**Janet:** This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I’m here today with Mrs. Anne O’Connor at her son’s home in Park ridge, New Jersey. The date is October 26th 1994. Mrs. O’Connor came from Ireland in 1923 when she was 20 years old.

Well, I’m happy to be here and I’m happy-- I’m looking forward to hear everything you have to say and I want to start by you saying your maiden name and your birth date.

**Anne:** Anne Marie Brown was my maiden name.

**Janet:** And your birthday?

**Anne:** October the 5th, 1902 I think so yeah.

**Janet:** Okay. And where in Ireland were you born?

**Anne**: Ballyward, Ballavari but the whole thing County Mayo.

**Janet:** Did you live in the same place up until the time you left came to America?

**Anne:** Yes. I did.

**Janet:** Okay, how about if you describe the town you grew up in? When you think of it what are the kind of things that you that you remember about it?

**Anne:** Well, we were very happy there, that I must say. We didn’t have much but we were very happy there. My father and mother was wonderful to us and we went to school, about 25 or 30 the most in the one school. And we had the same teachers, the father and the mother. The father was the principal and there was always the assistant and that’s all there was in the school I went to.

**Janet:** So all the grades were in one room is that--?

**Anne:** We had two rooms.

**Janet:** Two rooms.

**Anne:** Yes I think it was up to the 5th grade-- 4th grade I think we stayed with the assistant and we go to the principal and [inaudible 00:02:04]they were very strict.

**Janet:** What were they strict about?

**Anne:** More about religion than anything. They were very very much into religion. They would keep you in winter time and put the light on like we have here. To make sure that you [inaudible00:02:21] and couldn’t say yes or no to an answer, you had to give a nice sentence with it.

They were very very strict but we liked them they were very good. Now but they had no sons. [Inaudible00:02:37]I think four daughters they had. One of them died pretty young, lovely lovey girl with all that--they are all dead and gone now. I’m round they are not.

**Janet:** Well did you have brothers and sisters?

**Anne:** One brother and one sister, we all went to the same school.

**Janet:** What were your brother and sister’s name?

**Anne**  Patrick Brown was my brother’s name and Brigit Brown was my sister’s name.

**Janet:** Were they older or younger?

**Anne:** My brother was older, my sister was younger.

**Janet:** And did they come to America too?

**Anne:** No, my sister came on a visit but they never came to stay here.

**Janet:** What about your mother and father what were their names?

**Anne:** My mother’s name before she got married was Brigit Castellar and my father’s name was Thomas Brown.

**Janet:** And were your mother and father from the same town?

**Anne:** The same right neighbors, they were neighbors yes.

**Janet:** How about grandparents, did you have grandparents?

**Anne:** Yes, my grandfather was Patrick Brown and my grandmother’s name was Winner ford O’Brien Brown. Now on my mother’s side, I do not remember her family. They were distance away from us and I do not remember although I was called after my grandmother.

**Janet:** Tell me about the grand--your father’s mother and father that set of grandparents, did you ever spend time with them did you--?

**Anne:** They lived with us in the same house, we lived together.

**Janet:** And what do you remember, what were they like?

**Anne:** Well, my grandfather died pretty young I think I couldn’t tell you the exact age but I think he died—

**Janet:** How old were you, do you remember when he died?

**Anne:** I hadn’t started school yet that I do remember. And I think we started school at five over there because I thought it was a great treat to be brought to school and them days, they made their casket right in the house.

I had to go into school to get the plate with his name under something and I went with my brother and I thought that was such a wonderful treats, that I could be brought into the school. I remember that I had my head over the desk to see if I could see what he was doing. It was just putting his name like this on the plate.

That I can remember that I can and I can remember the day he was buried I went away back I went to hear them cry that I can remember. I don’t remember much more about him.

**Janet:** Do you remember about your grandmother?

**Anne:** Oh yes my grandmother was still alive when I came out here.

**Janet:** So what was she like?

**Anne:** Well, she was a very easy going person that I would say. She wasn’t bossy to us when we were children, she just sat in her chair and she did her knitting or something like that she didn’t do any work she never did any work around.

She always sat she was knitter but she would do knitting or sewing or something like that and she-- they would take care of her my mother and father they were there, they didn’t need to baby sitter.

