

[Three Anecdotes]

September 8, 1938 Reporter: William Wood Editor: L. Allen Supervisor: A. Hartog
Wordage: About 2200 words Narrator: Mrs. Margaret Berner*, 44 Furman Ave., Middle
Village, L.I. Sept 7, '39 2,080 Tales - Anecdote * I have assigned a pseudonym: Mrs.
Mary Schmidt. See remarks on separate sheet of this date. William Wood. [md] - [Three
Anecdotes?] - As told by Mrs Mary Schmidt (to William Wood) First, I must tell you coupla
stories what happened in Germany yet, before I came to this country out, when I was a
young woman. We lived near a little farm village, and I worked all day in the fields. From
morning to night. In the village there was an old miners (miser) what lived all alone by
himself in a big house. He was so stingy he wouldn't let no one in to clean for him, and
no one to cook for him; and he didn't want no one to come near the place, and the people
all said he was counting his money all the time, over and over again. The miners (miser)
had a brother what was a very poor man with a lot of children, and he had a little farm
what was so poor he didn't hardly could make a living. One year his crops was so poor
his family was going to to starve, so he goin' to his brother and he say, "John, 2 [please?]
help me out for my kids, [please?!] Soon is the winter coming and not enough food to eat.
[Please?], John, you must help me out!" So John, he thinks for a minute and he says,
"No, Karl," he says, "I don't can help you nothing this year; but maybe," he says, "you
kommen here [next year?] again, and I help you out." So Karl didn't get nothing from the
old [(miners?)]; but he live just the same, and the neighbors help him so his wife and his
kids don't starve. And his wife get another baby and makes yet bigger family, and he very
poor all next year. And when winter kommen on again he says to his wife, he says, "I goin'
to see mein brother again, and he goin' to help us." And his wife says, "don't you go to
that old [miners?]," she says, "he aint give you nothing." But Karl says, "I goin' just the
same; he promised he goin' to help me this year," he says. Well, Karl goes to the house,
and he find the door open and he went inside and called out: "John!" And he couldn't hear
John; and he couldn't see him nowhere. And he called out again, yet, and no answer. And

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Karl shout, and stamp foot on floor and make all kinds noise and John didn't come. So he thinks maybe his brother is sick, and he looks all over the house and he didn't could find him. And then he goes down in the cellar but he can't find his brother. And he sees 3 a big, heavy iron door built in the wall, with a funny looking lock on the door; and he never see before in his life such a funny lock. And he looks high up and he sees a very small place in he wall like a peep-hole. And ye climbs up on old box and looks through the hole, and can see his brother sitting at a table - dead! And there is big pile of money on table, where his brother been counting his money. So they sends a long way off to another village, and there lives a locksmith; and comes the locksmith to make open the door. And he says: "This is the lock I made," he says, "I made it about ten years ago; and you can't open the door from the inside when it springs shut." And he says the old [miners?] wanted him to make the lock so if a robber came, and found where he hid his money, he would lock the door on himself and couldn't come out. And the locksmith says the old [miners?] must forgot to put up catch on lock when he went the door in; and then door locked shut fast and he can't get out and he dies there. [md] There was a nice farm close by us what was owned by a father and son, and they kept a working man there to work for them; and his name was Heinrich. He was a very big, strong fellow; and he worked hard and he knows everything about a farm: horses and cows and pigs and chickens and 4 everything. So one time they all spreading manure on the ground, and Heinrich says too warm the weather is, and he goin' to do his work at night time. And the farmer says, "what's the matter mit you? Are you crazy you want to go to work in the night?" And the son of the farmer says to Heinrich; "Heinrich," he says, "the ghosts will come by you in the night time; better you work by me in the daylight, no." And Heinrich says he aint scared of ghosts and even he aint scared of the Devil yet; and he goin' to do more work in night time. So the farmer says to go ahead, and the son of the farmer says to watch out the ghosts dont get you. So the next night when the other people goin' to bed, about eight o'clock when it's getting dark, Heinrich gets manure-wagon out, and gets the horses the stable out; and he gets the fork and commence to spread manure on the fields. And he makes good work, and it's nice and cool, and the moon shining down; and he's glad the boss let him work in the

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night. And after [?] the moon goes in it gets more darker; but Heinrich, he can see good yet. And he gets hungry after while, and he says soon he goin' feed those horses and then he's goin' by the kitchen and eat some bread and sausage after he's made empty the load what's on his wagon. Well, Heinrich looks up and them two horses is shaking all over, and he says: "What's the matter now," he says. 5 And quick he looks in some big trees, by the wood where the corner of the field is, and "Heiligen Gott!" he says, and he makes the sign of the cross. He can see a big white thing the trees between, and waving the arms up and down. And them horses is so scared they goin' to run away aber he holds them by the head and he speaks to them. And he looks the trees between again, and he didn't could see no ghost no more. so he goes to work yet and he makes empty the wagon, and he takes his horse to the barn and gives them water and feed them; and then he goes by the kitchen and eats his bread and sausage. And after when the horses is through eating, he puts them back again in the wagon, and he goes to work again till daylight comes; and the farmer and the son of the farmer comes out. So the son of the farmer says, "Heinrich," he says, "did the ghosts been scaring you?" And he says: "No," he says, "I didn't could be scared by such humbugs." And the son of the farmer says: "What you could do when a ghost come and catch you yet?" And he says, "I fix that ghost; and when it is the Devil what comes by me, I fix him too." And in the breakfast time the farmer and the wife and the son of the farmer makes foolishness by Heinrich; and the son says, "he's very brave fellow and the Devil couldn't make him scared." 6 Well, when night time come again, Heinrich went with horses out, same like before; and he spreads again the manure, maybe two three loads. And just when he moon goes in he is close near the corner of the field where is the woods. And them horses start shaking again; and Heinrich jumps quick out of that wagon to talk to them horses; and he has in his hand that manure-fork. And quick he looks the trees between; and comes out now the ghost, same like last night, waving mit the arms. So first he makes the sign of the cross and then runs fast by that ghost and he hits him so hard he could on the head with heavy, iron manure-fork; and that ghost falls down and don't make no noise. Now, them horses so scared is, they start to run away with wagon, and Heinrich he's running after them; but they don't stop no

