**Janet:** This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I'm here today in Sayville, Long Island at the Petite fleur nursing home. I'm here with James Connelly who came in 1920.

**James:** I'm pretty sure it’s that. Definite was there in that time, in 1920.

**Janet:** I think its 1920 and we think that Mr. Connelly was 20 years old. I just want to say that I'm delighted to have found you here and I look forward to whatever you remember about coming to this country. Tell me first your birthdate for the tape.

**James:** April the 24th, 1900.

**Janet:** Where in Ireland were you born?

**James:** I was born in a little town called Newry.

**Janet:** How do you spell that?

**James:** N-E-W-R-Y.

**Janet:** Newry and what part of Ireland is that?

**James:** It’s in the north. It’s right on the boarder of the south and the north. On County Louth and County Down.

**Janet:** Say the counties again?

**James:** County Down and County Louth. I think its County Louth runs next to it and I was born right on the boarder there but Newry is a border town.

**Janet:** I see, so it’s a border between County Down and County--?

**James:** And Louth, County Down. It’s right on the border there but it’s in the north.

**Janet:** What do you remember about the little town?

**James:** I don't know. I come over to Ireland over to England and I think it was 1914 or 1915, I'm not sure.

**Janet:** I see, so you left Ireland for five years or five or so years before you came to the United States.

**James:** Yes, that’s right.

**Janet:** I see. Well then first let’s talk about that time up until you were about 14 years old when you were living in the little border town.

**James:** In the north, yeah.

**Janet:** What was the town like?

**James:** It was a probably nice little town where they manufactured linen or manufactured materials for making the linen you know in the north. At that time the north was great linen place where they manufactured linens.

**Janet:** Did you work in the manufacture?

**James:** No, I was too young, I was going to school but after that about 1914 or '15 or something like that I graduate school. I have an uncle, he's an Englishman. He's married to my mother's sister so they sent me over to him and he worked in the British Wesson house in Manchester. He worked on the [unclear 00:03:26] as far as I remember so he got me to the British Wesson house.

**Janet:** But before you left when you were in school, what was school like?

**James:** It was good.

**Janet:** What do you remember when you think back to your school days?

**James:** It was good, I liked it. It was a Christian brothers’ school.

**Janet:** Christian brothers’.

**James:** Yeah, Christian brothers’ school and they had a number of different schools and I went through the different schools like more or less like the grades that you have here. Excuse me. I've got a cold this past couple of days.

**Janet:** Were you a religious family?

**James:** Yeah, very.

**Janet:** How did you observe? What did the family do?

**James:** Well, my father- his father or my grandfather, he was a builder, stone mason and thus my father was more or less brought up in that but when he was young but he went to England and he worked in England and he also went to school there in Manchester. He studied sanitation because the town that we were living in.

**Janet:** In what way?

**James:** For instance most of the houses didn't have toilets, you had the dry toilets, so they made it up to dig their own sewages in and stuff like that so he was the inspector.

**Janet:** So he learnt that in England and he brought it back to Ireland.

**James:** Yeah, he learned that in England and he came back to Ireland and of course the job, he could get it in any place in Ireland or England for that matter because sanitation was just coming in.

**Janet:** What was your father's name?

**James:** James.

**Janet:** Oh James, were you the oldest child?

**James:** Yeah, I had another brother but a little bit younger, couple of years younger.

**Janet:** What was his name?

**James:** William.

**Janet:** Talking about religion, were you a catholic family?

**James:** Catholic yeah.

**Janet:** Do you remember any catholic--

**Female:** Who is that there?

**Janet:** Mr. Connelly, James Connelly.

**Female:** Oh, Connelly, I can't see his face, okay.

**Janet:**  Do you remember like any ceremony or any religious occasions that were celebrated when you lived...?

**James:**  My hometown was mostly catholic. The majority was catholic.

**Janet:** And was the Christian a school?

**James:** The Christian brothers’ schools were all religious schools. They were all run by the Christian brothers in Ireland at that time. In fact that’s where most of the schools in Ireland were down in the southern part.

Like in the northern part you had the government or more less what they called the protestant schools. They were supported by the government but the Christian brothers were supported by the people.

**Janet:** By the church.

**James:** No, by the people in the town.

**Janet:** Who went there?

**James:** The people of the town took up. They had everything, show their range, I don't know like in different things for the Christian brothers and I don’t remember the church helped to support them too.

**Janet:** What kind of an education did you get there?

**James:** Very good.

**Janet:** Was there anything in particular that you liked about school?

**James:** I liked drawing, mathematics and stuff like that. In fact that’s what I would like to have been because when I come out span as I told you I was in Britain- no, I didn’t mention that I was in the British army when I was in England.

