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UA68/8/2 Jan Freveill Oral History

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JIM BENNETT: Jan Freveill, a graduate of Western, who had done a study of President Kelly Thompson's family. She lives now in Louisville. How did you get interested in this genealogy?

JAN FREVILLE: Well, my husband's name is French, Freville, and I wanted to trace his father's side of the family and find out where Freville, the name came from. Also there's some interesting stories about his name. And then I got into the, Michael's mother's side of the family, the Thompsons, and I've been able to find much more about them because they are from the United States, Marion County, Nelson County, Kentucky. And so, I just got interested in it, got my mother interested in it, and my cousins and everybody.

JB: So, this was the connection then that led you into Kelly Thompson's genealogy?

JF: Uh-huh, yes.

JB: How far have you gotten at that?

JF: Really, I've taken it, some branches back to Maryland. His Maryland ancestors were some of the original Catholic settlers in Nelson County. And Washington County, too.

JB: And you have, it looks like a quite old photograph. What is this?

JF: This is Dr. Thompson's father, Charles Bromeo Thompson, and these are his brothers, there were eight brothers.

JB: So they would be the father and the eight uncles of Kelly Thompson.

JF: Uh-huh, yeah.

JB: Where did you come by that?

JF: Michaels's mother got it from her oldest sister which would be Kelly's oldest sister.

JB: I see.

JF: She's still living in Louisville.

JB: Do you have any idea of when that photograph was made?

JF: No, I don't. It was for the parent's fiftieth anniversary. They had fifteen children, so the picture is made of their eight sons. And I've never been able to find a date of the fiftieth anniversary.

JB: That's a good photograph.

JF: Uh-huh. You can have it copied maybe.

JB: Yeah, have that done fairly easily. So you have pretty much the genealogy worked out. At least you've traced the family back to Maryland.

JF: Uh-huh.

JB: How long did it take you to do this?

JF: I guess I started in '72, maybe, or '73.

JB: And did just a little as you could.

JF: I did a lot of work like this summer at the Kentucky Library because they have the Nelson County records.

JB: Right. What other resources did you use, other than the Kentucky Library?

JF: The library in Frankfort. And then I have written to a woman in Maryland, who has sent me some Maryland records. She is with the St. Mary's County Historical Society. If you want to look at some of them that's fine, some ancestor charts. This would be Dr. Thompson's mother and father, Charles B.

JB: Charles B. and Emily Josephine Clark Thompson. That's a world of work isn't it? Gee.

JF: Uh-huh.

JB: About what date, about how far back have you traced them as to date when you found the family in Maryland? You said that was as far back as you had gone.

JF: There's one 1762, in Maryland. I guess that's maybe 1750 something. They are related to Basil Hayden who is one of the settlers of Nelson County.

JB: Now did this Thompson family move from Maryland directly into

Kentucky; Nelson county, Washington County, around that area?

JF: Well, I haven't tied just the Thompson, the last name, in completely yet. Let's see, there's like two books I've found on the Thompsons in Marion County and none of them tie in yet.

JB: Oh.

JF: James Jeremiah Thompson, which would have been Dr. Thompson's grandfather. And so none of them tie in but one person said they could of tied into one lady's in the book but I've never been able to prove it. Also this is strange here, Clement Thompson. He was married twice. In his will, he doesn't give the children by his first marriage anything but a dollar. So I guess his wife died and they were grown by the time Clement died.

JB: Yeah, that could be. Now you got German and French ancestors, is that right?

JF: On my husband's side.

JB: Uh-huh.

JF: That's his side.

JB: Uh-huh. And you go back to about the middle of the eighteenth century then. Do you know about when the family moved to Kentucky?

JF: Well, different branches of them I do. This one is bigger, just penciled in. Maybe you can see this one, just go the names penciled

in. This one, John Hutchins, was one of the original settlers from Maryland. He was Dr. Thompson's mother's ancestor. And he is listed in the Webb's book on Catholic history.

JB: Uh-huh.

JF: And his son was the John B. Hutchins who was the priest at Loretto and he died in 1870 and he donated all his belongings to Loretto and the academy. Do you want me to tell you some specifics about it?

JB: Yes, whatever you would like to say. I mean, you may have run accross some odd and interesting facts as you went along.

