

[James Hughes]

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COMMENTS

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Section #2

Page 1. June Jane K. Leary

4/18/39 Lining Living Lore

James Hughes, Lynn Shoe Laster

“Whin I wuz a boiy (boy) in Ireland I usta go over a cartin (certain) stile ta go along the road ta school. I'd pass by a little shop theyyed where where theyyed (they'd) made shoes

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by hand. Miny's the day I'd stop there an' before I knowed it, I could make a wax ind (end). I usta watch em last a show shoe too. How cles close they'd put in thim nails.

"I wint back ta Ireland ta visit after I bin here five years, an' I wint back over thet stile agin ta that old shop. 'twas still standin'. I showed 'em thin jest how they lasted a show shoe in America. They put the tacks in too close. I showed 'em how ta save the half a the tacks.
Mass. 1938-9

"They made hob nail shows shoes there. That wuz bacause sa miny a the shoes wuz made fir firmers (farmers) an' thiey (they) had ta walk over rough roads an' if the shows shoes wuzn't hob nailed, they wun't wear there stall atall . The roads wuz good enough in a way, but they wuzn't what they are taday, fir iverybody hadda pay fir 'em thin, the firmers an' ivery other body.

"I usta laike (like) ta watch the tailors too. Thiey'd (they'd) make a suit ta order fir \$20 an' the same fir a overcoat with a vaelvet (velvet) collar. But that wuz elegant goods an' the collar wuz elegant too. Usta coat cost \$2 1/2 er \$3 ta heve (have) a new vaelvet collar put on whin the old one wore out.

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"They were wore thim vaelvet collars in Lynn at thet (that) tame. An' most ivery (every) one a us thet could, 'ould heve (have) a white vest or a tan one, an' a tall hat an' cain. (cane). I always heda (had) a white vest.

"An' about thet tame, the congress shoes wuz all the rage. They had took the place a thim tall boots that min usta wear fir dress. They hed (had) looked nice though, thim tall boots thet come half way up the leg. Ya'd be somebody sure whin they wuz all shained up. But what a job it wuz ta get thim off. Most a 'em come with a jack in the back so as ya could ketch one foot on it ta push the othern off.

"The Congress show shoe heda nice welt. an' they din't cost more'n \$3 1/2.

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“The girls ‘ould look nice too. Thied heve thim high collars that ‘ould stand stiff laike around thier neck, an' the tieght (tight) waists an' the long skairts (shirts skirts). An' thiey (they) wore this big hiats (hats) thin that set hiegh (high) on top a thier heads an' hed thin big feathers on ‘ em. Gainsborough hiats they colled 'em. ‘an the hiegh (high) laced boots thet the laidies (ladies) wore in thim days!

“We usta all mate (meet) down on Mairket St. (Market) and stairt from where City Hall stands now, an' walk down an' aroun' up Union St. ta where the Paramount Theatre is astandin' now. Sometames we'd go down ta the bache (beach) too an' walk along there. Nahant St. where all this [fiene?] houses is. Looked about the same thin as it does today.

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“Long about nane (nine) o'clock though, the streets ‘ould be ampty (empty) fir mosta us ‘ould go home.

“Fir a spacial (special) trate (treat) there'd ba (be) the summer picnics. er the fair thet the Lasters' Aid Socaity (Society) ‘ould put on ivery wenter, er a stage show in the theatre that wuz where the Waldorf movie place is today. Thin too, the diffrunt socaities held dances in Exchange Hall and in Odd Fella's Hall (Fellows). They had a spring floor in Exchange Hall, an' they danced the ol fashioned dances thin. It wuz nice.

“Spacial wuz the Easter Monday Ball there. The womin looked nice all rioght with trains on thier dresses. They wuz all atryin' ta be the bell a the ball. Iverybody wint and iverybody dressed in the best thiery could fir the Easter Monday Ball.

“An we always had a faine (fine) tame at the coffee parties over in St. Mary's school Hall hall . Father Strain wuz priest here thin an' everybody loved him. I remimber how he always hed a lotta chickens. An' dogs too. An' he liked horses and ta ride horse back.

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“There wuzn't miny Catholics in Lynn thin an' St. Mary wuz the only big Catholic Church aroun' here thin. Father Strain usta ride horseback ta Nahant an' Chelsea ta say Mass, well as take care a the Catholics in this pace place .

“Well, at the ooffee coffee pairties we usta have a lotta fun. There'd be coffe an' cake an' ice crame (cream). An' what crowds.

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I remember one tame I wuz pushed so by the crowds that one a my feet got in an ice crame (cream) can up ta ma knay (knee.) How everybody laughed! What a tame we always had! An a big crowd!

“An' what a crowd at the Laster's picnics. There's be a spacial train ta take us ta a lake er Grove. Sometames it' ould be at Lake Waldron, somewheres near Worcester. An' sometames they'd thied (they'd) be at Highland Lake er Centennial Grove, quate (quite)a distance outa Boston. Sometames there'd be tin er fifteen cars ta the train, sa miny paople'd go.

“The train 'ould lave (leave) aroun sivin (seven) er eight of a mornin' an' stay all ddiay day . Thin oft tames they'd ba (be) a noon train fir thim as count go in the mornin'.

“They'd be a parade ta the train. The lasters' ould all come out fir it in their white vests an' carryin' thier cains an awearin' thier tall hiats. Ladin (leading) 'ould be the Lynn Cadet Brass Band fir thied (they'd) go along ta play fir the dancin' at the picnics. An what a tame at the station before gettin' in the train. Meeting the lasters there 'ould be the girls. an' the womin an' the families.

Paople'd come from way off sometames ta go to the picnics. There wuz always a lotta professional runners ta enter the male (mile) race, for they give \$100 prize fir thet.

