

[Franklin Clay Brown]

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FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St., Lincoln Neb

DATE March 2, 1939 SUBJECT American Folklore stuff

1. Name and address of informant Franklin Clay Brown 1821 "O" St, Lincoln, Nebr.
2. Date and time of interview Mar 2, 1939 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Mar 3, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
3. Place of interview Home (room of informant)
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant Chas. Stopher and Chas. Krause 28 & Leighton St. Monroe St & R. I tracks Lincoln, Nebr. Lincoln, Nebr.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompany you. None.
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. Inside dingy, dreary, colorless, dark windowless room on second floor of rooming house on [East?] "O" st, Lincoln, mostly business street. Furnished with kitchen table, (oil cloth covered) chairs, bed, two trunks, or chests, and oil heater. Surroundings are dismal squalid and depressing, poor light and opening on long hall, cluttered with boxes, bales and decrepid furniture. Evidently a last resort in living accommodations. C. 15 Neb.

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St., Lincoln, Neb.

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DATE March 2, 1939 SUBJECT American Folklore Stuff

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Franklin Clay Brown

1. Ancestry Scotch-Irish-English-Dutch
2. Place and date of birth Brownstown, Green County, Wisc.
3. Family Bachelor, Father was a sailor and made trips to the orient.
4. Places lived in, with dates Green County, Wisc. 1853 to 1868 Beaver Crossing, Nebr. 1868 to 1870 [Wilford?], Nebr. 1870 to 1875 Lincoln, Nebr. 1875 to date
5. Education, with dates Green county, Wisc. school 1860 to 1868 24 days in Beaver Crossing, Nebr. 1868
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates
Farm work - 1868 to 1875 Government police service 1875 to 1890. Violin repairing, locksmith, violin playing, orchestra directing 1875 to 1932
7. Special skills and interests
locksmith (opening safes) violin repairing and violin playing
8. Community and religious activities Social entertainment, Quaker Church.
9. Description of informant about six feet tall lanky, bushy eyebrows, stooped and bent, gray blue eyes, [?]; whiskery face, hair gray and thin, nose slightly bulbous but straight, ears average, features normal but one eye,
10. Other points gained in interview stars off to side with a cast or dark spot seemingly sightless (cock eyed) hearing good, articulation, muffled but audible.

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FORM B Description of informant

Other points.....

Personality, friendly congenial and willing to talk. Health good but crippled in left leg and uses canes. Memory fair, living habits average for old person, inclined to exaggeration. Does not keep clean, needs good bath and thorough cleaning. Mr. Brown, with two of his close friends, one a contemporary, has each, an eye which stares off to the side and in each case is apparently sightless. This coincidental circumstance would tend to indicate that there was a kindred feeling here between the three because of this abnormality which is common to all three of them. Mr. Brown is more or less socially inclined and appears to like people.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis Lincoln, Nebr.

DATE March 2, 1939 SUBJECT American Folklore stuff

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Franklin Clay Brown, [1821?] "O" St., Lincoln, Nebr.

"Billy" Bryan and I were born the same day, March 19th [1853?]. I was at Captain Pinney's funeral in Green County, Wisconsin. One time he led his horse up the outside [stairs?] of the court house there and into the county clerk's office. We came to Nebraska in 1868 and lived two years at Beaver Crossing. "I Golly! they 'danged' near got me on the trail west of Lincoln, near Emerald. I was driving the express from Lincoln out Milford way. This feller showed up all at once and grabbed at the horses' reins. I saw him come and grabbed my gun and trained it on him. He made his get-a-way but I saw him the next day in Lincoln and he didn't feel so good then.

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I saw Jesse and Frank James in Lincoln as they were passing through there.

I used to play dances at the old Masonic Hall at 12th and "N" street here. [?] It had an old town bell in the tower and one day the whole thing fell down and smashed to pieces.

Those old dances were fine too. We used to play ["Money Musk," "Du Rang?"] Horn pipi," "Country men's Reel," "Fisher's Horn pipe" and lots of others. A feller came along and went to playing for us. I lent him one of my old violins and one day he got drunk and sold it to Prescott Music Co. His brother made organs for Prescott.

I had an old Stradiverius violin which came from South Kensington, Eng. It was made in 1317 by Anthony Stradiverius' second son.

Jasper De Sailo an Italian made a series of violin before this. My old "Strad" is still here in town.

I like to talk to a feller like you. Most of these people want to do all the talkin' and then go away and say you don't know nothin'.

In 1875, I went into the Government secret service. I helped catch McWater here. He was a tough nut. I belonged to the American and European secret service at the time.

Lincoln was known as Lancaster north of "O" street and west of 14th st.

I organized [andled?] the "Silver Coronet" orchestra. After that I organized the National Key and Lock Association. We had a blind feller who could fit any lock with a key.