JF: Well, from what I can find, Dr. Thompson's mother and father were distantly related and if you find, like my own family, I've got the same great, several great, great grandparents five times on the same tree. They all married cousins. So, the Vowels name, which is an unusual name-

JB: What was that name again?

JF: Vowels, V-o-w-e-l-s, V-o-w-e-l-s. They go back to Maryland with Cyrus Vowels and Victoria. And Cyrus died in St. Mary's County in 1777.

JB: That would be St. Mary's county, Maryland?

JF: Maryland. And then his, I figured out his children have come to, his male, his sons have come to Kentucky and a few of his daughters, one or two. Because their names pop up in Kentucky.

JB: Uh-huh.

JF: There's quite a bit on the Vowels I found.

JB: Now is that a family name that's till aorund in the part of Kentucky where you first found them?

JF: Yes, see Dr. Thompson's people came from Raywick, Kentucky originally. And I've been told that there are still Vowels in Raywick.

JB: Now, thats in-

JF: That's in Marion County, right near Lebanon.

JB: I think it's just outside Lebanon.

JF: Dr. Thompson's own grandfather, he was, he lived in Rauwick. Then about, I think the date's right, 1880, I think, he moved to Lebanon. Dr. Thompson's father, though, was born in Raywick.

JB: Uh-huh. In Marion County.

JF: In Marion County, So, Dr. Thompson's grandfather, James Jeremiah Thompson, had fifteen children. And many of them buried in Raywick or Lebanon at St. Augustine Church Cemetery.

JB: Now, the grandfather of Kelly Thompson, is that the first of the family that you find in Marion County?

JF: Okay, James Jeremiah Thompson, I can find heis father, Clement

Thompson, and he's born about 1803 and he died 1884. Let's see, July of 1884. And he, as I said, Clement Thompson, had married twice. Evidently his first wife dies. And so I haven't been able to trace Clement Thompson's parentage to Maryland.

JB: Uh-huh. That was almost a whole settlement there in the early years at Marion, was a Catholic settlement.

JF: Uh-huh.

JB: And still is strongly Catholic as I understand. I have some friends there and I believe they said that.

JF: The Catholics came, like to Bardstown and Washington County, Nelson County, that area. Most of the names bear Catholic names New Hope, New Haven, St. Mary's. It's interesting to read Webb's book on the Catholic history. It tells about the twenty-five people who came over originally. They formed a Maryland league.

JB: That came over from Europe?

JF: Came from Maryland.

JB: Oh, from Maryland down, I see.

JF: 1786, or something like that. And they were some of the original settlers in that area.

JB: So the Catholic settlement there in Marion County would date from that time.

JF: Uh-huh.

JB: The eighteenth century. Now this is the walking cane that was owned by whom now?

JF: Charles Bromeo Thompson, Kelly Thompson's father.

JB: Looks like a silverheaded cane.

JF: Yes. It was given to me by my mother-in-law, Caroly Thompson Freville and she got it from her sister, Lillian Thompson Ballard. And so that's why I've got it because they thought I would appreciate it, my husband and I would appreciate it more than some others.

JB: Now, what have you here? This is a wicked looking thing.

JF: That's his constable stick. I think they said he was a, he'd come to the fairs or something and be the constable.

JB: He was constable there in Marion County.

JF: He moved his family to Louisville in about 1929 or '28. And I believe he was something like that in Louisville.

JB: I see.

JF: But Dr. Thompson never did moved with the family to Louisville from what I understand,

JB: They would have moved then, I guess, about the time he graduated

from High school.

JF: Uh-huh. I think he stayed to finish high school. And then he came to Western.

JB: To Western.

JF: My monther-in-law was the youngest child and she was just nine or ten or something like that. And so she doesn't remember too much about Lebanon but she remembers life on Michigan Avenue in Louisville. And about Dr. Thompson's grandfather, she said that he would always wear a white suit and a big white hat and just stroll down the street with his cane. They would, all the women would greet him and everything.

JB: He must have been quite a dandy there.

JF: You see his picture, he was probably the most handsome of the brothers, the eight brothers.

JB: Uh-huh, yeah. That's a good photograph. Now you have something else here.

JF: Oh, that's my husband's father.

