

## [Hobo Lore]

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER JOHN E. O'DONNELL

ADDRESS 9 West 95th Street, New York

DATE November 14, 1938

SUBJECT HOBO-LORE

1. Date and time of interview

This material has been collected over a period of many years by this interviewer.

2. Place of interview

The habitats of hoboes and 'yeags' all over the country.

3. Name and address of informant

The informants were many and their addresses are unknown.

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

None

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5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

None

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

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NEW YORK

FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER JOHN E. O'DONNELL

ADDRESS 9 WEST 95TH STREET, New York

DATE November 14, 1938

SUBJECT HOBO-LORE

Informants were numerous and personal histories are unavailable.

1. Ancestry

2. Place and date of birth

3. Family

4. Places lived in, with dates

5. Education, with dates

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6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates
7. Special skills and interests
8. Community and religious activities
9. Description of informant
10. Other Points gained in interview

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NEW YORK

FORM C Test of Interview (Unedited)

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER JOHN E. O'DONNELL

ADDRESS 9 West 95th Street, New York

DATE November 14, 1938

SUBJECT HOBO-LORE

All hoboies do not talk the same language. Some hoboies are "bums", others "yeags".

A bum, the untouchable of the road, works on occasion, but a yeag will starve to death before lowering himself to honest labor. In other words, a hobo is a periodical bum who works today and takes to the road tomorrow, while a yeag is a professional tramp. Moreover, bumming is a racket and yeaging is regarded as a profession with a history and a culture of a sort. There are poets and songwriters in yeagdom. Their creations reflect

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their abnormal life just as poetry, song and music reflect joys and sorrows of all people through the ages.

“Yorkey Ned's” poem, “The Klondike”, for example, is the story of what, he saw and suffered while seeking gold in the Northland.

“At Fresno” by “Trot 'em Out Pete”, is a picture of a yeag convention at Fresno, California fifty years ago. These conventions are annual affairs and are attended by “Johnsons”, as the yeags called themselves, from all parts of the country. They arrive at convention headquarters, a jungle camp on the outskirts of some small city, via the rods and bumpers of freight and passenger trains. Cripples minus legs and arms, paralytics, able bodied loafers on high heels and crutches, and punks (boys) with their arms in splints are among the delegates.

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The order of every convention day is the same: drinking and singing from morn till night; poets recite their poems and song writers bellow their songs with all hands joining in the chorus. Every poet and songwriter comes to the conventions with a new creation. Prizes, a hundred dollars, are awarded for the most popular creations and the winners are expected to squander their awards on booze before the convention adjourns. If they don't they are given “Micky Finns” (knock out drops) and are relieved of their cash.

The watering tanks of the railroads are the hotel registers of hoboland. Every yeag carves his “monicker” on the tanks and these registrations enable then to keep in touch with each other. For example: “Boston Blackey-West-8-10.”

And so one day “Yorkey Ned” wrote 'The Watering Tank.’ Likewise the convention at Montreal in 1872 was the inspiration for “Moochers Hall”, one of the most popular drinking songs of yeagdom.

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The yeags also have an anthem with which all conventions are opened and closed. It is called, "Oh, Where is my wandering Brat tonight?" Salvation Army street corner meetings gave Ned the idea for the yeag anthem and "The Guinea" the idea for "Tony's Dream." But no yeag poet ever sings of love because the "Johnsons" avoided alliances with women. "Gals" are outlawed and yeags who cultivated them are blacklisted. And so the songs and poetry of yeagdom reflect the elements of the abnormal life of the road. They are documents of human experience. TABLE OF CONTENTS

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