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more till they come by the house. And Heinrich is holler out for horses to stop, and make so much racket his boss and the wife comes quick out to see what loose is. And Heinrich says "kommen quick," he says, "I catched ein ghost." And they all run fast by the corner where those trees is, and they see white ghost on ground, mit horns sticking from his head out. And then they look very close, and the wife of the farmer picks up those horns in the hand. And she picks up a bed sheet; and down on the ground is the son of the farmer; and the son of the farmer is dead! [md] 7 This part of Long Island was nearly all farms when I came from Germany; and I was a young woman and I worked on a farm here; and after, I went to work by a hotel. It was on Metropolitan Avenue in Middle Village near the Lutheran Cemetery, and Old Man Wanamacher was the keeper. And I went to work in the kitchen and mein husband got a job digging graves. The Manhattan people used to come mit funerals here; and after the funerals was over they came by us to eat lunch. And they drank schnapps and beer. And sometimes when they see my wedding ring, they ask me, "where your husband is?" And all time I tell them, "he is over in the cemetery." So they think all time mein husband is a dead one. Old Man Wanamacher one time was a great hunters; but when I worked there he was too old to go hunting any more; and he was all time saying he wish he was young again so he can only go and shoot birds the trees off yet. i didn't could talk much English but I can understand little bit; and after while I picked up more and learned to talk little better. You must come when you are a child or else you don't can learn good. Nearly all round here was German people, anyway, and everyone speaks German in them days. In them days they had coaches and horses for all the funerals. No automobiles. The driver wore big top-hats, and they was dressed all in black. And some of them had on suits what was too big for them, 8 and some was too small. Many times they looking like scarecrows, when they come to bury poor people. And when the dead ones was buried, and the families came to eat in hotel dining room, those drivers hang around drinking by the bar. And some of those drivers say bad words and swearing. We had a lot of chickens, and some of those hens are laying eggs every day. And after a funeral party eats lunch, we don't can find many eggs around. And I says, "I think it's them drivers," I says, "what's stealing our eggs." And every time one big

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fellow comes a funeral mit, I don't can find no eggs at all yet after he's gone away. So I says, "wait, once; I fix that guy!" Well, one of our hens quit sitting on some eggs she was hatching; and she won't sit on them eggs no more. And I says, "them eggs is very rotten," I says, "and I'm goin' to save them eggs for when comes that big fellow." Well, about a week after that, I can hear the horses driving in, and the people just had a funeral; and the big guy comes in by the bar mit the other drivers, and buys beer. And I run quick out and pick up all fresh eggs by the barn, and I puts down the rotten ones. After while that big fellow, he says, "I think I go look at my horses," and he goes out and makes the door shut. And he is holding his top-hat by the hand, upside down. 9 So I goes quick in the kitchen, and I look the window out; and I can see him go in by the barn. And pretty soon comes out again and holding top hat under the arm, upside down. And I'm watching him go fast to his coach and takes eggs from the hat, and puts them eggs nice under the seat. And after when he comes in by the bar he says, "them horses is all right; guess I takes another beer yet, and then maybe the family is done eatin' and we go home." So after when he goes away I tell the Old Man Wanamacher and the missus and the bartender. And next time that big guy's come with a funeral, the boss says to him, he says: "John, we got some plenty nice fresh eggs to-day; maybe you like to buy some yet." And that fellow says "No," he says, "my folks don't eat much eggs in my house." And Mr. Wanamacher says, "all right, olden-timer," he says. # II [Form D?] September 8, 1938 Reporter: William Wood Editor: L. Allen Supervisor: A. Hartog Wordage: About 2200 words. Narrator: Mrs. Mary Berner, 44 Furman Avenue, Middle Village, L.I., [Sept 8, 38?] The interview from which this material was gathered was made possible through the courtesy of a friend, Mr. Anthony F. Driscoll, of Middle Village. I deem it advisable to keep the informant incognito; lest her family, highly intelligent people, might regard as caricaturization my portrayal of her vernacular. For this reason I have assigned the pseudonym: Mrs. Mary Schmidt - a very common German name. While the narratives are not recorded [verbatim?] - indeed, this would be physically impossible without a stenographer - I have endeavored to preserve as much of her quaint phraseology as my longhand notes and the general circumstances of the interview permitted. Title: Three Anecdotes

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As told by Mrs. Mary Schmidt to William Wood