JB: Oh, I see. Well, let me ask you just a few questions about the work. Could you give any kind of idea in terms of hours, about how long you have worked on this so far. That's, I know, it sounds like a far out question but-

JF: Well, besides just doing the research, you know, you'd spend an

afternoon in the library pouring over those microfilms. Then you'd write the letters to various people and I spend time, like if I get back from the library I'd spend maybe two hours, if I try to, going over what I had found and trying to put it into place. So, I couldn't really guess how many hours I put into it.

JB: I can understand that.

JF: Especially recopying what you found and putting it in order.

JB: Now, you said that you had used the Kentucky Library at Western extensively and you used, I'm sure, church records. From what particular churches?

JF: St. Xavier, St. Frances Xavier Church in Raywick, Kentucky. And I've gone to the cemeteries and taken pictures in St. Augustine Church Cemetery.

JB: Now, Frances Xavier Church in Raywick. Raywick is what, just a community rather than a town, isn't it? Just a fairly small...

JF: Right, it, there's a church there and a grocery and we went through it two or three years ago. Marion County seems to be so hilly. And this is kind of set on a hill and the cemetery is up the road from the church. And it's just a wide spot in the road, it looks like.

JB: Raywick would be just a little bit larger, right.

JF: That's Raywick.

JB: Oh, Raywick-

JF: Is very small.

JB: Oh, I see.

JF: And, let's see what else I've used. Marshan County records, Nelson County census records. Specific things I've used; The Kentucky Genealogy and Biography by Westerfield, wills from St. Mary's County, Maryland, the records of St. Andrews Church, St. Mary's County, Marland. And I recieved that from the lady I was telling you about in Maryland who belongs to the St. Mary's County Historical Society. They put out Chronicles of St. Mary's, which is a pamphlet. She told me to send for the 1957 edition and had these records of St. Andrews Episcopal Church. Since Dr. Thompson's people were all Catholic, I asked her why the Episcopal Church and she said they were required to register under like the Church of England, the state church.

JB: Uh-huh.

JF: That's why some of the Catholics didn't register that were supposed to.

JB: Yeah, however they were the Church of England.

JF: Uh-huh.

JB: Did you find any help at St. Joseph's Cathedral in Bardstown? Did they have any references?

JF: I haven't really, I've written to them once and asking if this Clement Thompson could have been divorced and they said it wasn't likely. They didn't have anything to help me. I haven't really written to them much because I found that mostly in Marion County and then I've used the Nelson County files at Western.

JB: What kind of shape did you find the church records to be in?

JF: Well, the St. Xavier's Church, the priest kind of hinted that he didn't want anybody to read it, so he just copied it for me and sent it to me in the mail. And I wrote to the priest at the St. Vincent DePaul Church in New Hope, Nelson County, Kentucky and he never wrote back. So I don't know what happened to the letter, if the records were too priceless to look through. They could have been destroyed, too.

JB: Yeah, that's possible.

JF: The Lebanon County Courthouse was destroyed by fire and that's why a lot of their records are missing.

JB: You hit a lot of blank walls when you are doing this, don't you?

JF: Uh-huh. Trying, I'm trying to find out why Clement Thompson didn't give his children by his first wife, you know, anything but a dollar. It doesn't mention their names.

JB: And you haven't found any answer to that yet?

JF: No, the only thing is that they were grown and married and that's the only thing I can figure and that his wife must have just died.

JB: You've contacted a lot of people by mail I'm sure, I guess. You mentioned someone in Texas, I believe, somebody in California.

JF: I've been getting correspondence. Recently I subscribed to the Genealogical Helper. And that, you know, I'd come across something and they were after the same thing I was after and it was very exciting. It turned out to be distant relatives, for example, this one woman, Jimmy R. Bryant, of Paraguay, Arkansas, I got her name from the Genealogical Helper and she was looking up the same names. Clarks, Heads, Jutchins and Haydens and it turns out like my husband and she would be, I guess, very distantly related, through one branch of the family. And then, let's see, I wrote to a Mr. Thompson, I forget his first name, let me find it. Anyway, he's a teacher at the school there at St. Mary's, Kentucky, in Marion County. I think he is a history teacher. And he gave me the name of a man in Texas, J.D. Thompson, from _____ Street in Houston, Texas and he turned out to be a distant relative. Seventy years old and he provided one of the clues that Michael's, Dr. Thompson's grandfathers's, James Jeremiah Thompson's father was really Clement Thompson because he had been given records by his own grandmother back in the '20's and that his, the grandfather's name was Clem Thompson, he married a Cecil and then he had four children so that kind of proved to me that I was on the right track. Let's see, then I wrote to a genealogist and he couldn't help me, his name was Thompson. Then I wrote to a sister at the St. Catherine, Kentucky and she had put out a book in the Historical Society, Frankfort Library and her name is Sister Francis Gertrude Thompson, she's put out this book and someone else said that maybe we're related to her Thompson and she's got it traced all the way back to Maryland.