Right here I want to tell you about our watching the bald eagles sailing around in the air. I said "[I Golly?]" it would sure be fine if we could fly around that way. The rest of the fellers just laughed at me and I flared up and said we would be doin' it [sone?]. Well we are right now.

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I belonged to the Quaker Church in College [View?]. The Adventists came in and treated 'em meaner than the devil and they finally left.

You tell Charley [Sopher?] to come in here and I will cure him of his heart trouble. I made "eye water" which would cure any sore. I had a friend here who was a schooled doctor but he quit it. He said there was 'too darned much humbug in the business.

Then there was old 'doc Creekbaum. He went to Ceresco to practice. I have seen him sit and talk to two people and at the same time write two different letters one with the right and one with the left hand.

I'm the feller who started the populist party and also fixed for the big meeting in St. Louis. The Farmers Grange went in with us.

But I didn't go to the meeting. Yep, I was the 'daddy' of the populist party, 'the sons of liberty.' I talked to Billy Bryan one day at the court house, says I to him 'How about the money question,' 'Well he says 16 [?] I'. Well I says the green back was the best money ever printed.' 'Yes', he says, 'but the [intrinsic?] value is nothing.' I says 'there is only three things in this world with [intrinsic?] value sunlight, air and water.'

They way we came to organize the Populist party, a bunch of us got together and called a meeting.

They later called a big meeting at St. Louis. They wired the Farmers Grange which was meeting at Okallah Florida. After that they had a conference at Omaha.

'danged if I know who all went to it.'

A feller borrowed my old violin and never brought it back I tried to pawn it once for \$2.00. Old Loestadter took it to fix and switched on me. I played one time at the Masonic Hall here and two couples wanted me to play a tune so they could dance 'the Old French Four.'

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I played the "Rocky Road to Dublin in 3/8 time. It was a grand dance and [theyswung?] and passed through around and around in great style.

One night I played at a wedding dance in a new house. It was so cold we played with gloves on. When we dedicated the old Bohanon Hall at 10th and [N st?]. here it was so cold there and we wore gloves. That was the night of the Big Blizzard in January 1888. Lots of people came. There was a good many fellers who wanted to scrap in those days. I was never in many scraps but when they jumped me they got fooled, sure as the devil. If these fellers who want to scrap would use that energy for good creative work they'd do lots more good.

I saved three tains from getting wrecked on the old Atchison road just west of the penitentiary. I was down there by Salt Creek cutting wood and came up the tracks. Some feller had put a stone in the switch frog of a side track. I yanked it out. It happened twice after that once with a block of wood and once with part of a car link. I came along and found it.

I used to belong to an order called 'the Red Men.' They bought a block in Wyuka next to the Soldiers Circle. (G.A.R.)

The Adventists in College View had the day all set for the end of the world to come. Some of them started on foot for Los Angeles that day. They drilled for oil there, once, but closed the well without shooting it.

Where the high school stands now, used to be a swamp. On the edge of it was a haunted house. People would move into it and move right out. Everyone said there was ghosts there and were scared of it. I got some of the boys to go out there one day and we pulled off boards and tore up some of the floord. At last we found out what the noise was. Some loose shingles on the roof would groan and rap when the wind caught them.

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A feller here had a sure enough cure for rheumatism. He cured a man in three weeks, with a tea made from dandelion roots.

A sure cure for rattle snake bite is the bunched roots of the black snake plant. This grows along creeks has a square stem and looks like a Milkwee, with three little prongs on each limb with yellow centers. Wash the roots and boil in sweet milk. Drench 'em with it, that is get them to drink it.

A man living on 14th and [?] street here died of coal oil on the brain. He had been rubbing coal oil on his head for headache. The day he died he had been working near his house and his wife called him for dinner. He didn't show up. Sometime after that the police found him running down "R" street shouting 'Look out for me. Gabriel goin' to blow'.

I heard they cut his head open after he died and found a lot of coal oil on his brain. It must have soaked through his head.

We just about had Jim Malone on a 'hog train' here once over a money robbery on one of the trains. They found the money out at West Lincoln. I remember the old song 'Hot Time in the old town tonight' that they used to sing during the rallies. That was in the days of the Flambeau clubs colored lights and kerosene torches back in the nineties.

[One old?] Indian told us once that there was never any snow laid on the ground around where Beaver Crossing is now, until after the white man came there. They said it was always warm around there. In the ground from heat which rose up from below.

Yep I've had a lot of peculiar experiences around these parts and heard lots of funny things. I'll tell you some more when it comes to me.

Mr. Brown is a well known populist here so they say but have only his own word that he started the populist party. He is somewhat vague as to the actual circumstances of this political venture, but insists that he headed the movement.

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Other parts of his accounts of earlier day happenings are equally obscure, but he repeated practically the same story on two separate occasions.