**Janet:** So did you ever do things with her?

**Anne:** Play cards that’s all I can remember doing with her, that’s the most I can remember doing in Ireland is playing. We still do it here.

**Janet:** What card games did you play with your grandmother?

**Anne:** Well we used to play spots with my grandmother. We didn’t know I guess maybe five would be the six-- five would be the six in black and red and nine would be the ten I think with the opposite the colors in the card that I can remember. We called it spots and I know that’s what we used to play. The black card, a five I think would beat the six and the red card, a ten would beat the nine all the way down the line.

**Janet:** Were you good at cards, do you remember?

**Anne:** I don’t remember whether I used to win or not, that I don’t remember.

**Janet:** Would you would you just play with your grandmother just the two of you or—with your brother and sister too?

**Anne:** With all my friends and my mother and father used to take turns used to play cards with us we play 25 though I remember that with my father and mother.

**Janet:** What would be like a typical day? Can you-- Did you get up early? Did you have chores to do?

**Anne:** Well we had little [inaudible 00:07:93]we had no running water in the house that time you had to get a pail of water.

**Janet:** Where did you have to go?

**Anne:** Little right in my own home, for real work you only had to go maybe from here up to the road there but for the spring water we had a little distance to go, like what you’d cook with or drink we used real spring water.

**Janet:** And did you carry it or did you did you have a –

**Anne:** You had to bring a pail, no you had a pail and carry a pail maybe two pails, one on each hand and it would do you for the whole day because you would not use it on anything only cooking or drinking. We made our tea from it.

Now I don’t know if they were cooking for the potato, that I can’t remember whether we used regular water or the spring-- I think we used the regular what for cooking.

**Janet:** Would you go and get water like in the morning before you--?

**Anne:** Oh no, you’d make sure you had enough for your tea the night before that would take care. You would have your water for your tea the night before. We had our own little routines.

**Janet:** So when you got up in the morning when you were going to school, like when would you get up? What would be like your routine?

[Crosstalk]

**Janet:** We didn’t have to be in school until nine maybe quarter to nine. Whatever time the school would be opened I think a little after eight. You could play in the school yard if you wanted to. You could go in to the school if you wanted to. Do some reading. Do some studying for yourself if you wanted to. You didn’t do your homework the night before, maybe you could do it. Too much I don’t remember about the first grade in school really.

**Janet:** Then would you go home for lunch?

**Anne:** No, you take your lunch along. You brought your lunch and the teacher’s lunch would be brought to her and she would eat in school. And you would be very happy if you were called to go and pick up the teacher’s lunch because you get a nice little cooking, something nice a treat for yourself. Those little things I can remember, other things I don’t, I don’t.

**Janet:** So then when school was over what did you do usually?

**Anne:** You’d go home. We had to change clothes our clothes in my days, school clothes was kept for school alone.

**Janet:** Well, did you have like a school uniform?

**Anne:** Just a pinafore only that I can remember. I think you could wear any dress but there was like a pinafore that you it covered you mostly all the waist down that I can remember, but I think you wore your regular dress underneath, wasn’t a uniform you could make it yourself you didn’t buy it.

**Janet:** Did you make yours?

**Anne:** No, my mother used to make I think I maybe I made when I was older because I could saw.

**Janet:** And what did the boys wear?

**Anne:** The suits when they were younger they wore the knickers and I don’t think I ever saw boys in their shorts they always wore knickers I think.

**Janet:** So when you came home you take off the pinafore?

**Anne:** Yes, and you leave the dress on.

**Janet:** And then what would you do?

**Anne:** Well, if they had any chores for you to do, you’d have to do it first?

**Janet:** What might they be?

**Anne:** Well, to go get the spring water maybe would be one thing. To go to the store might be another thing when you are a little older there was no heavy work for us. Not work that you could complain about.

**Janet:** And then did you do your homework what after dinner?

**Anne:** [inaudible 00:I0:36] before dinner we had to have our homework done but I can remember my brother studying after supper and the men playing cards. I can remember that. It’s funny how some things stay with you.

**Janet:** Now who were the men? Your fatherand who else?

**Anne:** There was three men in the house my grandfather, my father and my brother. And there was my grandmother, my mother four women. It was small tight quarters but we got along we were very happy that’s all I can say. Didn’t ever bothered us.