I was in the British army towards the end of the war, 1918 and I was still working in England, so anybody that like us that come from Ireland if we wanted to we could go back home to Ireland or we could join the British army whenever you were eligible. So I [unclear 00:08:12] the British air force.

**Janet:** I see. How did you feel about the British?

**James:** Very nice, I liked them.

**Janet:** You did.

**James:** Yeah, after the first war I would have settled. I would not have settled in England because I liked the English people because I had an English grandmother too you know.

**Janet:** Oh that’s great.

**James:** I say a lot of my people are more or less connected with the Manchester people.

**Janet:** I see, did you have grandparents in Ireland? Did you have any grandparents who lived in Ireland? Not the Manchester.

**James:** Oh yeah, father and mother and my grandmother.

**Janet:** Which grandmother was that?

**James:** My mother's mother.

**Janet:** Did you see much of her?

**James:** Yeah, I see a lot of her.

**Janet:** What kind of a lady was she?

**James:** Beautiful woman, beautiful old lady.

**Janet:** Tell me more about her.

**James:** Very religious, she was 80 years old and she used to walk on a Sunday. I said her son was a farmer you know they were farmers and instead of talking him away from the farm on a Sunday because time meant so much to him when the crops were in and they had to take the crops and to bother him on the time like that, she would walk into church about three miles.

Into the church in the town to go to mass on a Sunday. So I remember her well, we were both very close, my grandmother and I because I used to spend a lot of time in the country and I liked the country life.

**Janet:** Tell me some experiences you remember with your grandmother? When you think back about your grandmother are there any events or any occasions that come to your mind?

**James:** Not really, no.

**Janet:** Did she ever tell you stories?

[00:10:29]

**James:** You know how the English and Irish question was that time was pretty bad.

**Janet:** That’s what I was wondering about, that.

**James:** And we had pretty bad in Ireland and they were building the titanic.

**Janet:** Were you aware of that?

**James:** Yeah, in 1912 way back and I was a kid, I remember that because I remember saying to me, she said to me one time in the country. She said, "That ship will never make America." I still remember that’s the way the war at that time because of the bitterness between them- the catholic.

**Janet:** I see the English were building.

**James:** No, the catholic and the Protestants. That was strongly protestants in the north especially Belfast and it was called the orange. See when you get to know them and you have been a kid and living next door to them you never think of that and they're all nice people, all of them. I mean even [unclear 00:11:54], very nice people so I have nothing bad to say about them in any way you know.

**Janet:** So you have nothing bad to say about the Protestants and nothing bad to say about the English?

**James:** No, nothing bad to say about either. I meant to say I know the British government was pretty rough on Ireland but the people were nice and the protestants people I know a lot of them one side were really bitter, the majority of them were very nice people. We never were allowed to hold any bitterness against them.

**Janet:** You mean who wouldn't allow you?

**James:** My family would never allow us to engage in any of the troubles and my father never believed in it either.

**Janet:** Can you remember any attitudes or ideas that your mother and father tried to instill in you about people or life?

**James:** Yeah, that’s one of the things they probably instilled with us. Not to hold any bitterness or to be nasty or anything like that and when we were kids. That’s how we were brought up. Not to have any of that bigotry or self-interfere with our lives and my father was the same. Of course he was the town inspector [unclear 00:13:32], so he couldn’t' engage in anything like that.

**Janet:** Sounds like your father had a fairly high position in the town. Good position.

**James:** Yeah, it was a good position because he studied in England and he could have went to other towns. In fact he could have went to England, he was offered a couple of jobs in England in the same line of work- sanitary work but this was his home town and he would have liked to have seen it cleaned up and nice because there was enough, a lot of these farmers.

A lot of the farmers that supplied milk and stuff like that to the towns and even butter and eggs and stuff like that and it used to be in a very unsanitary condition. Well, his job was to go into the market place and if they had eggs that weren't clean, you give them a [unclear 00:14:35] or if they had milk that was watered, that they were bringing it to town. If he took samples of them, had to test it and below the level, the weak level with the water in it he would issue a [unclear 00:14:53].

Things like that he had to do or if he went to any place where they kept cows in the town which some of them did at that time. They kept cattle in the town and supplied people around with milk and if he went to a place like that where they didn't have sanitary conditions for the milk, to keep the milk he would issue [unclear 00:15:20]. That was what his job was.

**Janet:** Excellent. So was he doing that in Ireland before you left for England?

**James:** In Ireland, yes he was there. He was still on the job in Ireland when I left for England.

**Janet:** Did you ever hear about- I know one of the things that’s often said about the Irish and Ireland is this idea of mystical things [unclear 00:15:56].

