working and where you lived ?

A Yes. I remember starting as a child's nurse in [sounds like Wawaset] Park.

Q Oh. In the city. And did you live there?

A And I lived there, yes. I did that--that was the only job I had until I got married. I got married in 1937.

Q Were there a lot of Irish in Wilmington at that time who'd come over?

A Yes. There were a good many Irish people in Wilmington--a lot more than there is right now.

- Q Uh huh. And where would you meet them? Would you get together?
- A Oh, we used to go to a dance and card parties and church affairs and that sort of thing.
- Q Was that St. Mary's or where?
- A Matter of fact it was St. Anthony's. At that time St. Anthony's was where all the Irish crowd met at that time.
- Q That's peculiar, isn't it.
- A Father Tucker was there then.
- Q I had heard--I mean, I know that they have a lot of things at St. Mary's; I just thought maybe that was where the Irish went. No?
- A No, that was before. . .
- Q Excuse me, not St. Mary's. Sacred Heart?
- A Well, no, the same story. That was where--I had an uncle here and in his time and his children, that's where they used to go. But that was long before my time. But when I came here we all seemed to go to St. Anthony's, a good many of the Irish people.
- Q When you came over, do you remember--there were a lot of Irish. Were there any problems in being Irish in Wilmington then?
- A Not that I can remember, no. No there weren't any problems.
- Q O.K. All right, so you got married in 1937 and in between you worked. And when did you meet your husband?
- A I guess I met Mike about 1936. But he was from the west of Ireland. He's from the County Mayo.
- Q Had you heard anything about people from the west of Ireland when you were in the north?
- A No, not very much.
- Q O.K. That's good.
- A No, I hadn't met too many people from the western [part] of Ireland, but when I lived in Dublin I had met a lot of people from County Cork.
- Q In the south?
- A Which is in the south, yes. But I came over here with the intention of staying about five years and going back to Ireland again, getting married, but that never happened.
- Q So you were coming over, what--just sort of an adventure or just for the

experience of it?

A No, I was really coming over with the intentions of working, of finding work.

Q Making some money, perhaps?

A Right.

Q When you were in Ireland, were there people you knew that had come over, made some money, and gone back?

A Oh yes. We used to call them Yankees when they'd come back from America. They'd come over and visit, but none of them ever stayed. It was just a visit and then come back to the United States again. And they had money, yes.

Q If you made--I mean, in other words, could you make what wouldn't be considered a huge amount of money here that would last you more in Ireland? In other words, would you have to save--say \$100 in American money at that time, would that. . .

A \$100 would seem like an awful lot of money in Ireland in them days. In 1929 \$100 was a lot of money. It'd last more than it does today.

[Mr. Vahey's comments will be denoted by "B."]

B It hardly meant--no, it didn't mean a lot of money.

Q O.K. All right. Thank you very much. That ought to do it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]