**Janet:** How about food, do you remember food that your mother made or your grandmother made that you like?

**Anne:** Sure, have you ever heard of the soda bread? Well, that was made every day.

**Janet:** Your mother did it?

**Anne:** Yes, every day she used to make the soda bread. Maybe once a week she made potato cake that we loved, we all dreamed about it and I don’t think there was any other. The apple pie she used to

She used to make but make it differently here. She made the apple cake.

**Janet:** Describe it if you remember.

**Anne:** Make the dough a little richer than you would for the soda bread, and you’d spread it up like this and you cut the apples in the sugar in the middle of it and then she used to turn it in like this. It was opened at the top but it was more like a piece of bread.

What do we call here what we get the deep apple pie, the deep dish apple pie something of that order. But I think I remember except at Christmas we got a lot we got a good treats with Christmas.

**Janet:** Describe what Christmas was like when you were a little girl.

**Anne:** Well, we celebrated more on Christmas Eve than we did on Christmas day.

**Janet:** What did you do?

**Anne:** We would go to church, we would come home and you could have all the goodies you wanted which we appreciated if you wanted a drink you had it. I don’t know, we would if we wanted we could get a drink but we didn’t take it.

I don’t know my brother did or not and I outside of going to church and coming home and having the grace and bread whatever treats we had. We didn’t do anything else. I don’t think we made sure the neighbors if they did not have milk, if they did not have butter that you would divide with. That’s one thing they would take care of. I don’t remember anything more about it really.

**Janet:** Did you have a garden or did you have animals?

**Anne:** Oh yes, we had cows and we had sheep with a little horse with a little donkey I remember that [inaudible 00:13:13] and we had a horse that we’d known since we were big enough to do it. We’d come over to a certain spot where we could get up on its back and he take us for the ride my sister and my--I can remember that very well and that horse knew the exact spot to come to that he would take us for a little ride around the field and we never fell I often think of that we never fell.

**Janet:** What was your father doing for work?

**Anne:** In the farm.

**Janet:** He was a farmer?

**Anne:** Just in the farm. When my brother got older he was to go to England. They’d go there I think it was for six months or certain at the time they’d be always home for Christmas.

**Janet:** You mean for work, he would go to England?

**Anne:** He worked in the farm with my father and we just had to go picking stones I remember that job that I didn’t like. When they dig up the dirt and they’d smooth it out if you see any soil you had a little pail, you pick it up and take that—that’s a job I didn’t like it. I didn’t do much in the farm. I never done much in the farm. I wasn’t a farmer. I guess that’s why I never went back maybe.

**Janet:** Let’s see is there anything else that you remember, any kind of ceremonies or holidays, things that you celebrated in Ireland that are different here?

**Anne:** Well, we didn’t have--we had a bonfire but I remember what time that bonfire was. Was June sometime I think but I can’t remember the days that we all got together and we’d have a great for two months before that [inaudible 00:14:53]or anything we’d save it and they make a big fire. They had a name for it, it was something special, I don’t remember what it was so though but—

**Janet:** Did you have something like name days?

**Anne:** Yes. What is the day after Christmas?

**Speakers:** St. Stevens.

**Anne:** St. Stevens Day we had something for that they used to like go out like here, they didn’t go out looking for—begging like here in Ireland as much as they do here but they had a great St Stevens Day, that was a big day.

**Janet:** What happened on St. Steven’s day?

**Anne:** Well the children would dress up like they do here for Halloween and go round from house to house and they had a little saying they had.

**Janet:** What would be the saying?

**Anne:** “*The ring, the ring the king of the birds St Stevens Day she was found in the forest. Although she is small her family is great, grace up Mrs. and give us a treat”.* That is what they would sing for you before you give—that I remember.

**Janet:** And then what, the people would give them the treat?

**Anne:** You give them whatever candy I don’t know what else they give them, I remember that well. I never went out doing that but I remember it. But then I think that was the only time they went around begging for anything that I can remember of

**Janet:** Do you remember any stories that were like childhood stories that either you were told or maybe when you started to read you read that were kind of common stories in in Ireland at that time?