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"There wuz other contests jest fir the lasters too. An' iverbody liked the dances, the polka, the faive step schottish an' the minuet.

"An' the thengs ta ate 'ould be nice too. the ham an' chicken an tonic.

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The Lowell Picnic

"Jest laike the laster's 'ould go some distance away from Lynn fir thier picnic ivery summer, so'd thim that wirked in the mills at Lowell, 'ould come down ta the Lynn bache (beach) fir their picnic.

"Whiniver we could, we'd steal away from wirk ta go ta thim. They wuz run a good deal laike the Lasters / Picnic but we in Lynn we usta call 'im 'the annual wash[?]' Thet wuz because mosta thim mill wirkers niver got ta the bache except at thet picnic. An' they spent a good parts the day in the water or asetting' on the bache. They sure got birnt.

The lasters' union always held a fiene (fine) fair in the wenter too. There'd be good show, an' singin' an' dancin' an' all sech things as that. The shows was sota laike vaudeville, an' good ones too.

Parades wuz grate (great) thengs in thim diays (days). Besiades (besides) the one the Lasters' ould always heve. there'd be one sometames by the Odd Fellas (fellows). an' the Masons that wuz sa strong thin. The Knights a Columbus 'ould hold ' im too an' they all looked fiene (fine) in their plumes an' uniforms.

"Laike I told ya before, Lynn wuz a lott diffрут in the im diays whin I first come here. There wuzn't no screens on windas thin, only nettin' on some. An' sometames people'd heve some netting in door ways an' sometames they wun't. I remimber the black flies an' the masquitos. Whin we'd get in bed ya ofa niaght, pretty soon we'd hear thet Whizzzzz. Thin up we'd get an' light the lamp fir there wuz no electric / lights in thim diays either.

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"An' if ya wanted a drink a water ya hedda go to the punp pump in the back yard fir it. But some folks had a pump in the kitchen. The people I lived with hed one of thim.

The Lynn Fire

Ivery body wuz excited the tame a the great Lynn fire. Parta the diay I wuz on the roof a the shop I wuz aworkin' in tryin ta kape it from gettin' afire. We had pails a water coolin' it off. The hate (heat) comin' down Union St. wuz something terrible.

Thet afternoon me and a few others wuz halpin' pack up shoes in a store in Monroe St. to take 'em up ta a place on Mairket St. fir folks din't know how fir the fire 'ould go. Afterwards the man that owned the store took us all to supper at the Winthrop hotel.

"Fir as I know no one birned up in that fire. Lucky it atarted started in the daytame or it mighta bin worse. As was, itwint from Blake St. down ta the depot, an' down Washington St. towards the bache. All lower Washington St. wuz birnt terrible. Got inta the coal wharves and it took a wake (week) ta put thet out.

"But it wuzn't long before ivertheny ivertheng wuz built up agin. [?] West the machaines is chaper ta run thin it is play sa miny min ta do the same wirk. A machaine don't havea havta eat, ya know.

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The machaines has put min outa wirk, there's no doubt a thet. It's the same in all industries, same as the shoe business. It's claimed 10 er 12 million min's outa wirk in America today. Thet's a lot.

I don't know what thengs is acomin' too, ralely I don't. It's cartin sartin Lynn's on the bum firiver. An' I guess that's the way it is in most places today machaines has took the places a the min.

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Durin' the war though, shoe business wuz good. A lotta the min went ta war, ya see, and that took up a good deal a the slack made by the machaines. But whin they come back, they wuz out fir good, most a thim.

There's a lotta raisons why the shoe business is on the bum in Lynn, besides the machaines though. Ya see, sa miny a the shops 'ould move to other towns that 'ould give 'em free rint and where they could get labor fir little er nothin'. Why three, four years ago, din't a town from this state send down trucks ta move one plant fir nothin, only the union stopped 'em doin' that.

"Ya maighta reminbered thim buildings that wuz jest opposite the Narra Gage a coupla years ago. Well, they charged high rint, so the shops moved and now there all tore down. An ya know the Vamp building down near there. That ain't doin' nothin'. There's a few diffrunt thengs underneath but the half of the top is empty.

It's part a the fault a the owners a the shops. They charged too high rint. Why some a 'em aven charged fir the amount of winda space. Why one big shop I knowed of, paid 8 aroun' \$25.000 a year rint.

"So ya see it 'ould pay a concern ta move sometames, whin they could get rint free. An the laber fir little er nothin.

"A lotta the manufacturers wuz min that come up from the bench. One of thim wuz Welch of Welch & Landrigan who made more'n a million dollars. They put out a fairly chape' (cheap) shoe an' it wint good.

"The worst crime a thim days wuz whin Landrigan got shot by one of thim foreigners whin he an' a policeman wuz bringin' the payroll. The policeman wuz shot at too, but they din't kill him.

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“But they got 'em before they got outa Lynn. Ya see in thim diays they din't have no automobiles ready ta jump into, and thin steal another an thin another automobile until they'd get miles away. They wuz foreigners; it wuz on the borders of Russia where they'd lived before they come here.

“After thet Welch kept on at the shop an' he made a lotta money. He wuz purty shrewd and he wuz no spendthrift He wuz not that kand (kind). Indade (Indeed) they din't go down Nahant st. ta live after he'd made his million. Indade not; it wuz on the highlands, they lived aven after they got all thet money.

Welch, before he started makin' shoes with Landrigan, wuz a laster the same as I. He run fir business agent a the lasters an' whin he got defeated he wint in with Landrigan ta make shoes.

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There wuz nothin stuck up about Landrigan. Very socaible (sociable) with the min. He'd heve a glass a beer with inybody. He started in business with Welch in a place on Pleasant St. But their shop wuz on Willow St. whin he got shot.