

[Blacksmith Entries]

W9662

Beliefs and customs [md] folkways

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Form[md]3

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Title Blacksmith entries. [md] Mt. Tabor M. E. church. [md] Old time verse.

Place of origin Portland, Oregon Date 3/20/39

Project worker Sara B. Wrenn

Project editor

Remarks

Form A

Circumstances of Interview

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date March 20, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Blacksmith entries - Mt. Tabor M.E. Church - Old time verse.

Name and address of informant Mrs. J. I. Kisaberth 4828 S. E. Kelly St., Portland, Oregon.

Date and time of interview March 16, 1939. Afternoon

Place of interview Above address, home of informant.

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant [md] Miss Mary Agnes Kelly, 2945 S. E. Franklin St., Portland, Ore.

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Name and address of persons if any, accompanying you [md]

Description of rooms houses surroundings, etc.

Living room, filled with many things, but with an atmosphere of use only on special occasions. Among the clutter of pictures hanging high on the walls were divers and sundry engraved diplomas, certificates, etc. A fire, lighted as the interviewer entered, was burning in the fireplace, despite which there was a chill in the air. The house itself [md] of a story and a half [md] is of the common square type of some 30 years ago, with a veranda along the front, its setting the ordinary city lot of 50 by 100 feet, on a slight grading above the street, with houses of similar type in the neighborhood.

Form B

Personal History of Informant

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

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Name and address of informant Mrs. J. I. Kisaberth 4828 S. E. Kelly St., Portland, Oregon.

Information obtained should supply the following facts:

1. Ancestry

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2. Place and date of birth
3. Family
4. Places lived in, with dates
5. Education, with dates
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

1. Father, Jos. D. Lee; Mother, Eliza Alice Witten. English-Scotch-Irish stock.
2. Oregon. Age refused.
3. Husband, J. I. Kisaberth. Two sons, Joseph Lee and Vernon.
4. Always lived in Oregon.
5. Public schools; one year in Willamette University; business college.
6. Y. W. C. A. secretary for a number of years.
7. No special accomplishments or skills. Interested in music and education.
8. President local P.T.A. Member Methodist church. Has taken part in various civic undertakings and local kindergarten.

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9. Medium height, slender, with dark eyes and hair; quiet and somewhat reticent.

10. A person interested probably in all that pertains to her home and community, but difficult to interview, although cordial.

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

Federal Writers' Project

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Text: My grandfather, Mother's father, Joshua Ewing Witten, came to Oregon in 1852, and his donation land claim adjoined that of Clinton Kelly. Grandmother Witten knew a good deal about nursing, and she was busy ministering to the sick coming across the plains, for that was the year when cholera attacked so many of the immigrants. Grandfather was a blacksmith by trade. He was very active in the first church hereabout, that of the Methodist church at Mt. Tabor, where he was the first class-leader. Here is the record he used to keep of what they called the "East Portland Class," which, as it shows, was formed on January 26, 1853. It shows: "C. S. Kingsley, Preacher in charge

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Thos. H. Pearne, P. E. (Presiding elder I think that means)

Clinton Kelly, Chm.

Witten

Nelson

Kerns

Gilham

Crisswell

Richey

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These names I suppose were those who signed up for the class. The same old record shows that on December 30, 1855, a number signed a resolution, which you can copy:

“All the undersigned do resolve by the permission and assistance of All Mighty God to read the Old and New Testament Scriptures through during the year 1856.

(Signed) S. Nelson

Hillary Cason

N. D. Gotham

M. Kelly

Mary E. Cason

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C. Starr

J. E. Witten

Eliza J. Witten”

I guess people read the Scriptures through a lot more in those days than they do now. Grandfather and grandmother were both interested in music. The roads were muddy and many of the roads were trails through the woods, but grandfather would bundle grandmother on a horse and off they would go to lead a singing school. Sometimes it would be in homes and other times in the little rude [schoolhouses?]; but there weren't many of the latter. It was mostly in the different homes.

As I said, grandfather was class-leader at Mt. Tabor church, and here is an entry he made in which you may be interested: “Remember the Friday preceding each quarterly meeting as a day of Fasting or abstinence & prayer.” He seemed to keep a pretty good check on his members too, for here he says: “Let this book be marked regularly. P for present. A for absent. E for excusable. S for sick. D for distant.”

I am not sure about this, but I am under the impression from what I remember that the Section Line in grandfather's time was called the Witten Road; chiefly because that was where he had his blacksmith shop, and the people who came there called it that. They used to come and bring their horses to be shod and their wagons to be mended, and their plows and almost everything.

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Their wives and families would come along too and spend the day. Grandmother used to complain that the visitors ate up all the profits they got from the patrons, let alone the work it made for her. Grandfather's profits couldn't have been very great, judging from these items in his old day book, in 1855:

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"Making 2 bolts for wagon .50 1.00

Cart hinges.25

Shoeing horse and mending hammer 1.25"

Here is an old copy book of my great-grandmother Witten's when she was a girl, and some of the verses in it. They are all a little gloomy: "My soul come meditate the day, And think how near it stands When you must quit this house of clay And fly to unknown lands."

—————"Soon must I bid a long adieu To life and friends on earth My nineteen years grows very few My number from my birth."

Form D

Extra Comment

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Comment:

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Anything of a folklore nature seemed sadly lacking here, so the interviewer took what she could pertaining to church history in Mt. Tabor community, thinking it might be of some value, particularly that relating to vows and resolutions.