**Anne:** No, I don’t read. I’m not good-- I’m not that much good at that. That, I’m not much good at.

**Janet:** How about games, do you remember any besides cards things that you played as--.

**Anne:** We used to play house. We used to play house. That I remember, we’d have a couple of plates that might have a chip on them or crack but we were allowed to play with them out in the yard and we’d be making a little party cakes from the dirt. That I remember. I don’t remember any rhymes we had. That I don’t remember.

**Janet:** Did you do things like jump rope or--?

**Anne:** Oh yes, that was a great jump rope was great. Jump rope was a great game.

**Janet:** Now did you have did you have rhymes that you said when you jumped rope?

**Anne:** I don’t remember, that I don’t remember. I don’t remember them. There was something but I can’t remember.

**Janet:** Well, if things come back to you as we’re talking you can just mention it. How about who were you closest to in the family?

**Anne:** My brother.

**Janet:** What was he like?

**Anne:** I don’t know. He was very nice. He was good and nice too. I liked my brother. We got along, we never—there was only the three of us so--

**Janet:** And did you have a best friend?

**Anne:** Yes, but they are all dead, they’re gone. There isn’t one of them alive, all on myself. But we were all neighbors when I came out there was four of us that went to the same school, come in the same day and then we got on the-- see I left home the 13th of June.

**Janet:** Well maybe we should first talk about-- how was it decided that you would come to America?

**Anne:** Well I’ll tell you. That Mary that you went to,her mother wrote to my uncle out here that had never had children. Of course Mary was here ahead of me and the mother was anxious that I would be out here, that we’d be together and she wrote to my uncle and asked my uncle to write to my mother and give me permission to come out here.

**Janet:** Now had you been friends with Mary?

**Anne:** We went to the same school, Mary and I. We all went to the same—the whole village we all went but there wasn’t many. Nobody had a big family it seems except Mary’s mother and father. I think they would be the biggest family going into the school. I think there was 12 of them I think.

**Janet:** I think so.

**Anne:** 12, I think.

**Janet:** So your uncle contacted your mother?

**Anne:** Yes, then I was supposed to come a year earlier but my mother was not feeling good and they wouldn’t allow me to come. So I put it off for another year. That’s how I got here.

**Janet:** Were you taking care of your mother is that--?

**Anne:** Well, I was trying to. They didn’t want me—she wasn’t feeling good they didn’t want me to leave home I guess. I remember that. One earlier I was supposed to come but then when I was coming one of the women was out here before and gone back and she knew all the runs. She didn’t tell us all the truth in the beginning but she gave us an idea what we would have to go through.

**Janet:** Do you remember what you knew about what you would have to go through or--?

**Anne:** I had no idea in the world. No idea in the world.

**Janet:** Do you know what you thought about this country before you ever came? Why you wanted to come?

**Anne:** Well everybody came home in their lovely clothes and they had gold teeth as [inaudible 00:20:16] I we always thought [inaudible00:20:19] here always had gold teeth. That’s what we thought as children growing up, you weren’t big a hank if you didn’t have a gold tooth in your head that I remember.

I remember that when we got to coming home, well some relations maybe distant relations of my mother’s that used to tell us stories about this country.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything that you knew before you came?

**Anne:** Well, I remember one of them now I won’t repeat because you wouldn’t know it and I wouldn’t know, this woman I think was a cook she was in some rich house. I don’t know what and there was a little one there and she said some said some dirty word I don’t know what it was in Gaelic and the child repeated at the table that night with company [inaudible 00:21:08] wasn’t a good word I’m sure.

I remember her telling that I thought was wicked and I think it was the same woman that once said one time that the lady asked her where the potato was left that was left over the night before was. And we thought that was wicked too. To be looking for a potato we thought nothing about a potato. There are a few things I can remember but isn’t any things I can’t remember really.

**Janet:** So did you see the letters from your uncle to your mother? Do you remember what they what they said?

**Anne:** He said yes. He said he would be glad to have me come but it would be up to my mother to give the consent, that he would not do anything without her consent. So I guess then she often told them that she wasn’t feeling good so went out for another year that’s how the next year I mightn’t have come but this girl that was out here before was coming back here again and her sister was coming with her. So that’s why I insisted I think that I’m coming that year.

