**Janet:** Today is August 2nd, 1994. I’m here at the Petite Fleur Nursing Home in Sayville, Long Island New York. I’m here with Cecelia who came from Ireland in 1925 when she was 18 years old. Why don’t we start by you saying your birth date for the tape?

**Cecelia:** My birth date March 11th 1905.

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

**Cecelia:** In Galway.

**Janet:** Did you live in Galway up until you left for the United States?

**Cecelia:** I lived in suburbs.

**Janet:** Was it a small town or village?

**Cecelia:** A village.

**Janet:** Did that village have a name?

**Cecelia:** Yes, French Fort.

**Janet:** Could you spell it please?

**Cecelia:** F-R-E-N-C-H-F-O-R-T.

**Janet:** Tell me what French Fort looked like.

**Cecelia:** Big farm; my father had many acres.

**Janet:** What did he raise on it?

**Cecelia:** Cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, horses.

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

**Cecelia:** Martin.

**Janet:** Martin Flanegan?

**Cecelia:** Yes.

**Janet:** And your mother’s name?

**Cecelia:** Murphy.

**Janet:** What was her first name?

**Cecelia:** Mary.

**Janet:** Were your father and mother also from Galway?

**Cecelia:** Yes. My father didn’t know my mother when he got married to her.

**Janet:** He didn’t?

**Cecelia:** No, somebody matched up the two.

**Janet:** Do you think they were pleased with the match?

**Cecelia:** Yes; nine boys they had.

**Janet:** Nine boys and you?

**Cecelia:** And three girls.

**Janet:** Do you remember the names of all your brothers and sisters?

**Cecelia:** Yes I do. Patrick, James, John; he died, Edward.

**Janet:** Were you closest to any particular one of your family?

**Cecelia:** Yes, my oldest brother.

**Janet:** That was Patrick?

**Cecelia:** Yes.

**Janet:** Where did you fall in line with the children?

**Cecelia:** Sixth.

**Janet:** What was it about Patrick that you liked so much?

**Cecelia:** He’s a good boy. He used to work with the government.

**Janet:** What do you remember about your childhood? What kinds of things did you do?

**Cecelia:** Mind children.

**Janet:** You minded your younger brothers and sisters?

**Cecelia:** That’s right.

**Janet:** Did you go to school at all?

**Cecelia:** Sure.

**Janet:** Did you like school?

**Cecelia:** Yes I did.

**Janet:** What did you like about it?

**Cecelia:** I learned Latin and I learned… I didn’t like my mother wouldn’t let us to [unclear 00:04:11]. She went to school she saw nothing but [unclear 00:04:17] and she says, “I’m not going to hit you because that did not suit you”. My father was one of those that they’d beg you to tears and giving you [unclear 00:04:33]. Dad always had plenty to tell you.

**Janet:** Did your father grow potatoes as well as have livestock?

**Cecelia:** Yes he did.

**Janet:** What were your chores as a little girl besides taking care of your sisters and brothers? Did you have any other chores?

**Cecelia:** Yes. I had to do the washing.

**Janet:** How did you do that? At a wash board?

**Cecelia:** Yes.

**Janet:** Did you have running water in your house?

**Cecelia:** I had to draw it from a well.

**Janet:** Where did you go to do the wash? Where was the water? Where was the well?

**Cecelia:** The well was further down the house.

**Janet:** What would you do, you’d go and get the water?

**Cecelia:** And pump it.

**Janet:** And pump it and bring it home?

**Cecelia:** Yes. I did milk the cows.

**Janet:** You didn’t?

**Cecelia:** I did.

**Janet:** Did you like doing that?

**Cecelia:** I had to do what I had to. My mother said do it, you did it.

**Janet:** What was your mother like?

**Cecelia:** Very strict. She didn’t do any work at all.

**Janet:** She didn’t?

**Cecelia:** No; you did the work, not my mother. She wouldn’t raise her hand.

**Janet:** So what did she do with her time?

**Cecelia:** Sit and knit crotchet.

**Janet:** What kind of man was your father?

**Cecelia:** He was raised a farmer.

**Janet:** What was his personality like?

**Cecelia:** Very good. He was red head. I had red hair but I don’t have it no more.

**Janet:** You had red hair?

**Cecelia:** Yes.

**Janet:** How about grandparents? Did you have grandparents?

**Cecelia:** No.

**Janet:** Do you remember how it was that you came to the United States?

**Cecelia:** Somebody had to go because my mother paid for it so someone had to use the money.

**Janet:** Your mother had a ticket?

**Cecelia:** No. She got them with her cousin and she kept it for somebody who wanted to go to America otherwise they wouldn’t have any money.

