



Elaine interviewing Christiane re immigration from Gourin to America

Christiane -

The first immigration that we know of to America was actually from the Commune de Gourin et Roudouallec in the 1900s, the immigration started then at that time, and the statue was given to the association, Bretagne Trans America. It was a gift from Air France. So it was installed here in 1985, but it was, in English I would say, 'en resine'. It was the type of statue that you could not leave outside. Since 1985, every winter we had to put it away in a warm place, and take it back in the summer. So therefore we decided it was time to have a real, new statue

Elaine -

Could we just go back a little bit? What I'm interested in, or what we're interested in, is why so many people from Brittany went to America in the 50s and 60s.

Christiane -

As I said before, it started in the late 1800s. Once you have somebody there, it's easier to go as you know somebody. This is from the centre of Brittany, not necessarily all from Gourin, but from the area, all centre of Brittany. You have to be sponsored by somebody, a family or a friend, so it was easier to go from here because we already had an agent around, who did all the necessary paperwork to help you emigrate to America, and Canada of course. So it was basically why the statue came to Gourin is because the Association was in Gourin.

Elaine -

Did they find it hard to get an occupation there, to get employment?

Christiane -

Oh no, no. Don't forget, after the second world war America needed people to work. They would take immigration from every country they could. So the Bretons could (?) get jobs right away. I immigrated in 1984 and had a job the next day, but I already had my uncle there, so it was easier to find jobs to start with. But the Bretons never really went without work over there. They were good, courageous people who worked hard, basically in the restaurant business at the time, and it continued that way until the immigration stopped basically in '95, late 70s. Brittany was poor, central Brittany was poor, basically it was agriculture and the seashore, we didn't have many industries in the area. So going to America – believe me, it was easier to go to America or Canada than going to Paris, because they were sure they were going to find a job. And don't forget they didn't speak English, but basically a lot of them learned it very quickly, like I did. In one year I spoke English, not courantly no, but I was able to communicate very easily, like many people like me.

Elaine -

How long did you stay there then?



Christiane -
Altogether, nearly 40 years of my life

Elaine -
Wow

Christiane -
I came back to take care of my little old daddy. He was getting so... I discovered a new Brittany, a new country. It was modern. And I've been in Gourin for the last 20 years.

Elaine -
Are you enjoying life here?

Christiane -
Oh, I love it! I wouldn't go anywhere else. Brittany to me is like Godsend country

Elaine -
Well thank you very much indeed

Christiane -
Oh, it's my pleasure