**Janet:** Were you working at that time?

**Anne:** I never worked in Ireland [inaudible 00:22:27]hated to do—

**Janet:** So after you finished school, you went through that school through the eighth grade.

**Anne:** Yes.

**Janet:** Then after that what did you mainly do?

**Anne:** I didn’t do anything around only around the house I didn’t go t to high school there was no high school just a grammar school only.

**Janet:** Well, did you like saw and things like that?

**Anne:** Yes I could saw and I could knit and I guess and I guess I helped my mother with the washing, the different things that had to be cone. The cleaning around the house and that we would help with that we didn’t think it was a project, we didn’t think anything of it.

**Janet:** So what made you want to go to this country do you know?

**Anne:** Well, this girl that was friend although in fact her mother and my mother were first cousins and we were good friends. Now when she was going to come back with her sister that was I think that got me saying I’m coming.

**Janet:** So, when you travelled, you travelled with who?

**Anne:** There was a group of us. We had a good time coming over.

**Janet:** Now tell about, tell about getting ready to leave, do you remember what you packed or--?

**Anne:** Well, in my time your clothes was almost made for you. We didn’t buy readymade clothes, we went to the dressmaker and I had two dresses made for me that’s all. Whatever else I had a small little suitcase not much. You got everything new, you came with everything new. But well I think this other girl would tell us that it would be foolish to bring too much. You’d have to buy stuff when you come here that’s what I think now because remember getting two dresses made I think I have a picture of myself with one of them here if I could find it.

**Janet:** So then did the group that went with you, how many people they altogether?

**Anne:** Well, in our group that stayed together there was 14 of us and we had not one of them I think but he didn’t play it. What do you call the whistle that you whistle into from your--?

**Male 1:** A penny whistle, a penny whistle.

**Anne:** Yes, not a penny whistle [inaudible 00:24:51] and we used to have it up in the deck we could play that and dance to whatever we enjoyed had a good time coming over, we enjoyed coming over had a very good time. But when I saw the Statue of Liberty, I got home sick and I wanted to come back.

So then we heard the rumor that we would not be allowed to land. I did not hear the 4th July if I did I did not pay attention to it. But I heard the rumor went out that we would not be allowed to land and I was very happy I was going to be sent back but when I found out that we were going to land and this woman that was with us before said you’ll be going at different gates. You will go out different gates. Now she said, “Don’t get excited” some will go this way some will go that way and I got worse.

Then when we landed and got off at Ellis Island, you were not allowed, you had to stay there until somebody picked you up. Of course my uncle that was supposed to pick me up but he was working that day and the rumor was here that we would not be let out the 4th of July. So he went into work and he worked with house of good shepherd and he got in touch with the priest there and asked him and he said he thought we might be out but he said, “Do not worry about her, if she gets up I will take care of her until you come”. So I[inaudible 00:26:17] I couldn’t tell you how many time my name was called and I’d take my little bag thinking I was going but I wasn’t it could be for different things. Then--

**Janet:** What would your name be called for, for example?

**Anne:** I had to send a telegram to my uncle in the US there, that I was in Ellis Island. That I had to do then maybe booked for lunch. I was called two or three times I remember. Oh yes Father O’Brien spoke to me then and told me I didn’t not have to worry that I would be home that night. Then my aunt came. My aunt had very poor sight. She came and picked me up and I had never seen my aunt, I did see a picture but she said, “Do you see anyone you know over?” And who was it, it was my uncle that I had never see I can remember them things and--

**Janet:** What was it like in Ellis Island for you?

**Anne:** Dreary, very dreary. I don’t know what country they were from because I didn’t know French or Polish or nothing they were all to me people but they used to sleep somewhere. Some of them had one some of them had two some of them had three and somebody said they were waiting all that time to be picked up. I don’t know if that was true to not. We were brought for lunch, got lunch there but I did not enjoy. I think it was stew with everything in the world in it. I did not eat it I know. Then my uncle came about 2 o’clock and took me home. That was the 4th of July.

**Janet:** What did—what? Do you remember what you thought when you met your uncle?

**Anne:** Well, I heard about his wife that [inaudible 00:28:09] his wife was very religious and very old fashioned which she had because I don’t ever remember her without a black veil used to wear the black veil years ago when there was a death in the family and I think she wore a black veil I can remember that but I was told about that before I left home.