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

**Cecelia:** I just wanted to go, that’s all.

**Janet:** You just thought you’d like it better?

**Cecelia:** Yes.

**Janet:** Did you have any idea what it was like before you came?

**Cecelia:** No. I had a girlfriend in school she always says, “You would never go to America but I go because my sisters are there.” And I cannot be with her sisters. I was the one that went. She lived there all along. She really did want to go America but I said, “I’m going.”

**Janet:** You went in place of her?

**Cecelia:** Not in place, because she needled me so much I already made up where I want to go.

**Janet:** In other words she used to needle you that she was going to go and you weren’t?

**Cecelia:** Yes.

**Janet:** But then you decided you were definitely going to go?

**Cecelia:** There and there I had decided.

**Janet:** Did you have a temper as a little girl?

**Cecelia:** Naturally yes.

**Janet:** Because you had red hair, right?

**Cecelia:** Yes.

**Janet:** Do you remember leaving? Do you remember packing up?

**Cecelia:** No.

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

**Cecelia:** Cork. That’s where I take the boat.

**Janet:** From Cork?

**Cecelia:** Yes.

**Janet:** The name of the boat?

**Cecelia:** Republic.

**Janet:** Did you have examinations in Ireland?

**Cecelia:** Yes.

**Janet:** What were they like?

**Cecelia:** Just regular tests.

**Janet:** You said you were travelling with someone; tell me about that.

**Cecelia:** She had a big job in the store. They called her a different name over in Ireland. A regular store; here you call different.

**Janet:** This person who travelled with you, who was it?

**Cecelia:** She was a girl I met in the store.

**Janet:** She wanted to come to America too?

**Cecelia:** She was going to meet her husband here. She wanted marriage; she was going to meet him.

**Janet:** She was going to be what you call a mail- order bride?

**Cecelia:** I guess she was.

**Janet:** In other words she was going to meet someone to marry.

**Cecelia:** Yes.

**Janet:** How did she feel about that?

**Cecelia:** She was very good. She was in the same room as I was. I had a top bed and she had the bottom.

**Janet:** Did anything happen aboard ship? Was there any kind of experiences on ship that you remember?

**Cecelia:** No; only this man that came over at me. He said, “You better be good because you have the skies up and the water”.

**Janet:** So you were on the Republic, were you down in the steerage?

**Cecelia:** No I had a good passage.

**Janet:** A cabin?

**Cecelia:** Right. I had [unclear 00:11:48].

**Janet:** So you were in the first or second class?

**Cecelia:** I think I was in the second class.

**Janet:** You said your aunt sent money? How did you…?

**Cecelia:** My cousin sent money to my mother. He was a first cousin. He was in this country. He sent money for her. If she wanted to send somebody to America he’d give her money, and he did.

**Janet:** How did your mother feel about you going? Did she want you to go?

**Cecelia:** [silence].

**Janet:** Tell me about when the ship came to the New York Harbor.

**Cecelia:** I was supposed to go to Boston where those girls were but I never got to that Boston. Somebody met me there; my mother’s cousin.

**Janet:** You remember when the Republic sailed into the New York Harbor?

**Cecelia:** I don’t remember.

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

**Cecelia:** Yes I do.

**Janet:** What was that like? Seeing the statue?

**Cecelia:** [unclear 00:13:14].

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

**Cecelia:** No I didn’t.

**Janet:** Tell me everything about Ellis Island that you remember.

**Cecelia:** Nothing happened at Ellis Island. Got a physical, got a blanket and they served me; nothing else.

**Janet:** Did you stay overnight?

**Cecelia:** This cousin of my mother picked me up.

**Janet:** At Ellis Island?

**Cecelia:** The party that I came up with was her brother- in- law. So I was like a [unclear 00:14:05]. He didn’t leave me there. He said, “I’ll take you to my other sister” and I went to the other sister. She had 14 children. I made the 14th for her; she had 13 already and we were so close all along.

**Janet:** Where did you go to? Where was she living, the woman with the 14 children?

**Cecelia:** Brooklyn.

**Janet:** So did you stay with them for a while?

**Cecelia:** I went to work.

**Janet:** What kind of work did you do?

**Cecelia:** Housework; minding children.

**Janet:** You had a lot of experience in that. Do you remember your first few weeks in this country? What it was that struck you as very different?