JB: And she teaches where now?

JF: She is at the St. Catherine, Kentucky, I guess she just lives in the little home for the nuns, the older nuns.

JB: And teaches there?

JF: Well, yeah, I guess she does. And the other man was Gerald Thompson and he was from St. Mary's, Kentucky, and he provided a clue, so-

JB: This could be a full-time job if you want to make it so, couldn't you?

JF: It is. If you didn't have anything else to do. Sometimes I go on binges and I find clues and I work real hard like earlier in the spring but then I put it aside and I haven't done anything on it in a long time.

JB: Well, you have some more that you want to do on it? So you'll be continuing on this genealogy. Have you given copies of this to the Kentucky Library?

JF: Copies, just sketchy, the ancestor charts here, I've given it to Mrs. Farley, the librarian. But, you know, eventually, I thought I would have it copied and give it to the library.

JB: I'm sure they would like to have it. It would be a help to them to have it.

JF: Uh-huh. Because the names are, just names from Marion County, Nelson County, the settlers and many people tie into them if they get into their family tree.

JB: Let me ask you this. Did you find that your work in history helped you do this?

JF: Yes, it gave me the interest, the motivation and then it helped me to realize the need for the primary source and trying to get as many facts as I can and not just try to make wild guesses because I know some people, they see a name and they think they are related to the name and they just go on crazy. Like I can't find Dr. Thompson's I guess it's another of his grandfathers, Thomas Jefferson Clark. And there's so many Clarks I haven't even tried to work with them. And I guess I won't until I can find some definite clues, because it probably would be-

JB: Is there any other comments that you want to make about this? I don't know much else to ask you really.

JF: You would really need to see a copy of it to get any good from it, I guess. Let's see, I'll look through my things here. Well, I just think it's interesting the tie in the names that you will see. Like in St. Mary's County census of 1890 and then they pick up in Kentucky. It just shows the migration of the settlers, like with the Merriman names and I think the Vowels, there were maybe just one Vowels name listed in 1790. The rest had, I guess, had come to Kentucky. And the Browns, the Van Cleave.

JB: I saw the Van Cleave name. Did they come from Maryland to Kentucky or did you go into that?

JF: Okay, I'm not sure. This J.D. Thompson, I was just talking about, he's related to the Van Cleaves by marriage. It's not directly related to Dr. Thompson.

JB: I had known some Van Cleaves from, well, some from Kentucky and some from Georgia. So I was just wondering where they had come from, the girl I used to know.

JF: Well, I think it's interesting. The Hayden name comes in here and he was Basil Hayden Jr., and William were prominent settlers at Nelson County. And I'm trying to prove that they are relation. And he was kind of a notorious fellow, he signed a lot of wills and court records and things. And I think there should, if I ever get into it, there should be something about him in some books _____.

JB: Well, is there anything else that stands out in your mind from this kind of work?

JF: Well, just that dry, dull things like will books and guardian records and executors boards. They've had quite a bit, just putting pieces together getting family groups worked up. I guess that's all. I'll give you some of these if you want to take it back.

JB: Yeah, we'd be glad to have copies of it. I'm just not familiar enough with this to ask many intelligent questions. So if you've nothing else to comment, why we'll just wind it up and if something comes to mind later we'll-

JF: I could just write it down. What I need to do is just write a written history of what I've done so, cause it's easier for people to read it that way.

JB: That's true, it takes a little getting used to to follow it through the charts here.

JF: And I'll do that some day and send it to Western.

JB: I appreciate you bringing this to our attention and giving us this information. And we'll certainly be glad to have copies of this, too. So, we'll just call it quits for now then.

END OF INTERVIEW