**James:** Oh yeah, did they believe in this? Yeah sure.

**Janet:** Yeah, did you have anything to do with that kind of thinking when you were in Ireland?

**James:** No, I heard about them but as I say my people, they were pretty broad minded. My mother- she was a dressmaker, a good one too. She made a living out of it.

**Janet:** Did she make your clothing?

**James:** What? Yeah, she could make clothes better than any the tailors could make for me and when I was a little older I never wanted her to stop making my clothes. I didn't like the tailors. The tailors would make the pants for me way to big and stuff like that.

**Janet:** So she'd make pants?

**James:** And she would make anything.

**Janet:** Anything.

**James:** She was an artist. She was really really very good.

**Janet:** So about the mystical aspects of life, did your mother and father think that was...?

**James:** Yeah, they didn't. They didn't think too much about it.

**Janet:** They didn't think too much of it.

**James:** No.

**Janet:** So now tell me about the next phase when you were 14 or 15 and you left for England. Why was it that you went to England?

**James:** That time the war was on and you couldn't live there to come here, although probably I could have, I never tried but I was working in England and I liked England and I figured about settling there. I did figure on leaving her but I got into the British Wesson house.

I was working there, my uncle was working on turbine, steam turbine [unclear 00:17:45] which was a new thing at that time. Steam turbines had just come on the market. He figured that that would be a good trade to come up in, with building the steam turbine and it would be a good thing for me to start, so I did but it was broken coming on near the end of the war but the war was still on.

**Janet:** But when you went in you went in the British air force?

**James:** Into the air force yeah.

**Janet:** When did you go in there?

**James:** In 1918.

**Janet:** I see so you were working on the turbines in Wesson house.

**James:** Yeah, in England.

**Janet:** And then you went to English..?

**James:** And then I went home to Ireland and there were advertising about the air force, this country here to loan them so many millions of money and they were building their air force, so they started building schools over in England and then when I joined the British air force they took me over to England and put me in the school. I was in the school until after the war.

**Janet:** I see so then where were you when you decided to come here?

**James:** I was in Ireland.

**Janet:** You were Ireland, you were back in Ireland.

**James:** Yeah, because there was no nothing. There was no work, nothing after the war and of course I didn't really try to get back to England in the workshops. They were laying off thousands of people.

**Janet:** So when did you get it in your mind to come here then?

**James:** I really got in my mind was when I was in Ireland and through the government I went to school over there again. I had the next school in Belfast.

**Janet:** What were you studying at that time?

**James:** Engineering, civil engineering and then I was up in my 19s and then I decided I'd like to- you weren't doing nothing, all you're doing is collecting the [unclear 00:20:15] at that time. I don't know if you know what that means.

**Janet:** Yes.

**James:** And I decided I'll go to Australia because I wanted to go Australia in the west way.

**Janet:** Why did you want to go so bad?

**James:** Because I had another uncle come from this country and he came over home at the time and when they spoke to him, he used to say Australia, [Unclear 00:20:42] cheap in Australia. So he [unclear 00:20:47], I know he didn't know any better but my parents said well, "You can't go over there, you might as well go over there." Come to this country and he was coming back here, I came back with him but I never see much of him afterwards.

**Janet:** So you travelled with that uncle to this country?

**James:** Not with him but some other people that were coming back here. I travelled with them but it was him that took me off the Ellis Island.

**Janet:** I see.

**James:** And he got me a room.

**Janet:** Do you remember leaving home to come here?

**James:** Yeah, sure.

**Janet:** Where did you leave from?

**James:** From Newry.

**Janet:** I mean what port did you leave from?

**James:** What was she now? If I can remember now. I know I came over to England and we get on the ship in England. I'm trying to think of the line it was.

**Janet:** You said I think the Cunard line.

**James:** Cunard line, oh yeah I think it was one of the Cunard line.

**Janet:** Did you have examinations before you came?

**James:** Yeah, an examination in England, an examination again on the ship, an examination again in Ellis Island.

**Janet:** Was there anything eventful about the voyage?

**James:** No, not really remember. No, I didn't remember nothing.

**Janet:** Okay, then do you remember coming in to the New York harbor?

**James:** Oh yeah.

**Janet:** Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

**James:** Statue yes sure, everybody gets up on the deck to see the statue of liberty.

**Janet:** Did you know what it was?

**James:** Yes, sure. Yeah you're told way ahead of time.

**Janet:** How about Ellis Island, what do you remember about that?

**James:** It was kind of rough. It’s a rough place to be. I know the way- the had you learn your way. I had a nice blue suit on, a blue surge suit on and I remember they were sending you over in bunches and the guy comes up and puts a big chalk mark on my suit. I was so mad, [unclear 00:23:30], mortified because I thought blue surge suit and he marks all over.