And my uncle was a very big heavy man, very tall man. I got along with them, I never had no trouble with them but when I came to their house [inaudible 00:28:45] straight off the front room. The 4th of July they told me nothing about the 4th of July and fire crackers.

Three [inaudible 00:28:56] but was only less than a block but he was in the block, half a block the Broadway bus, the [inaudible 00:29:04]. There was all that commotion there. Where I lived there you wouldn’t hear the sound when you got to bed. This, I thought Dublin was bad but this to me was wicked, wicked. Oh I didn’t tell you I went to my uncles-- we left home the 30th and we stayed in Dublin one night.

**Janet:** How did you leave home? What kind of transport?

**Anne:** The train, we took the train to Dublin.

**Janet:** All 14?

**Anne:** There was lots of us, yes. My father and mother did not come with us just brought us into where there train, picked us up and took us to Dublin. We were one night there and we thought that was noisy.

**Janet:** Had you ever been to Dublin before then?

**Anne:** No, no I don’t think I was ever in a train before, we didn’t travel. I don’t think I was in a train before that that I can remember. But I was one week with my uncle and aunt in England that was very very nice. Very nice.

**Janet:** Where were you there?

**Anne:** In Liverpool.

**Janet:** And did know--?

**Anne:** He had his own business yes, he had his own business and I used to help him what do you call fish and chips. That’s the business I used to help him peel the potatoes I remember that but she was a lovely woman I liked her.

**Janet:** So were there certain things that struck you that you had never seen before?

**Anne:** On England, yes. I enjoyed England, I really enjoyed there was nice neighbors there and we--. And something is trying to tell me but I can’t get that straight. That it was the radio that was coming out would that be so? There was something coming out new in England because I remember my aunt’s sister calling her and talking to her and she was so—couldn’t get over how she could talk.

**Janet:** On the telephone?

**Anne:** It might--.

**Janet:** Did you have—did you ever see a telephone before?

**Anne:** I don’t think we had a telephone then that I don’t think a telephone then that I don’t remember a telephone then but there was something that was new that she couldn’t get over how you could hear what was going off in so many miles away. I don’t, I have not clear.

**Janet:** So it’s maybe a radio maybe a telephone.

**Anne:** Because I know when I came that’s why I’m thinking it might be the radio because when I came to my uncle’s they had something with a big horn on it. That’s what the kind of they had there and they were just putting that up new. That I remember so I didn’t pay too much attention to what was going I was just going along with the day that’s all.

**Janet:** So then well the other people that came with you on the ship, did they leave from Liverpool too?

**Anne:** We all we all left from Queenstown.

**Janet:** From Queenstown.

**Anne:** From Queenstown we pulled out. We didn’t have to go into Queenstown. We pull out from Queenstown that I know.

**Janet:** Well did the others go?

**Anne:** We all went together we were all on the--

**Janet:** They all went to Liverpool beforehand?

**Anne:** Well, I went with my aunt and uncle, another girl and her sister went with her neighbor that was married there. And I don’t know how the others went. I’m not sure how the others-- but I stayed with my aunt and uncle I know and the other two was only just down a block from us, somebody they knew from home and they stayed with them. We broke it up like that but we were all together on the steamer coming out.

**Janet:** And do you remember the--?

**Anne:** On our maiden villa voyage, they had-- not the maiden, they went around with the world before with the big shots and we were the second time of course on the water.

**Janet:** So did you-- were you in steerage or were you in--?

**Anne:** Second class, we went first class that’s sure.

**Janet:** So you had a cabin then.

**Anne:** We had a cabin I think it was – I know there was two, if there was four or not and the one--I’m not sure now but there was two.

**Janet:** Two sets of bunk beds?

**Anne:** I was in the back somebody was over me. That I do know. But I don’t know if there was anyone on the other I’m not sure of that four of us or two there that I couldn’t say for sure really I think it was just two.

**Janet:** Describe what it was like the voyage coming across?

**Anne:** Oh I loved coming over. I enjoyed coming over we had a good time that’s all I can say coming over we had a good time. But I would never, never want to go back by sea never. The fear of plane was not available when I went home, I would never have gone back that’s how much I did not enjoy there.

I wasn’t sea sick but I wasn’t just myself all the way. They said it could be better if you were sick but I was not what you’d say sick but I was not my--