**Cecelia:** They didn’t get good food.

**Janet:** They didn’t?

**Cecelia:** No.

**Janet:** You had better food at home before you left.

**Cecelia:** When I was home they gave me cabbage, when I arrived here they gave me cabbaged cooked with water. It was horrible so I airlifted myself. I got an odd job. I looked into the paper. I wasn’t no [unclear 00:15:28].

**Janet:** What did you find in the paper?

**Cecelia:** Another job.

**Janet:** Also taking care of children?

**Cecelia:** No, cooking. I worked with [unclear 00:15:43]. Her mother was from Ireland. Her mother worked hard and helped in the home. She would never let me down a [unclear 00:15:56]. Everything was for me. She looked after me.

**Janet:** So she was nice to you?

**Cecelia:** Yes.

**Janet:** Did you live there as well?

**Cecelia:** I lived there. I didn’t get much money but… $75 a month.

**Janet:** And board and room.

**Cecelia:** Yes.

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

**Cecelia:** I quit there too.

**Janet:** Then what?

**Cecelia:** Then I got married.

**Janet:** How did you meet your husband?

**Cecelia:** Through those friends. They worked in the sugar factory and he worked in the transitory as a conductor. He used to give her sister fare. The mother invited me to her own house because he was good. He was wonderful.

**Janet:** What was his name?

**Cecelia:** Adam.

**Janet:** Adam Zeilan?

**Cecelia:** Yes. They had their name and she cut off. It’s Pole; had his name shortened.

**Janet:** What was it to begin with?

**Cecelia:** Z-E-I-L-I-A-N-S-K-I; Polish but he never spelt it that way.

**Janet:** When you got married then what? Did you stop working? Did you keep working?

**Cecelia:** No, he wouldn’t let me work. The girls who were working in the factory making a lot of money. I said, “I’m going to work.” He said, “You work, I quit.” And he would; I know he’d do that.

**Janet:** You know he would have?

**Cecelia:** I know he would.

**Janet:** Did you always have a lot of friends who were from Ireland once you were here in this country?

**Cecelia:** I had a few friends but not [unclear 00:18:30].

**Janet:** Did you have children?

**Cecelia:** Three.

**Janet:** Their names?

**Cecelia:** She died. She had four children. They were wonderful to me. You see other pictures in my room. Did you see them?

**Janet:** No I didn’t see them. This is your oldest child?

**Cecelia:** Yes.

**Janet:** And then you had two other children?

**Cecelia:** [unclear 00:19:16]. He is her brother. He’s married. His wife she lives…

**Janet:** Are you talking about your children now?

**Cecelia:** I’m talking about my children.

**Janet:** Now you have grandchildren?

**Cecelia:** I have so many.

**Janet:** How about great grandchildren?

**Cecelia:** God knows I must have.

**Janet:** What do you feel really proud of that you’ve done in your lifetime?

**Cecelia:** I was good to my kids.

**Janet:** Do you think coming here as an 18-year old girl from Ireland made a big difference in the rest of your life?

**Cecelia:** I guess it did.

**Janet:** Can you think of any ways it might have…?

**Cecelia:** I got a good husband. He wouldn’t let me carry one little bit when we were shopping in stores. He wouldn’t let me carry one bottle. He wouldn’t let me do anything.

**Janet:** Did you stay in Brooklyn?

**Cecelia:** No. I lived in Richmond Hill.

**Janet:** Is that in Staten Island?

**Cecelia:** No, that’s in Queens. You know Jamaica Hospital?

**Janet:** Yes.

**Cecelia:** That was Richmond Hill Hospital but now they call it Jamaica Hospital. They’ve [unclear 00:21:07] everything now.

**Janet:** Is there anything else that you can think of that has to do with… do you keep some of the ways of people who live in Ireland? Things that you learned as a girl?

**Cecelia:** I go to Harlem lots of time. I have a niece over there and she takes care of me when I get there. I pay her. I can afford to pay her.

**Janet:** Your husband worked for the Transit Authority until he retired?

**Cecelia:** He died. He was retired two years and then he died. He used to drive the train. Every time the train stopped his heart was in his mouth. He thought somebody would jump off onto the train.

**Janet:** Is there anything else that you would like to say about this country or coming to this country?

**Cecelia:** I had a good life here. My husband was wonderful to me.

**Janet:** I’m talking with Cecelia Flanegan Zeilan, who came in 1925 at the age of 18 from Ireland. Now you’re 89 years old and it’s August 2nd 1994. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I’m signing off.