**Janet:** What did that mark mean?

**James:** They were separating you. So many here for the [unclear 00:23:47] and so many through goes certain places. I don't even remember half of what it all meant.

**Janet:** Did they find something wrong you? Is that what the chalk was..?

**James:** No, when sailing through the doctors.

**Janet:** Did you stay overnight at Ellis Island?

**James:** No, I don't think so. I think when we got up in the morning on the ship, we packed and come over onto the boat and over to Ellis Island and then there was the whole routine. I don't remember I was dizzy.

**Janet:** A lot of people?

**James:** Oh sure. Polish people, Slavish people from all over Europe. I tell you it’s some crowd.

**Janet:** So now it’s this uncle who met you then?

**James:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Did he come to Ellis Island?

**James:** Yeah, he come over then during the day. He come over to Ellis Island. [Unclear 00:24:57] I didn't come over to Ellis Island, I don't think so. I think he waited down in south ferry I think at that time. It’s all open it was built up like what it is today.

**Janet:** When you saw your uncle, where did you go? Where did he take you?

**James:** Well, he had a room.

**Janet:** Where was that?

**James:** I don't know. I don't really remember because I wasn't there long.

**Janet:** Where did you go? What happened? That you stayed with him a little while?

**James:** Yeah, I don't remember how long or what it was but I know that he sent to a friend of his that was a foreman, he sent me up at Saint Luke's hospital in New york city. That is way up in morning side drive and I got a job up there.

**Janet:** What kind of a job did you get?

**James:** Potter's job, cleaning the floor at night. Lucky you get a job up there late because it fitted right into me because when you work at night you get a separate room up on the roof and so you have your own room up on the roof which was nice.

At night when you get up at 12 O'clock you come down to work, you come down and you go in there, have a little dining room for some of the other [unclear 00:26:35] different that worked in there and you got something to eat and you go downstairs you go down to work.

**Janet:** How long did you stay there?

**James:** Quite a few months I think. I remember it was coming on towards the end of the winter, is in the fall. I know that, I'm pretty sure of that and then I stayed there quite a few months. You know how you meet different guys, different fellas at work there and when a fella suggested that they were building someplace else, building the hospital down on fifth avenue or something and he said, "You know they're opening up a new hospital. You get so much a month." And that’s the way it goes and then you get to go, to rise up and you'd start on that and something comes up. So that’s the way...

**Janet:** So you bounced around a little bit from some [crosstalk 00:27:44]?

**James:** Yeah, sure you bounced around, that’s right and you take the job over here there's money and then we left New York. We were supposed to go to California, this friend of mine and we wound up in Pittsburgh and then from Pittsburgh there was a job going.

I think there was a strike on if I remember right in the overland plants and in one of the taverns out there in Ohio at the time. There was a strike on there and they were picking up guys and when the strike breaks.

**Janet:** Did you stay during that there?

**James:** I stayed in that town. I worked in that town all summer right into the late fall.

**Janet:** Then did you keep heading west?

**James:** Yeah, went to Chicago, tried Chicago couldn't get a job and then we met some guys that were coming east and like at that time you could move around. Take a job, this job go and so and so and you go into some of these employment [unclear 00:29:26], pay a couple of dollars, line up with the rest of the crowd there, they ship you off. So we’re shipped off to I think up in the north. I forgot where it was anyways shipped up there and the same thing there, no work there so I said, "The hell with it." and know what come back to New York.

**Janet:** When did you meet your wife?

**James:** Years afterwards. My wife is 11 years younger than me, was. I mean my wife died years ago. She was 11 years younger than me and I was working in a building in the night. Anything goes wrong at night they have mechanics in the building to take care of it. I got a job in there, in the building and I lived there and had a room there and that’s where my wife in the same building.

**Janet:** She was working there?

**James:** She was working in one of the apartments there and I met her.

**Janet:** Do you remember the meeting?

**James:** Not really, I think we met- she used to come out into the yard to bring the dogs down to let them walk outside, take a walk around and I see this little yard, pretty little girl. We started talking.

**Janet:** Was she Irish?

**James:** No scotch.

**Janet:** So then did you court her for a while before you married?

**James:** We used to meet there once a while and then finally we got together and got married.

**Janet:** Did ever find a job that you liked well enough to stay at for a long time?

**James:** Oh yeah, the job that I got afterwards was in one of the buildings. I worked...